

Draft Concept Note

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

30-31 January 2018

Background

Since 2012, the annual Youth Forum of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has become a platform through which young people can contribute to policy discussions at the United Nations through their collective ideas, solutions and innovations. The Forum, which has become one of the most institutionalized avenues for youth participation in the official UN processes, allows representatives of youth-led and youth-focused organizations and networks, youth advocates and others to engage with Member States, and to explore ways and means of promoting youth development and engagement.

The active and meaningful engagement of youth in the design, implementation, follow up and review of sustainable development goals and strategies, at the national, regional and global levels, has been repeatedly echoed as top priority and crucial during the previous ECOSOC Youth Forums. This is particularly relevant as youth development is a cross-cutting issue of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The 2018 Youth Forum

The seventh ECOSOC Youth Forum, to be held at the UN Headquarters from 30 to 31 January 2018, will be an opportunity for young people to share their perspectives and engage on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its review during the ECOSOC High-level Segment, including the High-level Political Forum (HLPF), which will be held in July 2018 on the themes “From global to local: supporting sustainable and resilient societies in urban and rural communities” and “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies”, respectively.

The 2018 HLPF will focus on reviewing progress on the following SDGs:

- Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all (Goal 6);
- Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all (Goal 7);

- Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (Goal 11);
- Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns (Goal 12);
- Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation and biodiversity loss (Goal 15); and
- Strengthen the means of implementation and Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development (Goal 17).

Young people are active partners for the realization of the above-mentioned SDGs. Their ideas and commitment contribute to ensuring universal and equitable access to clean drinking water and sanitation (SDG 6). Their innovative capacities and consumption choices are crucial to the success of the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All (2014-2024) (SDG 7). They are leading the way for the promotion of choices that increase the eco-efficiency of consumption and minimize waste and pollution (SDG 12). They are recognized as important partners in the United Nations' New Urban Agenda that aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, and resilient (SDG 11). Similarly, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Compact on Young People in Humanitarian Action recognize young people as key partners in advancing resilience to ensure disaster preparedness, reduce risks when disaster strikes and as key contributors in all phases of humanitarian response. Also, building the capacities of and increasing resources to the youth entities created in support of the implementation of the UN Conventions on Combating Desertification (UNCCD) and on Biological Diversity (UNCBD) is crucial to mobilise individuals and youth organizations in order to build a global coalition to reverse land degradation and protect biodiversity (SDG 15). Young people continuously identify emerging issues, offer solutions, and support evidence-based action to accelerate progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Forum participants will be invited to frame their discussions on the SDG goals under review at the HLPF in 2018 around: (i) the need for ensuring young people's individual resilience as members of society; (ii) building resilience in local communities; and (iii) how youth can contribute and benefit from the implementation of the six goals. This is particularly relevant as young people everywhere, especially those who live in poverty, particularly girls and young women, have historically been discriminated against, and continue to be left out, or poorly served, by development efforts.

Objectives

The 2018 ECOSOC Youth Forum will:

1. Discuss the policy frameworks and promote innovative, institutionalised approaches and initiatives for advancing the youth development agenda at national, regional and global levels with a view to promoting solutions to the global challenge of strengthening resilience among youth.
2. Share knowledge on achieving youth development by promoting the implementation, monitoring, follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda, and the participation of young people in policy-making and implementation in this regard.

3. Identify pathways and means to support youth to surmount challenges they face and meaningfully contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
4. Provide an avenue for member states to report on their national progress on the ‘SDG Youth Dashboard’.
5. Provide an avenue for identifying and addressing emerging issues.
6. Showcase initiatives and platforms to advance youth related Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda, including the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth;

Format and participation

The Forum will feature opening and closing plenary sessions with representatives from youth organizations, high-level and other keynote speakers. A Ministerial Roundtable will be held which could feature national reviews of progress on youth development and youth engagement in the context of the 2030 Agenda. The programme will also include thematic and regional breakout sessions. During the interactive sessions, the moderators will have a primary role to actively engage the audience, using social media, with pertinent questions related to the various themes to be addressed.

Best practices and lessons learned could be shared that may benefit Member States and other stakeholders. Representatives of youth-led and youth-focused organizations and networks, civil society and other social and economic partners could also provide views on youth development and engagement trends. Young people will also be encouraged to make individual and group commitments for action to build resilient and inclusive societies and to achieve the SDGs.

Virtual participation will be possible as youth representatives will be invited to participate through video-link from selected countries. The meeting will be available through webcast and participants will be able to pose questions via social media through Facebook and Twitter (#Youth2030). Plenary sessions will feature SDG Youth Advocates in interactive and dynamic discussions. The objective is to leverage their influence and global reach to inspire concrete actions to promote implementation and provide feedback on progress.

A SDG media zone and a youth initiatives corner bringing together youth representatives and young entrepreneurs could also be organized. It will be a space where participants at the Forum will engage in conversations about innovative and successful initiatives and interventions aimed at strengthening the involvement of young people in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. It will also provide an opportunity for UN officials and government representatives to interact more directly with a young and diverse audience. The format will be informal conversations, which will be live-streamed on UNTV and on diverse social media platforms.

Participants of the Youth Forum will include high-level Government representatives, including Ministers of Youth and other Ministries responsible for the coordination of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at national level, high-level representatives of national youth institutions, representatives of National Youth Councils or representatives of National

Youth Institutes, representatives from the Permanent Missions of Member States to the UN in New York, official country youth delegates, and focal points and young people selected through the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth (UN-MGCY), the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus, representatives from youth-led and youth-focused organizations (particularly the regional platforms and international youth organisations that are members of the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organisations (ICMYO), Young Leaders for the SDGs, youth representatives from CSOs, and representatives of regional and other multilateral organizations. Other participants will include the UN System, Major Groups and other Stakeholders, and NGOs with consultative status with ECOSOC. The Forum will also reflect the diversity of formal and informal youth organizations, include a balanced representation of youth from all regions and groups, including indigenous groups and people with disabilities.

Outcome

The outcome of the Forum will be an informal summary of the proceedings by the President of ECOSOC and a summary document capturing key outcomes of the discussions and findings of the Forum, which will be made available to the High-level Political Forum convened under the auspices of ECOSOC and the High-level Segment of the Council in July 2018. A Presidential Statement will also be issued at the closing of the Forum. A youth representative from the Forum will also provide a summary of proceedings and outcomes to the Commission for Social Development.

Preparation of the Youth Forum

The 2018 ECOSOC Youth Forum will be chaired by the President of ECOSOC and is co-organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Office of the Secretary General's Envoy on Youth, in collaboration with the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development, in particular its Working Group on Youth and SDGs, and co-convened by the UN-MGCY, ICMYO and the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus.