



ECOSOC
YOUTH FORUM

YOUTH2030

2022 ECOSOC Youth Forum

SUMMARY



**United
Nations**



Opening Session

ECOSOC President H.E. Mr. Collen V. Kelapile, opened the Forum with a recognition of the significant platform the Youth Forum provides, as it “promotes the equal participation and engagement of the global youth in the work of the United Nations”. He stressed the most urgent task “is to address the inequities across the globe, that have been vividly exposed by this pandemic; which has also disproportionately affected the youth”. He considered vaccine availability across the globe, strong health and social protection systems, food security, investments in technology, peaceful and inclusive societies, and transformative policies and strategies as key actions to better recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. The ECOSOC President addressed the young people who “legitimately deserve to have a seat at the table when decisions about [their] futures are being made” and encouraged innovative ideas and proposals during the Forum to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

The President of the General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Abdulla Shahid, highlighted that “young people are our best hope for tackling the challenges facing the world and in pursuing success on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. He recognized many young people who are working at the frontlines of global problems. From the COVID-19 response to climate action, young people show their “will to fight for the planet they inhabit”. He concluded by advocating for inter-generational conversations across the globe which can shape policy-making and decision-making at regional, national, and global levels.

The Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, noted the various challenges youth are confronted with, which have gone from climate change to COVID-19, and the war in Ukraine. She also recognized that “one of the invisible clouds that we see for young people has been mental health as well”. To bring young people to the center of rebuilding, she called for including them in designing plans for the future, particularly regarding transitions to sustainable energy. Promoting inclusion must be an “integral part of everyone at the table. You need to take a look around the table and ask, how many young people have we got in decision-making today?”.

UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake, addressed the lack of young people in decision-making, which requires immediate action. She called for better representation of young people in decision-making bodies, since “only 3% of parliamentarians are under the age of 30” due to “structural, legal, financial barriers and stereotypes”. Inequalities in the digital space were also addressed by the Youth Envoy, as “2.2 billion children and young people around the world do not have an internet connection at home”. She urges that pre-conditions such as internet connectivity must be met to ensure that young people can realize their fundamental rights.

The Youth Envoy of the African Union, Ms. Chido Mpemba, provided insights into youth inclusion in the African continent. She stressed youth unemployment as a significant problem in Africa that requires action as “we have almost 10 million young people entering the job market each and every year but only 3 million jobs that are available”. She also highlighted a gap between ratifying the African youth charter and holding member states accountable for the implementation. She called on member states to appoint a special youth advisor to involve young people in decision-making at the highest national level.

When asked by the moderator, Mr. Sherwin Bryce-Pease, what global leaders should know about her vision of the future, climate justice advocate Marinel Ubaldo replied that she envisions “a future where I am not afraid to dream”. She stressed that the window of opportunity to rectify

climate destruction is shrinking and referred also to the IPCC report, which has laid down actions needed to tackle the crisis. In addition, she called for a future where her children will still be “enjoying the Human Rights that I am enjoying now because climate change is the greatest threat to Human Rights”.



Marinel Ubaldo

Climate Justice Advocate

(Philippines)

“I hope that more grassroots climate activists will be given a platform to tell their own stories, so we will be able to put a human face on the climate crisis.”

Plenary Sessions – Day 1

Working With and For Youth in Building Back Better from the SDGs and Achieving the 2030 Agenda

“Working With and For Youth in Building Back Better from the SDGs and Achieving the 2030 Agenda” was the first of many interactive discussions held with the participation of high-level government representatives, officials from international and regional organizations, the United Nations, and youth activists. In addition to the government representatives that participated in the session live, Ministers of Youth Affairs engaged through pre-recorded video messages, which can be found [here](#).

During the discussion, speakers highlighted how young people are disproportionately affected by multifaceted challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing conflicts, humanitarian crises, climate change, growing inequalities, and more. Speakers emphasized the role of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the roadmap for action to respond and build back better from current crises, aiming to avoid future ones. The pivotal role of listening to and working with young people as equal partners and not only beneficiaries in that endeavor was prioritized.

The need to ensure no one is left behind (including but not limited to young women and girls, LGBTIQ+ youth, indigenous youth, young persons with disabilities, young refugees and migrants, young persons impacted by armed conflict, and more) was highlighted by different speakers. Speakers stressed the importance of equitable and accessible resources and materials for the meaningful engagement of marginalized youth from an intersectional lens. This means providing significant, flexible, and accessible funds for youth initiatives and programs.

