6th Economic and Social Council Youth Forum
CONCEPT NOTE

Thematic Breakout Session

"Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation"
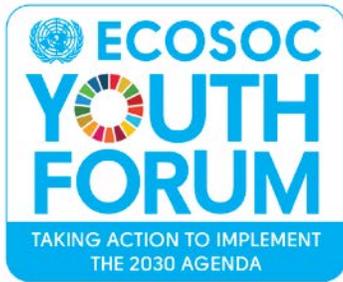
30 January 2017
CONFERENCE ROOM F

2:30 – 4:30 pm
United Nations Headquarters, New York

#YOUTH2030

Background and Context

SDG 9 of the Agenda 2030 calls for building resilient infrastructures, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and fostering innovation, and builds on the premise that economic development can only be achieved through the attainment of higher levels of socially inclusive and environmentally responsible industrialization.

Developing resilient infrastructures, that allow for social inclusion and universal access to basic services while safeguarding the surrounding natural environment, is crucial for building the foundation for effective achievement of the SDGs, and SDG9 in particular. However, gaps remain in attaining appropriate infrastructures, especially when comparing formal and informal settlements, including those resulting from crises situations, where poor infrastructure perpetuates poverty, spread of disease, vulnerability to disasters, and other barriers to sustainable development.

Similarly, ensuring that processes of industrialization and innovation address the gaps in social and economic development in an environmentally responsible manner is key to the effective achievement of SDG 9. The growing repertoire of tools presented by science and technological advancement, by different organizational frameworks and modalities, as well by new business models such as social entrepreneurship, can provide potent solutions to overcome the prevailing barriers to development. This can be supported by the development of a sound private sector, through entrepreneurship promotion, and by empowering the social and economic participation of the most vulnerable groups of society, including women and youth. This requires strengthening the financial and non-financial capacities on the national

levels, the promotion of innovation and domestic technology research and development, and the fostering of knowledge transfer through increased access to information and communication technologies.

The use of innovative technologies and of communication and information technologies has proven to be key for driving industrialization, and consequently the improvement of opportunities for social and economic development. Such technologies have shown to harbor immense potential in generating the necessary momentum for broader action towards the achievement of the SDGs and in mobilizing the needed resources. Even more, these technologies find resonance amongst the key drivers of inclusive and sustainable development, namely young social entrepreneurs.

Transitioning to the information and digital age can provide a plethora of innovative breakthroughs, yet these should not come at the expense of a resilient infrastructure and inclusive and sustainable industrialization. While ICTs and digital technologies can be effective solutions to increase access to services and opportunities, with ubiquitous applications, there is a need to ensure proper conduit to apply the technological and digital advances for social betterment and development, without creating or expanding the digital divide.

Given the responsiveness, and innovative and economic potential of youth, their empowerment can play a central role in ensuring that the abovementioned challenges are addressed in a way to ensure effective achievement of SDG 9 in the context of Agenda 2030 action. They can contribute to ensuring that technological and digital advancements are utilized in ways to improve resilience of infrastructures and of societies at large. They can also contribute to shaping and directing incentives for socially and environmentally responsible behavior, to ensure that gains achieved through industrialization and innovation are shared equally and equitably. Furthermore, youth can guide future investment and innovation policies, and thereby address potential barriers, such as the current intellectual property rights regimes or other policy frameworks that may either stifle investment in innovation or limit distribution of the benefits gained. However, access to capital is the biggest challenge for most of these young entrepreneurs and innovators. This remains the greatest barrier to commercially sustainable investments in new technologies, especially in emerging markets.

Shifting to a more low-carbon intense economy and reducing gaps in infrastructure that continue to buckle under pressures imposed by natural disasters, conflicts, urbanization, population growth, or poor management will require increased participation of youth and their good leadership as the major drivers of economic

development, adept user of ICTs, and advocates for sustainable development within project environmental thresholds and capacities.

Objective:

The breakout session will explore how to promote innovative approaches and initiatives, particularly how to harness the potential of youth entrepreneurs as drivers of development of thus as key contributors to the achievement of the SDGs and Agenda 2030, with particular focus on SDG 9. In particular, it aims to highlight the need for a combination of social and technological innovations for youth economic empowerment, livelihood generation and job creation for the achievement of SDG 9 in the context of Agenda 2030 action.

