



**ECOSOC
YOUTH
FORUM**

#YOUTH2030

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

25, 26 and 27 April 2023

CONCEPT NOTE

SESSION TITLE & TIME

Strengthening the Trust of Youth in Multilateralism: Exploring Intergenerational and Peer-to-Peer Dialogue
27 April 2023, 11:15 AM – 1:00 PM NY time
Hybrid format - online and in person at the Trusteeship Council Chamber at United Nations Headquarters

ORGANIZERS

Organizers (in alphabetical order):

- Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)/Division for Inclusive Social Development (DISD)
- Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY)
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- United Nations Foundation
- United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT)
- UN Women

Members of the EYF Organizing Team:

- DESA/DISD
- DESA/Office for Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development (OISC)
- International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organisations (ICMYO)
- MGCY
- Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth (OSGEY)

BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES

The COVID-19 pandemic and other ongoing major crises have further exposed the growing mistrust among young people towards the current global environment and its institutions, particularly multilateralism. Young people regularly cite sexism, ageism and other intersecting forms of discrimination as major factors contributing to this erosion of trust in multilateralism. Reinvigorating multilateralism among youth requires improving its inclusivity, accountability and effectiveness.

Member States and the United Nations (UN) have progressively recognized through various resolutions dating back as far as 1960, the importance of engaging youth in intergovernmental processes, reaching over time the understanding of the need to adopt multilateral approaches that are inclusive, transparent, accountable and effective in addressing global challenges¹. These resolutions and modalities, to name only a few, recognized the importance of youth engagement in the work of the UN and for the realization of its Charter ([A/RES/1572 \(XV\)](#), 1960), as well as the importance of communication channels and effective opportunities for youth to participate at the national, regional, interregional, and international levels ([A/RES/32/135](#), 1977). They recommended including youth representatives in national delegations ([A/RES/36/17](#), 1981) and instituted formal modalities to engage youth as a rightsholder/social group in UN processes (Major Group for Children and Youth, [Agenda 21](#), 1992) through which young people have been formally engaged in formulating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) and several other frameworks and initiatives on a number of topics, ranging from humanitarian affairs to environmental governance and sustainable urban development.

More recently, the [UN75 declaration](#) reasserted that “our challenges are interconnected and can only be addressed through reinvigorated multilateralism”. Furthermore, recognizing the growing complexity and diversity of actors participating in global affairs, the recommendations in the Secretary-General’s [Our Common Agenda Report](#) aim to create “a form of multilateralism that is more networked, more inclusive and more effective in addressing twenty-first century challenges”.

The meaningful engagement, leadership, and participation of diverse young people in the multilateral system require improvements to achieve its full impact. Young people, especially those with intersectional identities, face a variety of challenges when attempting to play an effective role at the global level, many of which stem from stereotypes and discrimination based on age. According to the [Be Seen, Be Heard report](#), 76 percent of those under 30 years old think politicians do not listen to young people. In particular, data from various sources indicate that women continue to be under-represented in many multilateral decision-making spheres and processes. At the current rate, gender equality in the highest positions of power will not be reached for another 130 years ([UN Women, 2023](#)). Young people from all continents regularly come to the same conclusion: despite giving feedback and participating in consultations, they seldom see the outcomes of those processes, and therefore lose hope and the will to trust and keep engaging with the system.

The intersection of sexism, ageism and other forms of exclusion in multilateral spaces not only undermines progress towards the SDGs, but limits opportunities to advance policies and investments that lead to inclusive, equitable and sustainable development, which ultimately also negatively impact young people’s development. The strength of the multilateral system and its mandate to address global challenges is anchored in its capacity to include diverse views and unique contributions. If the system does not work hand in hand with youth, and if youth do not trust it, its ability to reach our shared goals is at stake. In its [report](#), the Independent Commission on Multilateralism previously identified the deficit of trust as a major obstacle facing the international

¹ General Assembly resolution [A/RES/65/94](#), December 2010.

community. In this regard, solidarity across generations and rebuilding of trust is crucial. Moreover, the recent UN Global Report on Ageism highlights the importance of fostering successful and equitable intergenerational relations and partnerships to ensure that “no one is left behind”, including in multilateral processes.