Moreover, the need for accountability by different stakeholders in ensuring all young people are engaged in a meaningful, diverse, and effective manner in all decision-making affecting their lives, livelihoods, and futures, was brought up by many speakers. For that to be possible, speakers argued about the importance of creating the conditions for young people to maintain and expand their leadership and shared examples of the work they do in that regard.

Thematic Breakout Sessions



SDG 4 – Youth Engagement in Transforming Education

Education empowers youth to become active participants in the transformation of better societies by strengthening the teaching and understanding of shared knowledge, values, and attitudes enabling individuals to live together in diverse environments. Education and lifelong learning for all is also a recognized driver and enabler for progress across all SDGs, peace, security, and human rights. While significant progress in expanding access and equity in educational opportunity across the world has been made over the past decades, promises for inclusive education remain unfulfilled. Persistent barriers to the full realization of the right to education – highlighted by the pandemic – remain, especially for most marginalized people. During the interactive panel of the SDG 4 breakout session, youth participants from around the world shared their insights on issues of achieving gender equality, leveraging the digital revolution, addressing the refugee emergency, as well as advancing education for peace, human rights, and development.

Several solutions and actions have been identified by youth to create sustainable and equitable education. Speakers agreed on the key principle to ensure youth empowered engagement in forging a new social contract for education. With 40% of the world population aged under 25, youth are best placed to define what relevant education looks like – one that provides meaning, purpose, and agency to act. Education must be tailored to prepare youth to find solutions for the challenges of both today and the future. It was recommended in this regard to include students in the creation of curriculum and extra-curricular activities. To advance gender equality in education, participants identified the urgency to advance gender-responsive education systems, including mainstreaming gender-sensitive education and training in education policies and creating education budgets specifically targeting the needs of girls and women. Moreover, to respond to the rapidly changing new technologies and the advent of the digital revolution, improving connectivity and access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is necessary. Furthermore, a focus on skills development both for learners and teachers should be included to enhance international cooperation and bridge the digital and gender divide in developing countries. To ensure quality and inclusive education for refugees, actions need to be taken to strengthen language learning and increase financial literacy. There should also be a focus on the creation of child-centered reception and integration services. The international community should strengthen global humanitarian efforts in support of governments that provide such education services. Additionally, to advance global peace and improve the welfare of humanity through education, it is important to ensure that students and learners are engaging in dialogue with people belonging to different cultures and ethnic groups.

Thematic Breakout Sessions



SDG 5 - Generation Equality: Building back better with young women and girls at the center

In the thematic breakout session on SDG 5, panelists addressed the interlinkages between COVID-19, gender inequality, gender-based violence (GBV), and climate change and how it disproportionately affects young women and girls due to the rising social and economic pressures as well as lockdown measures triggered by the pandemic. Women and girls' safety was presented as the gateway to basic health, living standards, and empowerment, making it a necessary condition in achieving gender equality to build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic. During the session, youth leaders discussed possible solutions where young people, women, and girls were taking action for a sustainable recovery. These include the development of peer and youth-led resources for young people to deepen their advocacy efforts at the legislative and community level. Young people also consistently expressed the importance of strengthening the capacities of other youth to develop peer-to-peer education and programming to combat issues of GBV, violent extremism, and online safety. Increasing young women and girls' safety online, as well as in their day-to-day lives, is critical to strengthening the gender equality agenda. In addition, youth leaders expressed the need for technology and digital spaces for young people to express solidarity and advocate with one another.

In order to put young people, their perspectives, and experiences at the center of COVID-19 recovery efforts, several recommendations were made. Firstly, to address the impacts of poor or low internet access and connectivity, young people suggested strengthening public and civic spaces, including internet cafes or libraries. Secondly, it is recommended to improve the integration of governments' planning activities on countering Gender Based Violence (GBV) and its impacts, including providing training to law enforcement and criminal justice professionals on GBV. Thirdly, to strengthen youth-led organizations' impact and outreach, civil society, governments, and private sectors must create funding pools specifically for youth-led organizations to advance their missions. Fourthly, youth organizational capacity can be bolstered by implementing enhanced mentorship and subsidized professional development programs. Lastly, speakers called for expanding and increasing funded mental health resources and integrating wellness and support systems to better support and serve youth. The session highlighted that to achieve gender equality, we must center the voices of young women and girls, amplify their leadership, and co-create solutions to the hurdles that bar their full integration and participation in conceiving solutions. Sustaining ample opportunities for young people to have a seat at decision-making tables will be key. Intentional support is needed to strengthen the capacity of young people to lead, influence policy, and advance inclusivity in youth spaces.

