



ECOSOC
YOUTH FORUM

YOUTH2030

Economic and Social Council Youth Forum

“Accelerating the COVID-19 recovery and full implementation of the 2030 Agenda with and for youth”

THEMATIC SESSION ON SDG 9
25 April 2023, 4:45 pm to 6:15 pm (NY Time)
Hybrid Event

IDENTIFICATION	
SDG/theme or Region	SDG 9, “Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation”
Session title	Harnessing the potential of youth to turbo-charge SDG 9 – infrastructure, industry and innovation
Session co-lead UN	United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)
Session co-lead Youth	International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organisations (ICMYO) Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY)
Session co-organizers (both UN and Youth)	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) International Telecommunication Union (ITU)
BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES	
<p>SDG-9 is built on three pillars – infrastructure, industry and innovation – all of which are strongly connected among themselves and share the common goal of achieving socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable economic development. SDG 9 is considered a bridge to many other SDGs, from the ending of poverty and hunger to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy, sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work, and sustainable consumption and production, among others.</p>	

Youth is critical to progress in SDG 9 and other interrelated SDGs, and to fulfil the promise to leave no one behind. Youth constitute the majority of the working age population worldwide, especially in developing countries, and the driving force of future economies. Youth are also important sources of innovation and drivers of change. Particularly in developing countries and in rural areas, young people constitute the largest share of the population, and they have huge potential as accelerators of inclusive and sustainable industrialization and technological innovation, including for a green transition and overall rural transformation. Young people, especially in the Global South, need opportunities for training and education, including in the areas of research and development, in order to unlock their innovative potential. Access to the internet and digital technologies is crucial therein.

Industrialization is a primary source of income generation, offering employment opportunities for young women and men and contributing to sustained increases in living standards. For developed countries, growth is achieved in higher productive activities relying on advanced technologies. For developing countries, structural transformation is a shift from the extraction of raw materials and primary sector activities to increasingly complex technical transformation processes, i.e., industrial and manufacturing activities, while also innovating targeted interventions, such as applying new technologies in agri-food and packaging to reduce the carbon footprint in addition to diversifying employment into non-agricultural activities. With its strong linkages to other parts of the economy, industry also serves as an integrator between the agriculture and service sectors. Youth need access to opportunities to develop their entrepreneurial skills and abilities, as well as to resources, including financing and mentorship support, to be able to take part in building resilient infrastructure and inclusive and sustainable industrialization built on principles of circular economy.

However, in many countries, youth face challenges in engaging in productive activities and tapping into socio-economic opportunities. Inadequate infrastructure, country-specific policies and regulations that do not reflect the needs and aspirations of youth, limited access to finance and business support, gaps in skills, lack of mentorship and limited knowledge of opportunities, networks and markets hamper youths' potential. Within the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR or Industry 4.0), there are many opportunities for youth to be at the frontier of new technologies and innovations, but they need to be equipped with the right technical, vocational, digital and entrepreneurial skills to be able to harness the opportunities and bridge the digital divide, especially in developing countries. The recent global shocks have triggered a major economic crisis, further increasing youth who are not employed, in school or in training, and particularly affecting the least developed countries.

Advances on SDG 9 today are taking place against a challenging landscape. The pandemic has demonstrated that manufacturing remains the backbone of economies, and that countries' industrial capabilities and levels of digitalization support resilience in the case of such global shocks. This thematic session will explore how we can harness the potential of youth to turbo-charge progress in resilient infrastructure, inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and innovation. The session will build on the outcomes of the Expert Group Meeting on SDG 9 convened by UNIDO and DESA in March 2023 as input to the in-depth review of SDG 9 at the 2023 High-Level Political Forum on "*Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels*". The recommendations stemming from the session will also feed into other processes in 2023, namely the 2023 SDG Summit as the mid-term review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the 17 SDGs.

SESSION OBJECTIVES

Provide an interactive platform to:

- Raise awareness about youth's priorities and challenges pertaining to SDG 9.
- Highlight youth's experiences and youth-led entrepreneurial initiatives advancing SDG 9 (and other interrelated SDGs), which could possibly be adapted/replicated/scaled up.
- Disseminate international best practices in empowering youth in the context of SDG 9 in different contexts.
- Discuss the key enablers and policies needed, including industrial policies, those for financial inclusion and for the promotion of innovative entrepreneurship, to maximize youth's contributions to SDG 9. Discuss how governments, support institutions and the international development community can empower youth to serve as accelerators of resilient infrastructure, inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and innovation, with a particular focus on rural communities.
- Identify concrete recommendations and mobilize youth actions to advance the implementation of SDG 9.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Key messages and recommendations identified highlighting youth's experience, best practices, and proposed solutions for their maximum contribution to the advancement of SDG 9.
- Key takeaways from the SDG 9 session of the ECOSOC Youth Forum will contribute to the discussions on the review of SDG 9 at the 2023 HLPF, the SDG Summit, and the resulting follow-ups to accelerate implementation.