In light of this mistrust, multilateralism faces an urgent need to rapidly evolve. According to the UN75 global surveys, of which half of the respondents were below the age of 30, the UN needs to change, innovate and be more inclusive of the diversity of actors. This was reflected in the Secretary-General’s Our Common Agenda report, which highlighted that “any effort to improve our governance... must navigate this complexity and seek explicitly to incorporate these new approaches where they are likely to deliver better outcomes”.

Seizing on the current global effort to reimagine the United Nations, reinvigorate multilateralism, and strengthen trust in institutions of global governance, this plenary session seeks to develop key messages to be delivered to Member States on this topic. The session builds on key takeaways from the side event “Advancing Youth Inclusion in Multilateral Spheres: Exploring the Impact of Ageism and Sexism”, held on the margins of CSocD61 earlier this year:

- Opportunities exist for young people to participate in multilateralism, facilitated by different UN entities, governments and other stakeholders. However, these programmes engage only a fraction of young people. There is also a need to strengthen accountability measures and processes in place after participation. To boost multilateral effectiveness, more diverse youth must be represented in a more systematic way within such mechanisms and directly engaged in innovative ways at multiple levels (national, regional, international).
- While digital technologies can be part of the solution, when it comes to digital participation, the voices and leadership of young women and girls, as well as rural, disabled, migrant or displaced youth, are still structurally excluded. Without addressing the digital divide, these groups may be left behind, further exacerbating already existing inequalities in the multilateral spheres.
- Intergenerational exchanges and peer-to-peer models offer alternatives to traditional top-down engagement strategies by bridging the gap between youth and policy makers.

The plenary session will seek to generate creative solutions and concrete policy recommendations that would enable the multilateral system to meaningfully and effectively engage a greater diversity of young people. It will draw on innovative and inclusive methods, such as intergenerational exchanges, peer-to-peer models, and other methods and programmes, which hold tremendous potential to inform multilateralism and contribute to improving its efficiency and accountability.

This session takes place on the third day of the ECOSOC Youth Forum, which focuses on Youth and the SDG Summit 2023. This day is designed as a concrete opportunity for young people to present their assessment, vision, and recommendations for Member States’ consideration ahead of the Summit to be held in September 2023 at the level of Heads of State and Government.

Chaired by the President of the General Assembly, the SDG Summit marks the mid-point of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the beginning of a new phase of accelerated progress towards the SDGs. It will review the state of the SDGs implementation, provide policy guidance, mobilize action to accelerate implementation and consider new challenges since 2015. The outcome of the SDG Summit will be a negotiated political declaration, which includes a placeholder to reflect key messages of the ECOSOC Youth Forum and the HLPF.

SESSION OBJECTIVES

The objective of this session is to discuss the intersection of multilateralism, ageism and gender issues and examine how peer-to-peer and intergenerational exchanges, among other innovative approaches, can advance inclusion and meaningful participation of young people in efforts to address global issues.

The session will seek to identify concrete, creative actions/commitments that would contribute to transforming the multilateral system in ways that are more inclusive of diverse youth contributions, ensuring that a strong, accountable and effective multilateral system harnesses intergenerational solidarity to rebuild after the pandemic and meet our shared goals. The target audience for this session is primarily Member States. Key messages from this session will be taken to the SDG Summit and the Summit of the Future.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Discussions of this session will arrive at concrete recommendations to be taken forward on how to strengthen the multilateral system, more specifically:

- 1) Briefly take stock of the key issues underpinning youth's lack of trust in the multilateral system and identify issues that can be addressed in the short and medium term to rebuild this trust;
- 2) Examine a number of good practices, innovative and inclusive models that can advance the meaningful engagement of youth in the multilateral system and therefore advance efforts to improve the efficiency and accountability of the system;
- 3) Formulate a number of actionable recommendations for stakeholders of the multilateral system, including Member States.
- 4) Identify priorities for youth to take forward in their work to advocate and shape a more inclusive multilateral space.