Thematic Breakout Sessions



SDG 14 – Youth Action for SDG 14

Whether it is in business, science, or innovation, youth are taking an active part in driving integrated approaches in Ocean conservation. They've developed innovative solutions to sustainably use our marine resources, strengthening Ocean literacy and capacity, and questioning related norms and existing practices. Youth-led innovation has the potential to align purpose and profit, to build profitable business models that also benefit communities and contribute to sustainability. It is important to support children and youth to be part of the solutions to protect our Ocean, including by creating opportunities and empowering youth to be change-makers. Furthermore, efforts must be undertaken to increase Ocean literacy amongst young people and build a deeper understanding of the Ocean and its interconnectedness with other SDGs. This must happen at international, regional, national, and local levels, with local communities and vulnerable groups, including indigenous people, all actively engaged when developing Ocean-related solutions. Shining the spotlight on solutions and good practices can help local communities understand the impact that they have on the Ocean and what they can do to contribute to its protection. Lastly, it is critical to establish strong partnerships with young people in multilateral mechanisms related to the Ocean, such as the UN Ocean Conference, and meaningfully engage them in related decision-making processes, where young people can be mobilized, consulted, and contribute to discussions and outcome documents.

During the breakout session, several recommendations were made by the participants and panelists for policymakers and government officials to take into account. Firstly, policymakers should strive to create opportunities and platforms that empower youth. Through their actions, their votes, and by asking the right questions, youth can help push political leaders and hold their governments accountable for their internationally agreed commitments related to the Ocean. Secondly, policymakers should create incentives for businesses to create sustainable long-term impact, including by providing funding and stimulating youth-led innovation to tackle Ocean challenges. Lastly, governments and the international community should also take measures to enhance Ocean literacy and awareness-raising at all levels and strengthen related science-policy interfaces for more effective policymaking. Young people can be powerful storytellers about the Ocean. Engaging young people is necessary to advance more effective intergenerationally collaboration and achieve SDG 14 by 2030.

Thematic Breakout Sessions



SDG 15 – Securing a Sustainable Life on Land

Nature and ecosystems provide vital support to all life on earth and sustain our economies. But life on land is increasingly under threat from the growing impacts of the triple planetary crises, and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Transitioning to a low carbon resilient, resource-efficient, nature-positive, and socially inclusive economy holds the key to long-term solutions to conserve, restore, and sustainably coexist with ecosystems and biodiversity. Over 1 billion of the world's population are young people, who fully recognize that it is now the time to take action to protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems. Youth are on the frontlines of the triple planetary crises and already showing leadership in the change that needs to happen; investing in their education, training, and employment is an investment towards a resilient and sustainable future.

The panelists have identified several recommendations and actions that can be undertaken in order to include youth better in securing a sustainable life on land. For example, youth play a vital role for transformative change - in bringing innovative ideas and fostering the actions to conserve and restore natural ecosystems and halt biodiversity loss. Their engagement should be strengthened in global policy forums of relevance, such as Convention on Biological Diversity, UN Convention to Combat Desertification, UN Environment Assembly, UN Forum on Forests and UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to share their perspectives and showcase their innovative approaches to achieving sustainable consumption and production. Moreover, youth platforms and networks can be utilized for innovation, exchange of knowledge and information on combating pollution, promoting ecosystem restoration, and sustainable lifestyle choices. It can also help to engage youth in the process of disseminating information through different platforms to capture wider disaggregated demographics and inspire actions needed to rebalance our environmental footprint and resource use. Furthermore, youth can contribute to support efforts to secure land tenure of indigenous peoples and local communities to benefit their welfare, cultural heritage, and livelihoods, and support their efforts in sustainably managing forests, conserving biodiversity, and mitigating and adapting to climate change. Young people are well-positioned to be the voice of vulnerable groups and populations, to hold public and private sector officials accountable, and mobilize civil society and local communities in ensuring that the short-term economic gains were not made at the expense of vulnerable people and ecosystems. Meaningful engagement of youth is essential in global efforts to achieve the targets of SDG 15 by 2030 and in the process of building better from COVID-19. More action is needed to create an enabling environment for young people to share their perspectives in decision-making processes and policy formulation.

Regional Breakout Sessions

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Youth in Asia-Pacific, in all their diversity, are at the forefront of advancing the 2030 Agenda and rebuilding a new social contract in the post-pandemic world. With the uptake of digital technology in communities, they are adapting to the new normal and collaborating to foster innovation across sectors. The session highlighted the necessity to systematically include young people and adolescents in COVID-19 recovery plans, re-imagining meaningful and inclusive youth-adult partnerships and sustained interactions among all stakeholders. Structural, legal, and financial barriers hamper youth representation in policy processes and lessen their potential contribution to meaningful change. Young people wish to be considered equal partners in development and advocate for conducive spaces and platforms for outreach, empowerment, and engagement.

