



ECOSOC

United Nations Economic and Social Council

TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE LIVES

Remarks by

**H.E. Mr. Collen Vixen Kelapile
President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**

During

World Youth Forum 2022 – Egypt

“The future of employment and entrepreneurship during the pandemic and beyond”

Wednesday 12 January 2022 - 12:30 – 14:00 (local time)

Excellencies,

Distinguished participants,

Friends and youth from around the world,

1. Last July, the **United Nations High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on sustainable development** alerted that the COVID-19 pandemic has had adverse impacts on virtually all of the SDGs, undermining years of development efforts.
2. The HLPF further observed that the pandemic severely impacted the livelihoods of half of the global workforce, and exacerbated unemployment.
3. Recognizing the vulnerability of young people, the HLPF Ministerial segment committed to prioritize decent employment for young people, along with their education and skills development.

4. But even before the start of COVID-19, young people were -- according to the **International Labour Organization (ILO)** -- three times more likely to be unemployed compared to adults. Many worked in the informal sector, without steady and decent income.
5. As we begin the third year of the pandemic, young people are at an even higher risk of being left behind in education, economic opportunities, health or wellbeing, during a crucial period of their development.
6. According to the ILO, the share of young people not in employment, education or training has risen in many countries. It is difficult to predict if it will return to pre-pandemic levels.
7. In order to avoid long-term scarring effects, youth employment should be a central part of strategies to recover from COVID-19.
8. But we should move beyond our emergency mode of operation. Temporary measures to support employment are not enough. The recovery needs to be more transformative to promote the creation of decent, fulfilling jobs for youth. It should support the shift towards a circular economy, which has the potential to create green jobs for youth, strengthen economies and drive sustainable development.
9. We must also build on the positive changes we have seen with the pandemic. New forms of work and new ways of working have emerged, with the accelerated progress in the use of digital technologies. They offer new empowering opportunities to young people.
10. In this vein, we need to close the digital divide and ensure equal access to digital technologies to young people everywhere -- a subject that is of greatest importance to me and shall form part of the **United Nations Youth Forum** event, which I will host in the first quarter of 2022 alongside the **Secretary General's Envoy on Youth**.

11. We have also seen how young entrepreneurs could bring break-through response solutions to the pandemic and its impacts. Therefore, building back better from the pandemic should include promoting youth entrepreneurship as a catalyst for employment creation.
12. Interventions such as elimination of regulatory barriers, providing access to start-up funding and provision of business development know-how, will go a long way in supporting youth entrepreneurship.
13. With the right policies, we can transform COVID-19 into an opportunity. We can realize the deep changes we need, to empower young people to live a life of dignity and realize the **Sustainable Development Goals**. Long term actions for strengthening healthcare, social protection, education and governance systems should be at the core of the recovery from the pandemic. This will facilitate achievement of most of the SDGs.
14. But young people should have the same opportunities, regardless of where they were born or their gender. The uneven effect of the pandemic means some countries are seeing the prospects of their youth hurt more than their counterparts elsewhere.
15. Many developing countries are still facing a raging pandemic, with weak health and social protection systems and too little financial resources. They urgently need equal access to the vaccines. International solidarity is, therefore, paramount for their recovery and to embark on a sustainable path towards the SDGs and thus provide better livelihoods for the youth in the most vulnerable countries such as the LDCs.
16. My role, as ECOSOC President, is to open spaces for inclusive dialogue with the youth on such challenges and required policy responses. One of those spaces is the **ECOSOC Youth Forum** to be held on 19 and 20 April of this year.
17. I, therefore, conclude by encouraging you to effectively utilize the upcoming ECOSOC Youth Forum to act on the ideas and solutions emanating from this **World Youth Forum**.
I thank you for your kind attention.