A set of key messages addressing the above will be produced and serve as inputs to the Presidential Statement of the ECOSOC Youth Forum. These high priority action points will also connect with other key UN processes and events in 2023 including the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) under the auspices of ECOSOC in July, and the SDG Summit to be held under the auspices of the General Assembly, at the level of Heads of State and Government, in September. The key messages developed in this session could be reflected in the SDG Summit Political Declaration in September 2023.

OVERALL STRUCTURE AND FLOW

The session will take place on 27 April 2023 from 11:15 AM to 1:00 PM NY time (105 minutes), in a hybrid format, allowing for opportunities for in-person and virtual participation. It will follow an interactive dialogue format, led by two moderators, and structured according to pre-identified guiding questions. Youth perspectives and speakers will be prioritised, as well as an interactive intergenerational dialogue. Questions and opportunities for engagement through social media will invite various voices and reflections from young people and other participants in the audience.

The proposed agenda is:

1. Welcoming remarks (5 minutes)
2. Taking stock (20 minutes): Examining some of the issues underpinning youth's lack of trust in the multilateral system. This segment will be focusing on impact: how does it translate in young people's engagement and development, as well as the world's capacity to address and solve global issues?
 - a. Lack of **inclusion** (2 speakers, 3 minutes each)
 - b. Lack of **accountability** (2 speakers, 3 minutes each)
 - c. Lack of **efficiency** (2 speakers, 3 minutes each)
3. Examining solutions (45 minutes): Improving inclusion to positively impact accountability and efficiency of the multilateral system. Honing on inclusion, one of the areas where young people can have the most impact, the discussion will focus on lessons learned and best practices to advance the meaningful engagement of youth in the multilateral system and therefore advance efforts to improve the efficiency and accountability of the system. Two speakers per solution...
 - a. to address lack of **diversity** and at least one of the session discussion questions (2 speakers, 5 minutes each)
Questions or comments from audience (5 minutes)
 - b. to address **ageism** and at least one of the session discussion questions (2 speakers, 5 minutes each)
Questions or comments from audience (5 minutes)
 - c. to address **sexism** and at least one of the session discussion questions (2 speakers, 5 minutes each)
Questions or comments from audience (5 minutes)
4. Formulating recommendations (30 minutes): Based on previous discussions and input from the audience, formulate focused and actionable recommendations for main actors in the multilateral system, with emphasis on concrete ways to advance youth inclusion. Speakers from previous segments will be brought back and asked to suggest recommendations addressing issues examined in the first segment while using solutions outlined in the second segment.
5. Closing remarks (5 minutes)

SESSION DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) How can the multilateral system improve its problem-solving capacities by securing mechanisms for transparent and participatory decision-making that go beyond "youth consultations"?
- 2) How can we achieve an institutional culture change and challenge the youth/adult power imbalance, at multilateral level, on the basis of a shared understanding of meaningful youth engagement?
- 3) Creating spaces that are more inclusive also means using more diversity of approaches. How could multilateral processes and structures be more creative and diversify their approaches? What could this look like?
- 4) How can we leverage technology to connect local and global decision makers with communities? What innovative approaches can be used to address the structural exclusion of young women and girls, indigenous, migrant and rural youth and ensure inclusion of all voices?
- 5) As an alternative to traditional top-down engagement strategies, some peer-to-peer models engage youth as partners to ensure their inclusion in decision-making spaces and to help bridge intergenerational gaps.

- a) What are examples of successful attempts to inform policy using peer-to-peer models?
- b) How can these successes be broadened and scaled up?
- c) How can peer-to-peer engagement be built into multilateral spaces and intergovernmental processes to increase the diversity of voices and hard to reach youth that contribute to these processes?

6) What are concrete ways that intergenerational dialogue and solidarity can improve the multilateral system? How could this be applied to multilateral spaces and what other concrete methods could be used to foster intergenerational solidarity in multilateral spaces?