The session explored the role young people play in building back better from COVID-19, and speakers, panelists, and moderators presented youth-led initiatives across the region. They contribute to the advancement of the SDGs in multiple ways: from the deployment of new technology to tackle plastic pollution; leveraging on partnerships to advance education; creating business opportunities for women and the most marginalized; running awareness campaigns to eradicate gender discrimination; advocating for climate action and biodiversity protection; and addressing misinformation. They were united in the call for including and prioritizing young people in the planning, implementation, monitoring, and review of the SDGs at the national, regional, and global levels, urging political leaders and governments to hold on to their commitments to leave no one behind.

Among others, the following recommendations were formulated: 1. Youth engagement needs to be mainstreamed, and this includes the climate response, with more space given to collective and concrete youth-led initiatives, along with adequate financial investments and investments in digital transformation to upscale youth-led social innovation. 2. Enabling youth-inclusive policy processes may result from a combination of approaches, such as partnerships, collaboration, capacity building, technology transfer, and finance. 3. It will be crucial to create, safe and supportive ecosystems, free from intimidation, that provide opportunities for young people to be fully involved in shaping, developing, and implementing policies, strategies, and interventions without fear, including environmental defenders. 4. To better support youth in driving action and innovation on the ground, the education system needs to integrate digital literacy and digital learning opportunities, especially in the most marginalized communities, including critical thinking, and teach how to recognize and overcome misinformation. 5. All forms of gender-based discrimination and violence must be addressed through robust prevention and response mechanisms including the eradication of harmful practices.

Regional Breakout Sessions

ARAB STATES

In the session on Arab States, four thematic pathways – job seeking, entrepreneurship, policy-shaping, and community building – were discussed and presented as top priorities for empowering youth in the Arab region and potentially paving the way to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs. Youth continue to face high unemployment and a turbulent transition into the job market. Many young people are taking interest in entrepreneurship as an alternative to waiting for employment opportunities to emerge, and to develop local solutions to local issues. Despite strong motivation, and even though over 146 million young people live in the Arab region, their voice is not matched with equal participation in policymaking. Another key area of need is found in rural communities, where people, public services, and infrastructure benefit from far fewer resources for development than cities do. For each of the pathways, a young changemaker presented examples of initiatives undertaken by young people to highlight their agency in articulating solutions and advancing SDG implementation. These included an online platform to link youth with skill-building initiatives to enhance their readiness and suitability for employment, and a youth-led NGO training and mobilizing communities for SDG action.

The discussion identified several recommendations to better support youth in these pathways. Firstly, to ensure a successful transition into the job market, young people require critical and early interventions at the school level to equip them with the skills that are needed. They also need continued access to reliable data and up-to-date information on the evolution of the labor market and its changing expectations as jobs are continually reshaped by technology and automation. Secondly, to maximize their impact potential, young people in the region would benefit from earlier exposure to social entrepreneurship knowledge and resources. Investment is key in enabling financial institutions to meet the needs of young entrepreneurs, especially through accelerators and incubators. When it comes to policy shaping and youth's meaningful participation, governments should acknowledge the leadership of young people and give them access to designing, implementing, and reviewing all sectoral and sustainable development policies. Governments should ensure that every ministry owns a youth policy that could eventually result in an integrated national youth strategy that guarantees youth civic engagement. Civil society organizations could create pressure for youth to hold decision-making positions in their organizational structures and in political parties, which could have an impact in youth participation in governments. Finally, at the community level, participatory approaches, networking, and transparent partnerships are key to supporting young people in making a positive impact. To enhance youth participation in the achievement of Agenda 2030, the SDGs must be integrated into the learning environment of all young people in the Arab region at theoretical and practical levels.

Regional Breakout Sessions

AFRICA

The 2019 progress report of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) showed that Africa is not on track to end hunger by 2025. The COVID-19 pandemic has not only exposed the global health inequality but also food security inequality. Nearly one out of five Africans experienced hunger in 2020, more than double the proportion of any other region. The most notable impacts of the pandemic and its containment measures have been disruptions in food systems across the continent, from production and supply to distribution and consumption. These have included increased food losses and reductions in income for both large- and small-scale food producers, and small- and medium-sized enterprises in the agri-food industry. With negative effects on livelihoods, human development, and productivity, malnutrition contributes to entrenching poverty and undermines the achievement of the SDGs and Agenda 2063 priorities. It is an urgent time for a paradigm shift in agriculture, emphasizing resilience and involving both new and traditional actors to reverse trends, feed Africa and eliminate hunger by 2025.

