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OPENING REMARKS

H.E. Marie Chatardová, President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

2018 ECOSOC Youth Forum

“The role of youth in building sustainable and resilient urban and rural communities”

**30 January 2018
Trusteeship Council Chamber
United Nations Headquarters, New York**

Mr. President of the General Assembly,
Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ms. Deputy Secretary-General,
Ms. Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth,
Youth Representatives,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the 2018 Economic and Social Council Youth Forum. Thank you all for coming.

We are gathered here today to discuss how to build sustainable and resilient urban and rural communities. This is an ambitious task – but it is exactly this ambition that will carry us into a bright and better future.

The challenges we face are daunting: the threat of climate change is ever increasing, and scientific evidence suggests that this year the highest atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide was emitted than in the past 800,000 years.

Last year's hurricane season was one of the worst we have ever seen, and brought



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devastation and destruction to the lives and property of many peoples in different countries. The intensity and frequency of floods, fires, extreme storms and drought has increased to the detriment of all, and especially the most vulnerable.

Access to so many of the world resources is still not equal. Some 3 in 10 people worldwide, lack access to safe, readily available water at home, and 6 in 10 lack safely managed sanitation.

There are still 1 billion people who do not have access to modern energy.

Our consumption, our emissions, and our exploitation of limited natural resources are unsustainable.

I mention these facts to help us focus on what needs to be done and to reinforce our ambition to achieve the SDGs on time.

This is the ambition we set for ourselves in 2015 believing that a better world is achievable if we work together.

Dear friends,

This year, we are focused on the role of young people in building resilient and sustainable urban and rural communities.

You imbue urban and rural communities with energy, creativity, and innovation.

Your drive for innovation and consumption choices are crucial to our goals of increasing the eco-efficiency, minimizing waste and pollution, and of promoting access to and the sustainable use of all resources.

We need your ideas and commitment to ensure universal and equitable access to clean drinking water and sanitation.

You are a key partner in efforts to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, and resilient, and to build a global coalition to reverse land degradation and protect biodiversity.





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You also have the highest stake in the future and how we prepare for it. The decisions we make and the policies we design will impact you the most and for a long time to come. So, more than ever, you need to engage in shaping policies and decisions that affect you.

We are here to listen to your voices. Our landmark frameworks - including the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction - already recognize you as the key partners in efforts to build a better future.

We are giving you this platform at the United Nations to build a strong network and plant innovative ideas that will motivate people around the world and accelerate action for SDGs.

In these two days, you have the opportunity to be heard. Tell us the needs and hopes of young people. Share your innovative ideas and your plans to turn them into action.

My friends,

I urge all delegations and our young guests to take advantage of the seating arrangement and interact with each other to delve deeper into these issues and find solutions for the difficult challenges we face. Beyond plenary sessions, you do have opportunities to speak in the plenary and breakout sessions. While there is never sufficient time, use these opportunities to speak up.

We need you. We need your passion, we need your energy and we need your vision. Together, I am certain we can build a better and prosperous future in your home communities and around the world.

Thank you for being here. I wish you fruitful discussions and a successful 2018 ECOSOC Youth Forum.