NAMES OF SESSION SPEAKERS AND MODERATOR(S)

Moderators (in alphabetical order):

- **Ms. Yande BANDA**, Generation Equality Adolescent Girl Leader
- **Mr. Jacob ELLIS**, Next Generation Fellow
- **Mr. Zihan XUAN**, YOUNGO Global Focal Point

Speakers (in alphabetical order):

- **Ms. Lani ANAYA**, Juventudes por Paz
- **Ms. Justice FAITH BETTY**, Co-founder, Révolutionnaire
- **Ms. Poonam GHIMIRE**, UN Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Board for Effective Multilateralism
- **Ms. Laura GUAY**, UNESCO's Youth as Researchers Global Initiative/Intergenerational Steering Committee
- **Ms. Dilanaz GULER**, UN Women National Gender Youth Activist
- **Mr. Sameh KAMEL**, MGCY Operating Partner
- **Mr. Dev NAGAR**, UNOCT's Youth Engagement and Empowerment Programme (YEPP) Alumni
- **Mr. Pierre-Louis NEPHTALY**, International Association of Women Judges
- **Mr. Abideen OLASUPO**, Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative
- **Ms. Arlinda RAMQAJ**, Swiss Youth Delegate to the United Nations
- **Ms. Christy Marlene WONG BOBADILLA**, Millennials Movement/Grupo NNAYJ LAC

Respondents (in alphabetical order):

- **Mr. Alejandro QUECEDO DEL VAL**, Youth UNESCO Climate Action Network (YoU-CAN)
- **Ms. Sousan SUHA**, UNOCT's Youth Engagement and Empowerment Programme Alumni

OVERVIEW OF PREPARATORY EVENT/CONSULTATION

This plenary session builds on a side-event organized by DESA on 14 February 2023, on the margins of the 61st Commission for Social Development on “Advancing Youth Inclusion in Multilateral Spheres: Exploring the Impact of Ageism and Sexism”. Co-organized with UN Women, UNESCO, UNOCT and the Major Group for Children and Youth, the event gathered a group of eight diverse speakers to share their experiences and perspectives on challenges and opportunities young people face when trying to engage with the multilateral system.

The conversation explored how intergenerational dialogue and the use of innovative tools and approaches can advance inclusion and meaningful participation of young people in decision-making processes. Lessons from peer-to-peer models were discussed, as well as the importance of bridging the digital divide and ensuring digital literacy, especially for young women and girls. The side-event concluded with an interactive segment: Gamifying

Inclusion, in which the participating audience, together with the speakers, worked together to envisage a more inclusive multilateral system in break-out groups facilitated by young people from all continents.

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF SESSION FOR OFFICIAL PROGRAMME

This session will explore the intersection of multilateralism, ageism and gender issues, and examine how peer-to-peer and intergenerational exchanges, among other innovative approaches, can advance the inclusion and meaningful participation of young people in efforts to address global issues.

SUGGESTED READING

From the [CSW67 Global Youth and Adolescent Recommendations](#):

Co-leadership, Co-creation, and Co-ownership: Full and Effective Participation in Decision Making

- Institutionalize, integrate, and ensure the meaningful, substantive, and safe participation and co-leadership of youth, including adolescents, especially girls and gender diverse youth, in all their diversity and intersectional identities by shifting power dynamics, to prevent tokenism and ‘youth-washing’ by recognizing, centering and resourcing the substantive co-leadership, co-creation and co-ownership in decision-making spaces including in the methods of work and the work of UN Agencies, multi-stakeholder forums and intergovernmental spaces. (Based on CSW66 para 62 (p) E/CN.6/2022/L.7 and A/RES/76/137)
- Welcoming and recognizing the newly integrated ‘Interactive dialogue with youth representatives on the priority theme’ and commit to engaging meaningfully with youth representatives active in-person and online, and further commit to opening this dialogue to wider youth. (Based on CSW Methods of Work para 27 E/RES/2022/4)

From the [CSW67 Adolescent Girl Town Hall Recommendations](#):

- Support and strengthen programming to fund girls and gender diverse adolescents to build girl-led and girl-centric spaces instead of silencing, suppressing, girl-washing, tokenizing, or minimizing girls. Empower and generate change "with girls," not just "for girls."
- Recognize girls as co-leaders, co-creators, and partners essential to achieving systemic engagement of girls and gender diverse adolescents across UN deliberative and decision-making, including in intergovernmental processes.

[International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace, 24 April](#)

[International Day of Women in Multilateralism, 25 January](#)

[UN Global Report on Ageism](#)