Focus will be placed on the following:
- **Information and communication technology** to improve and promote actions towards the achievement of the SDGs and Agenda 2030, in particular SDG 9 (Target 9.c);
- **The establishment of a youth action marketplace through the use of digital social currencies** based on **blockchain** technology, to mobilize and reward actions that contribute to the achievement of SDG9 (Target 9.3);
- Highlighting the need to risk inform all investment in infrastructure and make it people centered to improve the resilience of infrastructures to support economic development and human well-being (Target 9.1);
- Emphasizing and facilitating a dialogue on the territorial dimension of integrated industrial and infrastructure development (Target 9.a & the NUA)

The discussions on the above will serve to inform the following general debate on the implementation of the SDGs and the Agenda 2030, and SDG9 in particular. The below points will be discussed:
- How to promote global multilateral multi-stakeholder solutions to achieve shared prosperity, and how to mobilize collective action for the five pillars of the SDGs, people, planet, peace, partnerships and prosperity;
- How best to gather input for the review discussions on SDG 9 at the HLPF, and help create a youth engagement plan towards it.

The session during the 2017 ECOSOC Youth Forum builds on the outcomes of the **workshop "Youth Empowerment for Agenda 2030 Action through Social Entrepreneurship Capacity Building and Digital Social Currencies"** convened by the organizers of the breakout session (UNIDO, UN Women, UN Habitat and IAAI) on the 16th of January 2017, at the UN HQ in Vienna, Austria, the Youth and multi stakeholder round table on resilient infrastructure at the children & youth assembly at

the Habitat 3 conference in October 2016, Quito, discussions at the children and youth pre forum at the Asian Ministerial Conference on DRR in November 2016, in New Delhi, and the *"Youth Commission on Science, Engineering & Technology for the Sustainable Development Goals".*

The organizers aim to engage the panelists and the broader audience of the breakout session in a critical, targeted and constructive discussion about youth economic empowerment through innovative digital social currencies based on block chain technology, as well as various investment vehicles available for aspiring and existing entrepreneurs, ranging from grants to loans to crowd-sourced investment, and as well as the public-private partnerships. The session will also explore how the young entrepreneurs and innovators should take advantage of these opportunities and exploit them as a means to promote youth engagement and implementation of the SDG 9.

Tentative Agenda:

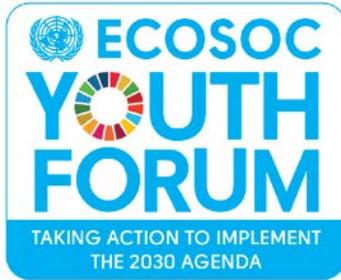| Time	Agenda item
2:30pm – 2:40pm	***Opening and reporting on the workshop "Youth Empowerment for Agenda 2030 Action through Social Entrepreneurship and Digital Social Currencies"*** Moderator: Matteo Landi (UNIDO) Resource person: Miroslav Polzer (IAAI)
2:40pm – 3:30pm	***Panel discussion*** Panelists: • Dr. Hayri Baracli, Secretary General of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality • Natasha Koermer, UN MGCY – Engineer without Borders • Prof. Minna Aslama Horowitz (presentation of research on digital currencies) • Niels Caszo, President AIESEC (Youth and the SDG 9)
3:30pm – 4:10pm	Q&A
4:10pm – 4:30pm	Wrap up and preparation for reporting

Questions:
- How does a lack of a resilient infrastructure (both physical and digital) base specifically affect young people?
- How should governments include better infrastructure in national plans so as to achieve is full potential of being a precondition and enabler of youth empowerment?

- Discuss cases of partnerships between young people, governments and other stakeholders that resulted in development of appropriate and enabling infrastructure.
- Discuss cases of counterproductive policy specific to SDG 9.
- How can we mobilize proper investments into resilient infrastructure to build a stronger foundation for emerging digital and information technologies?
- How can we promote sustainable physical infrastructures that will ensure equitable access to basic services across different territorial dimensions (urban, peri-urban, and rural) and with increasing pressures brought by population growth, climate change, etc.?
- How do product and process regulations influence the development of innovations, its dissemination, and impact?

Suggested reading materials

Jonathan D. Cahn & Ali Adnan Ibrahim, A New Digital Currency for Sustainable Development, Stanford Social innovation Review, 6 May 2016, https://ssir.org/articles/entry/a_new_digital_currency_for_sustainable_development

Brett Scott, How Can Cryptocurrency and Blockchain Technology Play a Role in Building Social and Solidarity Finance?, UNRISD, Working Paper 2016-1 http://www.unrisd.org/brett-scott

Design of Social Digital Currency. Publication produced in the context of EU funded project d-cent (Decentralised Citizens Engagement Technologies), March 2015 http://dcentproject.eu/resource_category/publications/

UNIDO - Introduction to inclusive and sustainable industrial development https://www.unido.org/fileadmin/user_media_upgrade/Who_we_are/Structure/Director-General/DG_Brochure_February_2015_Web.pdf

International Association for the Advancement of Innovative Approaches to Global Challenges IAAI, COP22 Call for Resources for Youth Climate Action and GloCha Global Challenges Youth Empowerment Partnership Poster, http://www.glocha.info/attachments/article/293/GiveYouthAChance_Call4Resources4YouthClimateAction_COP22poster.pdf