The session discussed solutions to these challenges, including how to encourage young Africans to join agriculture. In Rwanda, “Gira Inka” helps to curb malnutrition and stunting by providing one cow per family. The Ghanaian initiative Planting for Food and Jobs, a flagship agricultural campaign of the government that uses hybrid seeds, fertilizers, and digital technologies to attract youth to farming, is another success that can be replicated. Homegrown school feeding programs have been increasingly implemented by African countries to address malnutrition, provide learners with quality nutrition, and generate more revenue for farmers. Today, over 65 million children benefit from these programs and governments should expand them. It was discussed that Africa needs a new narrative based on its opportunities and not its challenges. African youth, who have shown exceptional ingenuity to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 by launching more than 120 health-related technology innovations, can be instrumental in realizing this new narrative and transforming Africa.

Several recommendations were made. Firstly, to incentivize young people to join agriculture, they should be sensitized about the many opportunities along the agricultural value chains beyond farming. African governments should also support youth with skills development and access to finance and market opportunities. Development partners alongside governments should support access to the Internet, water, electricity, and other critical infrastructure. Secondly, barriers to agricultural development must be addressed. Subsidies to farmers in more developed regions of the world distort markets and undermine the profitability of agriculture in Africa. African governments need to advance solutions to address this problem. If African countries want to break the cycle of poverty and achieve the SDGs, they must set up ambitious national targets and invest heavily in technology. Those with strong and effective Science, Technology, and Innovation systems invest up to 3.5 percent of their GDP in research and development. Development partners are urged to support innovative and climate-smart agriculture. Thirdly, cross-cutting issues should not be overlooked. Governments must create a conducive environment to realize the potential of Africa’s youth through the demographic dividend, as Africa will be transformed by its human capital. Gender equality is key to ensuring that Africa eliminates hunger and malnutrition, creates jobs, eliminates poverty, and contributes to inclusive sustainable

development. Climate change and peace and security are affecting agriculture in Africa and need to be addressed in tandem.

Regional Breakout Sessions

EUROPE, NORTH AMERICA, AND OTHER STATES

This session discussed how the COVID-19 crisis has exposed the vulnerabilities and inequalities of our social and economic systems, including the fiscal systems, and stressed the need for more concrete actions and reforms. Despite targeted measures such as national recovery plans, the impact of COVID-19 is still disproportionately weighing on vulnerable populations, including young people across the world, for example in accessing healthcare, education, housing, or food. It also highlighted that in addition to the COVID crisis, phenomena such as warmer temperatures, extreme weather, droughts and floods, and environmental and biodiversity degradation continue to impact our ecosystems and people's livelihoods. Meanwhile, violent conflict in the region that also has implications on oil and gas supplies reminded of the importance of disengaging from fossil fuels.

The following key messages and recommendations emerged from the session. Firstly, it is time to redesign the economy in such a way that it contributes to the well-being of the people and the planet. We need to invest in a sustainable and social future now and it will require public investment and spending on a large scale for a green transition. A consequent involvement of governments will be needed to set climate, environmental and social goals before GDP growth and macroeconomic stability. Secondly, governments must address overconsumption and other root causes of our climate and inequality crises and establish institutional platforms and investigate and develop post-growth policies. All policy measures must actively close inequality gaps and consider the rights of all young people, particularly marginalized youth who are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis. Specific examples of solutions and actions in this regard were formulated and included, amongst others: Establishing a binding reduction target for EU material footprint; Ensuring a cross-sectoral approach to coordinating work with youth organizations, and ensuring meaningful youth participation in policy-making especially given the context of the European Year of Youth; Creating a pool of funding to support youth organizations at full capacity; Transforming the European Stability and Growth Pact into a Sustainability and Wellbeing Pact that would include an Excessive Emissions Procedure for European Member States that diverge from their NDC paths. This proposal fits with a vision for a society where everyone, including future generations, can fulfill their needs and realize their rights while ensuring that this does not overshoot Earth's natural resources and fundamental life-supporting systems.

Regional Breakout Sessions

LATIN AMERICA

Latin American youth find themselves in a complex and unequal context that challenges their possibilities to fully exercise their rights and endangers their present and future. The pandemic has affected the financial situation of their families, delayed their studies given the confinement measures due to the pandemic, and increased the time spent on unpaid and care work, especially for young women. Violence, the climate crisis, and the lack of free, inclusive, and quality education add additional layers of vulnerability and uncertainty. Despite these challenges, and despite a limited representation of youth in decision-making spaces or opportunities for collaboration with governments and other stakeholders, youth are showing their resilience and a strong commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The session discussed how youth have mobilized across the region to transform their communities. They delivered workshops and campaigns reaching the most marginalized, they defended the region's biodiversity and human rights, responded to humanitarian crises, oil spills and illegal deforestation, created green jobs for their peers and apps to help young women and girls ask for help when they faced violence.

