



**ECOSOC  
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**#YOUTH2030**

## 8<sup>th</sup> Economic and Social Council Youth Forum

### ONLINE REPORTING

SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

**8 April 2019**

**CR 5, 4-6 p.m.**

**United Nations Headquarters, New York**

<b>IDENTIFICATION</b>	
<b>Session focus</b>	SDG8
<b>Session lead</b>	Matthieu Cognac, ILO
<b>Session rapporteur</b>	Sophia Fei Ya Chen, UN MGCY
<b>Session moderator</b>	Sophia Fei Ya Chen, UN MGCY
<b>Session note-taker 1</b>	Kanika Sahjwani
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<b><u>CURRENT LANDSCAPE</u></b>	
What is the current landscape for this region or SDG, including issues, opportunities, recent trends, gaps, challenges?	

The current landscape shows slow progress in advancing the targets under SDG 8 and in particular continued challenges for young people to access decent work. Lack of relevant and accessible pathways into the labour market, including through education, significant skills gaps and, high levels of unemployment and underemployment (low wages) characterize youth labour markets today and embody a massive waste of potential and a threat to social cohesion.

To accelerate progress on SDG 8, economic growth should no longer be seen as an end in itself, but as one possible means of supporting the wellbeing of people, as long as it does not cause adverse environmental impacts. Governments and international institutions must contribute to change by initiating a fundamental debate on what progress means and how society can be structured towards the achievement of collective wellbeing and adopting alternative measures of progress based on sustainable development and the real wellbeing of people and planet in line with SDG target 17.19.

Similarly, the future of work is strongly linked to sustainable development and will impact many dimensions of life in and beyond employment. Moreover, it will affect all members of society including those who work, those who cannot work, and those who are unable to find work. Governments and other stakeholders must work together now to explore and address these challenges to ensure a future labour market that is both sustainable and inclusive. To address the megatrends and challenges influencing the world of work (e.g. digitization & automation; ageing population; globalization/business re-organization; urbanization/rural transformation), new structures need to be created. The objective should be to drive and inspire people-centered work environments enabling employability and inclusive labour markets, while also considering the need for the future of work to be environmentally restorative and climate resilient.

#### Opportunities:

- Social and political unrest. Due to social and political unrest in recent years, there has perhaps never been a better time to propose a complete reimagining of the status quo. Enough tensions have boiled over that there is willingness across stakeholder groups to implement solutions that match the gravity of our challenges. Politicians are floating bold proposals, companies are making bold investments in developing a skilled workforce, academia is open to transforming ways of teaching and learning, and citizens are supporting politicians with bold ideas to provide economic security for populations.
- Platform technologies. What we have not seen are platform technologies that completely transform the public good, solving problems such as decent work deficits or absence of relevant lifelong learning, while simultaneously paying their fair share of taxes and respecting human rights. We have the technology to create a dramatic impact on the public well-being through the design of new platform technologies, but doing so would require investment and incredible synchronicity between industry, government, social partners, academia, civil society and volunteer-involving organizations.
- Big data allows multiple actors including from the public and private sectors and civil society to come together and create a more systemic approach to filling gaps in the workforce at a granular level and to advance evidence-based decision-making.
- New metrics for measuring green growth, quality of employment, green labour market performance as well as work that is not currently accounted for such as volunteer work and work in the informal economy, will be increasingly used to counter the traditional GDP growth targets.
- Increasingly common interactions between sectors, regions and various stakeholders enhance capacity-building, multidimensional research programs and youth engagement.

## **YOUTH SOLUTIONS AND ACTIONS**

**(What are youth doing to address the current situation and leverage opportunities? And what are some of the most transformative solutions?)**

From programming classes in Nigeria, mobilizing Belgians to fight climate change, empowering children through photography and digital skills in Bangladesh, to promoting human rights education everywhere, youth are taking the lead across the globe in multiple ways to achieve SDG8.

Youth has taken action to achieve a paradigm shift by advocating for a beyond-GDP approach and promoting social protection floors from the local to national and international levels. To mobilize will and attention to these issues, youth continue capitalizing on intergovernmental, intersectoral, intergenerational and intersectional dialogue to (i) improve access to opportunities (e.g. education, skills, networks, information and technology), (ii) foster recognition and inclusion of marginalized groups and their contribution to society, (iii) support the fight to curb corruption and to have more youth-friendly fiscal systems, environmentally-conscious and human-centered progressive and redistributive economic development adapted to local needs. Youth groups and organizations have been collaborating with multiple stakeholders, putting emphasis on peer-to-peer learning and developing programs that empower people to build resilience in the new economy.

Finally, UN MGCY has made a commitment to the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth to host and facilitate workshops to contextualize SDG8 and decent work for young people around the world and encourage everyone to make their own commitments as well.

## **LOOKING TO THE HORIZON**

**What can the UN and youth do together to make sure young people's contributions have a deeper and wider impact, and that they are better served and engaged by member states?**

- Beyond GDP:

GDP is not a good indicator of well-being, decoupling is proving to be a myth, and wealthy countries must de-grow. In this context, the UN and young people can work together to better define and measure economic growth and decent work, especially for those kinds of work that don't contribute to traditional economic growth, such as work in the informal economy and volunteer work. It is important to recognize that vast numbers of workers, including young workers, are volunteers or engage in informal employment. Similarly, the UN and young people can enhance collaboration to promote a transition towards a low-carbon, resource efficient and people-centred economy while encouraging the creation of green jobs, improved labour market regulations, linking skills provision to inclusive growth and adapting to climate change

· Youth transitions:

- The UN and young people can work together to promote and advance the following areas:
- Quality lifelong learning for all by stressing the importance of early childhood, secondary, tertiary, higher ed, and vocational education. Education must be affordable for all and in many countries, vocational education must be de-stigmatized. Formal, non-formal, and informal types of education and training deserve recognition and must have better accreditation.
- Special attention must be paid to traditionally marginalized groups including, but not limited to indigenous and rural youth, all gender identities and orientations, all spectrums of physical and mental ability or disability.
- Stronger social protection systems that recognize the vulnerabilities of youth while their transition from school to work and work to work, in wage and self-employment.
- Reskilling. Educate to adapt, including those who lose jobs due to technological advancements and climate change.
- Rural-urban transitions require integrated territorial development, rethinking of supply chains, equitable access to resources for youth, and tailored access to finance for youth entrepreneurship. Together, these can help creating decent jobs for youth in rural economies. It is also key to invest in quality services and vocational training/education for young people living in rural areas as a solution for curbing rural exodus while stimulating decent rural youth employment and rural development.
- Governments must develop policies and schemes for youth volunteering as volunteering provides the transition of youth from education to employment through soft skills, mentoring relationships, employment training and access to labour force.

· Rebuilding Trust:

- The only way to address the extremely low trust in institutions among young people is to have meaningful youth engagement. Simply investing in the institutions of work will not do anything if youth are not included in the process. Principles of meaningful stakeholder engagement require universality and equity of access for all.
- Youth voices must be more meaningfully integrated at all stages of the policy process (design, implementation, follow-up and review) as well as in budgeting.
- Strengthening the roles of young people and their engagement in thematic and technical processes at all levels of government (international, regional, national, subnational, and local.) – need to rethink participation spaces in order to make them truly youth-friendly and need to make stronger efforts to reach out to and engage with marginalized youth – e.g. rural youth, indigenous youth, youth with disabilities, etc.
- Working towards governments making legally-binding commitments towards the SDGs