APPROACH USED TO GENERATE CONCRETE CONTRIBUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- A preparatory consultation will be held before the session on 25 April 2023. This will allow for a wider network of youth to engage, share their experiences and identify recommendations.
- Youth will be encouraged to identify 1-2 best practice initiatives that serve as drivers of SDG 9.
- A 2-pager will be prepared, highlighting three key messages and three main recommendations stemming from the consultation.
- The outcomes of the consultation will contribute to shaping the discussions at the session, and the resulting recommendations.
- The ECOSOC Youth Forum SDG 9 session will also build on the outcomes of the Expert Group Meeting on SDG 9 convened by UNIDO and DESA in March 2023.

OVERALL STRUCTURE AND FLOW

The session will be held in a hybrid format; the duration is 90 minutes. The session will include:

- Brief introduction by the moderator
- Opening remarks
- Moderated panel discussion with key guiding questions, also relaying key messages and recommendations from the preparatory consultation
- Q&A period (with discussants, including representatives of groups involved in the preparatory consultations)
- Closing remarks, key messages and recommendations

SESSION DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What are youth's priorities and challenges pertaining to SDG 9?
- How are young people advancing SDG 9 and what are some of the best practices, innovative initiatives and partnerships that can be replicated and scaled up, including in other countries and regions?
- What are the key enablers and policies, including industrial policies, that can empower youth as accelerators of resilient infrastructure, inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and innovation, especially in poor and rural communities? What is the role of governments, support institutions and the international development community in this regard?
- At what level do you include youth and vulnerable people in decision making spaces?
- What are some of the best practices at governmental/country-levels on youth involvement & participation in SDG 9 that can be shared for learning and replication?
- Which skills are needed for accelerating the achievement of SDG 9? How can we ensure that youth have adequate opportunities to acquire these skills in developing countries, including through research and innovation centres?

NAMES OF SESSION SPEAKERS AND MODERATOR(S)

Moderator:

- **Ms. Leselle Vincent**, MGCY Regional Focal Point for Latin America and the Caribbean

Opening remarks:

- **Mr. Ralf Bredel**, Director and Representative to the UN Headquarters, UNIDO

Panellists:

- **Ms. Maanda Elizabeth Sianga**, Founder of Agro Queen
- **Mr. Diogo Ide**, Board Member of the Generation Connect Visionaries Board, Microsoft's UN Affairs Office
- **Ms. Luisa Franco Machado**, SDG Young Leader
- **Ms. Cathy Yitong Li**, Vienna Energy Forum Youth Steering Committee Member
- **Mr. Muhammad Sarim Raza**, UNCTAD Youth Network member and Coordinator of Youth Action Hub, Pakistan

Discussants:

- **Ms. Farah Albibi**, Youth Representative, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- **Ms. Inga Huld Ármann**, Youth Delegate, Republic of Iceland
- **Ms. Grace Gaso Pascal**, Youth Delegate, Republic of South Sudan
- **Ms. Aishwarya Gupta**, UNCTAD Youth Network Representative

Closing remarks:

- **Mr. Beom Joon Baek**, Co-founder of Youth for Privacy

OVERVIEW OF PREPARATORY EVENT/CONSULTATION

A preparatory consultation will be held virtually. The key questions will be in line with the ones in this concept note.

Co-organizers: UNIDO & MGCY

Date: 13 April

Participants: TBC

The consultation will identify three key messages (reflecting the main issues/priorities related to SDG 9) and three key recommendations (solutions/actions to address the issues identified) stemming from the discussions.

SUGGESTED READING

- [SDG 9: overview, targets and indicators, progress](#) (DESA)

- [UN Youth Strategy, Youth 2030: Working with and for young people](#) (Third priority: Economic empowerment through decent work - Support young people's greater access to decent work and productive employment)
- [UNIDO SDG 9 statistics portal](#) (industry-related targets). Tracks progress of individual countries
- UNIDO's strategy to empower youth for inclusive and sustainable industrial development (under finalization)
- [Territorial tools for agro-industry development](#) (FAO)
- [FAO Rural Youth Action Plan \(RYAP\)](#)
- [Promoting Youth Engagement and Employment in Agriculture and Food Systems](#), Committee on World Food Security
- [Opportunities for Youth in Africa \(OYA\)](#) – Accelerating job creation and entrepreneurship in agriculture and agribusiness (UNIDO, FAO)
- [UNCTAD Youth Forum Declaration](#) – Five youth priorities to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: social and economic development, new economies, climate action, inclusive and equitable learning, and youth civic participation.
- [Policy Guide on Youth Entrepreneurship](#) – Recommendations for policies and programmes that support the development of youth entrepreneurship.