Several recommendations were made to support the achievement of the SDGs under review this year, including: For SDG 4, the need to repair the deficits generated by COVID-19 and guaranteeing quality and inclusive education with measures such as teacher training, sufficient digital and non-digital infrastructure, social protection programs to support families, and projects to identify the dynamics of discrimination in education. For SDG 5, to eradicate gender-based violence in all its manifestations, implement comprehensive multi-sectoral strategies that address the causes and their link with education, health, gender violence, and other problems related to inequalities. Access to justice is also key and the judicial and policy systems need to be equipped with knowledge and tools to respond to current challenges. Efforts to ensure the full exercise of the rights of the LGBTI population will require addressing gender structures, sexual and reproductive rights, gender violence, and new masculinities in a massive educational process. Regarding SDG 14, young people proposed coordinated work between different sectors of society to promote environmental education from early childhood. They encouraged working against greenwashing and strengthening the response to illegal fishery, oil subsidies, and other economic activities that are damaging our oceans. Concerning SDG 15, it is necessary to raise awareness and sensitize the largest number of people to implement more sustainable practices that can be part of the circular economy. This can be expressed as the use of local materials with low greenhouse gas emissions, restoration of the forest landscape, protection and conservation of biodiversity, and reduction of the use of plastic. Regarding SDG 17, youth demanded participation in the spaces of institutionalized social dialogue, and to be included in a relevant way, including in the follow-up, review, and implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the post-pandemic recovery. To achieve this, they requested safe engagement spaces, respecting youth voices and autonomy without politicization or criminalization, as well as training and strengthening of youth leadership programs, among others. The spaces should allow interaction between states, the private sector, and youth, but adopt dialogue strategies to improve communication between the parties.

Regional Breakout Sessions

THE CARIBBEAN

After almost two years of multidimensional impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the subregion is slowly reopening and gradually rethinking its trajectory on the road to recovery. Some of the most successful, prolific, and impactful movements across the Caribbean are being led by young people, who have been doing the work and engaging with external stakeholders as well as mobilizing resources on their own. However, youth face many challenges that need to be addressed if they are to reach their maximum potential and contribute to the achievement of the SDGs by 2030.

There is a need to adopt a transformative approach to education with a view to empower students with social and emotional learning to build their resilience and to sensitize them to the history and needs of more vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities, migrant and refugee and indigenous populations. Rather than streamlining them into STEM-focused disciplines, they should be encouraged to explore other skills and trades to address the different needs in the subregion. Improvement of digital and online learning should also be prioritized to further reduce the gaps in access to quality education especially experienced by marginalized groups.

Strong multi-stakeholder partnerships and collaboration should be promoted. The value that young people bring to the development discourse must be acknowledged and more efforts must be made to facilitate their participation as key stakeholders in decision-making processes and consultations and to empower them to work with different stakeholders in addressing issues exacerbated by the pandemic. Engaging youth in a meaningful way also means compensating them for their time, energy, and effort, so that they are respected as valuable experts.

More opportunities are needed for youth organizations and coalitions to share best practices and experiences, and to expand on the impactful work that is already taking place in the subregion. The Caribbean must also adopt a resilient recovery approach that includes the meaningful participation of all marginalized and diverse groups if the subregion is to build back better in the aftermath of the pandemic. Stakeholders can learn from the lens of women and girls, indigenous peoples, and other diverse groups who are experts on their own lived experiences and can weigh in at every stage of the decision-making process.

Finally, access to reliable and valid data must be improved. Sex and gender-disaggregated data in research and analysis, as well as consultations with communities and organizations on the ground, are critical to assessing needs to design effective solutions.

Plenary Sessions – Day 2



SDG 17 Session – Financing our Future

The SDG 17 Session on Financing our Future identified many challenges faced by youth. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a large number of job losses with a disproportionate impact on vulnerable segments of the population, including youth. Measures like lockdowns and quarantines have greatly affected the effective labor force. Moreover, a lack of sufficient funding for Youth impedes progress on the SDGs. Financing youth-led solutions has yet to become part and parcel of the global Financing for Sustainable Development Agenda. This problem is connected with financial insecurity which exacerbates youth's vulnerability to crises. Only a small percentage of young change-makers in developing countries can cover all of their necessary expenses, including health. Inequality is another challenge identified during the session, which puts a heavy systemic constraint on the societal and economic potential of youth. Inequality, especially in terms of access to education, skills training, and digital connectivity perpetuates poverty and limits the potential of youth. The international community needs new approaches to solve intergenerational challenges and innovation of policies and enterprises must include youth.

During the session, various recommendations were presented to achieve SDG 17. Firstly, empowering youth is critical in mobilizing means of implementation and reinvigorating the global partnership for sustainable development. Engaging youth in research, policy design, and implementation will sharpen the focus of SDG 17 on the priorities of youth and will also mobilize the political momentum needed to put the international community back on track toward timely implementation of the SDGs. Secondly, the international community must strengthen the means of implementation in those areas that are particularly impactful for youth, such as incentivizing socially responsible and sustainable investment in youth, supporting young entrepreneurs through skills training and access to finance, and promoting equity of access to digital tools and technology. Thirdly, to mobilize financing for the SDGs there is a need to explore innovative options to support young entrepreneurs and scale up investment in socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable businesses. Youth have a role to play as both investors and investees. Official Development Assistance (ODA) and the quality and impact of development cooperation going toward youth-led projects must be monitored. Lastly, the design of development should be re-examined to ensure that old structures and approaches of the past that ingrained inequalities and uneven power dynamics shift toward an inclusive and effective development that gives voice to young people.



Vladislav Kaim

Economist and a member of Secretary-General's Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change

(Moldova)

"Come to our tables and recognize that, in fact, we are co-equal partners not only from the generational perspective, but also from that of the expertise in our own right."

Youth2030: Achieving the SDGs with and for Youth

During the “Youth2030: Achieving the SDGs With and For Youth” plenary session and interactive dialogue marked the launch of the Youth2030: Progress Report 2022. The report, the second of its kind, captures key milestones based on the reporting by 40 UN entities and 130 UN Country Teams (UNCTs) on their work on youth in 2021 and highlights how are implementing global commitments on youth, in the context of the SDGs. The session was co-moderated by the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake, and two youth representatives.

The session included messages from 10 Youth2030 High-Level Steering Committee members (9 UN Entities and 1 youth network), 6 Ministerial-level government representatives, as well as 7 UN Resident Coordinators. The opening statement was presented by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Antonio Guterres, who highlighted that almost four years since the launch, Youth2030 continues to accelerate joint work for and with youth. This significant progress speaks to the UN’s ongoing commitment to placing young people at the center of decision-making processes and action at all levels.

Several of the recommendations outlined in the Youth2030: Progress Report 2022 were also highlighted by the session participants, including the urgent need to strengthen policies, processes, and platforms to ensure that youth are meaningfully engaged in decision-making and implementation. Furthermore, the Secretary-General, in his opening statement, highlighted recommendations on youth outlined in his report “Our Common Agenda”, including the establishment of a dedicated UN Youth Office in the UN Secretariat, which will be key to continuing high-level advocacy, coordination, and accountability for youth across the UN system and beyond. From the youth representatives there was a clear call to action for young people to continue working to fight for human rights and justice, and to hold the UN and Governments accountable for their commitments to youth, including engaging with youth – in all their diversity – as equal partners. Session participants also emphasized the important contributions of Member States through their continued support to Youth2030 and ensuring that youth are meaningfully engaged in Governments’ policies and practices. From the session, there was a consensus that robust Youth2030 implementation is critical for accelerating sustainable development and for enabling us to reach the SDGs by 2030.

Strengthening Solidarity with the World's Young People (Q&A)

In the “Q&A: Strengthening Solidarity with The World's Young People” session, United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, Jayathma Wickramanayake, moderated a critical conversation surrounding pathways forward in the meaningful engagement of youth in the United Nations and beyond. The session featured questions from young people from all over the world gathered through a social media campaign led by the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth. Speakers included a representative of the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism and two youth representatives.

The event provided a platform for the world's young people to engage with an intergenerational panel of leaders engaging in different capacities with the United Nations, by asking their questions on the role of youth in COVID-19 recovery, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Our Common Agenda report, and more. The questions were reflective of young people's most pressing concerns and were representative of various communities, countries, and regions. Questions ranged from the issue of trust in decision-making processes and institutions, the issue of sidelining youth rather than including them in mainstream decision-making, opportunities for youth engagement in contexts where it is non-existent or negligible, and more.

Speakers argued that agendas, strategies, and goals should include a pluralism of voices, paying particular focus to the voices which are most marginalized – even though these are not always visible or obvious. The integration of diverse youth voices is critical to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. “Our Common Agenda,” serves as an example of the integration of youth voices (including consultations with young thinkers and activists) within the United Nations. It stresses the importance of solidarity with young people and future generations, acknowledging that development can only be sustainable when everyone is included. Panelists agreed that youth participation should move beyond the United Nations to include other international actors, national governments, civil society, and key institutions. Considering the various threats that young activists can face in their local and national contexts, it is critical that those in leadership positions ensure that youth spaces are safe for youth activists and leaders. This rings particularly true in the COVID-19 era, where young people have endured various hardships (educational, mental, physical, and economic) and are still recovering from a pandemic that continues to affect the health and livelihood of youth around the world.

Despite challenges affecting the meaningful participation of youth in national and international contexts, young people are demanding a seat at the table and, when that is not possible, they are carving their own space. In their closing remarks, panelists offered advice to youth, stressing the importance of working together, advocating for critical causes, starting as soon as possible, and ensuring that no one is left behind.

Closing Session

The youth keynote speaker in the closing ceremony, Ms. Sharifah Shakirah, Founder and Director of the Rohingya Women Development Network, called for high political will and ambitious action in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda that serves to ensure “peace, prosperity, and opportunity for all on a healthy planet”. She raised attention for the many young people who are affected by violence and conflict and focused especially on displaced youth, who are often overseen. Ms. Shakirah highlighted examples from Colombia, South Sudan, and Burma on how youth engagement and leadership can have a significant impact on peace negotiations, youth visibility, and the building of democratic institutions. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and physical distancing, young people proved to be resilient and took action at the forefront. She urged that “the youth of a country determine the future of a nation” and with youth, engagement come perspectives of and insights into issues not accessible to adults. Including young people in decision-making and development is not only a “nice to have (...) but it is actually the only path to long-term change”.

The Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Liu Zhenmin, complemented youth for taking action, pushing for solidarity and inclusion, and providing concrete recommendations to achieve the 2030 Agenda. In order to build back better, the United Nations family encourages “Member States in their pandemic recovery efforts to include partnerships with youth”. He stressed that “working alongside young people is crucial and should become the norm” by also highlighting positive examples such as the UN Youth Delegates Programme which is managed by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. He concluded by encouraging “a broader and more diverse representation of youth in decision-making” in order to realize the SDGs by 2030.

UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake, expressed gratitude to all the organizers, the ECOSOC Bureau, and the over 13.500 participants, “who were leading our conversations in the online space every step of the way”. The Forum highlighted once more the impact of crises such as the climate emergency, economic crises, conflicts, and the COVID-19 pandemic. During the Forum, young people demanded to change the oppressive systems and structures that weigh them down and they provided innovative ideas, visions, and solutions that incoming generations want to see to get the world back on track for the global goals. She encouraged young people to think about how to claim their own space and claim their leadership when those who are supposed to represent youth do not do their job well. Moreover, Ms. Wickramanayake emphasized the establishment of a UN Youth Office, which “will provide an anchor for high-level advocacy, coordination, and accountability in the UN system”. She stressed that people all over the world will continue to suffer due to the lack of action if the status quo continues. To change the course of the world, young people will need to remember “that if you have the audacity to dream of a world that is equal, fair, green, and just, you have the power to create that world, yourself, as well”.

The President of ECOSOC, H.E. Collen V. Kelapile, concluded the Forum by emphasizing the dedication and commitment of young people that called attention to the urgent actions needed to achieve the SDGs. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how intimately connected and interdependent the world is”. According to him, the pandemic has “also revealed the leadership, resilience, resourcefulness, and dedication of the young people around the world” and that the crisis can be turned into an opportunity to build a more resilient and sustainable future. Young people “have rightly demanded to be in the driver’s seat in the recovery efforts and have a seat at the table when decisions are taken that will impact your own future”.

The Forum provided a space for candid discussions among young people and policymakers to identify gaps and next steps to implement the 2030 Agenda. Youth have urged to find concrete and innovative solutions to ensure that no youth is left behind, in particular the most vulnerable youth. The regional sessions included young people's experiences and robust actions at a local level that can be scaled up and duplicated at the global level.

The President of ECOSOC underlined that in the two days of the Forum, young people have challenged the world to reexamine its assumptions, reimagine the future and reminded that young people are not a marginal actor but an equal partner.



Sharifah Shakirah

Founder and Director of the Rohingya
Women Development Network

(United States of America and Malaysia)

"Today, we live in 2 different worlds, in a world where I was born, and another world where people are privileged to be protected under the law of their country."



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Summary**

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