

Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY)

Sectoral Position Paper to the High-level Political Forum on sustainable development (HLPF) 2021:

Outcome Document of the the **ECOSOC Youth Forum 2021**



Major Group for
Children and Youth
the space for children and youth in the United Nations

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Voices of Youth 2021: Outcome Document of the ECOSOC Youth Forum 2021 is written exclusively by young people as an informal summary of the proceedings of the plenary, thematic, and regional sessions of the 2021 ECOSOC Youth Forum

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June 2021

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Voices of Youth 2021:

Outcome Document of the
ECOSOC Youth Forum 2021



ECOSOC
YOUTH FORUM
10TH ANNIVERSARY

Acknowledgments

Together, we've made history!

On April 7 and 8, 2021 nearly 20,000 young people joined from around the world over the course of the two days for the 10th anniversary of the ECOSOC Youth Forum. This has been the Forum's largest gathering. This milestone marks the largest youth-focused event in 75 years of United Nations history. We are so grateful to everyone who attended and found inspiration for building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development. We couldn't have done it without each and every one of you!

This report highlights the voices of young people who helped to shape the 2021 ECOSOC Youth Forum. The discussions at the ECOSOC Youth Forum will directly shape the children and youth input into the United Nations High Level Political Forum being held in July, 2021. Thus, preserving the integrity of their words and ensuring that this report is an accurate account of the dialogue was top priority.

This report is an informal summary of the proceedings of the plenary, thematic, and regional sessions of the 2021 ECOSOC Youth Forum. It is a direct call to action from young people on current challenges they are facing and their expectations vis-à-vis the international community. All text has been verified by relevant stakeholders.

I would like to extend a special thank you to the ECOSOC Youth Forum planning committee for their tireless effort and endless hours putting together this year's Forum. While we all knew that adapting to a virtual format would pose it's challenges, the clerical rollercoaster that we have been on exceeded expectations.

This report has been authored by Heather Nichols on behalf of the Major Group for Children and Youth. This report has been designed by Amily Li who has given valuable input and support.

This report could not have been written without the tremendous support from Jack Walsh.

This project has been supervised by Steve S.J. Lee, Organizing Partner Major Group for Children and Youth.

On behalf of the hundreds of hard working individuals who have made this event possible, we are thrilled to present the 2021 Voices of Youth at the ECOSOC Youth Forum to the HLPF report.

Heather Nichols

Editor, *Voices of Youth Report*
Program Coordinator, *Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY)*

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About the Report

On April 7 to 8 2021, the tenth anniversary of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum was held. The Forum provided a global platform for a candid dialogue among Member States and young leaders from around the world on solutions to challenges affecting youth wellbeing. It also served as a unique space for young people to share their vision and actions as well as to provide youth perspectives on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The discussions at the ECOSOC Youth Forum 2021 will directly shape the youth input into the United Nations High-level Political Forum on sustainable development being held in July 2021.

The 2021 ECOSOC Youth Forum took place at a critical historical juncture where the world is struggling to respond to the multidimensional challenges of COVID-19. The pandemic has upended the lives of young people from every region, obliging them to adapt to new challenges to health, decent work and employment, food and nutrition security as well as social isolation and exclusion, among others. Young people have been forced to adjust to a “new normal” where social distances prevail, notably with respect to diverse forms of distance learning to ensure the continuation of education and skills acquisition.

Despite being disproportionately impacted, young people around the world are coming together to respond to this crisis demonstrating resilience, resourcefulness and leadership while tackling injustice and demanding accountability, from calling for urgent climate action and building peace, to tackling inequalities and gender biases. Their active involvement in implementing the SDGs Decade of Action is critical to achieving a peaceful, just and sustainable future.

As they embark on this journey of recovery – and building a “better” world - from an unprecedented pandemic, young people were invited to frame their discussions and share their views, experiences and ideas on the recovery from COVID-19 including a special focus on the SDGs under review at the HLPF in 2021.

This report is an informal summary of the proceedings of the plenary, thematic, and regional sessions of the 2021 ECOSOC Youth Forum. It is a direct call to action from young people on current challenges they are facing and their expectations vis-à-vis the international community.

This report is structured as follows: It will start with main policy recommendations for UN leadership and government representatives as called for during proceedings of the ECOSOC Youth Forum 2021. Then, the report will proceed with a broad overview summarizing the dialogue of

the two-day Forum. The summary of proceedings in the report are organized by session type.

A Brief History of the ECOSOC Youth Forum

The Youth Forum was first organized in 2012, initially as a half-day conference on “Creating a Sustainable Future: Empowering Youth with Better Job Opportunities”. The first Forum enhanced awareness on high youth unemployment rates, a theme that built on the momentum of the International Year of Youth (2010-2011).

The success of the Youth Forum and the subsequent demand by young people to actively engage led to a full day meeting in 2013 and subsequent Forums have been transformed into two-day meetings. From 2014 onwards, the themes of the Youth Forum have been developed taking into consideration the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals contained in the 2030 Agenda, for Sustainable Development.

The 2021 Forum adapted a virtual format in light of COVID-19. This was the first time in ten years of ECOSOC Youth Forum history that young people were not able to connect in person. While the virtual platform posed

numerous challenges, it is clear that this year’s Forum was the most accessible, wide-reaching and inclusive ECOSOC Youth Forum held to date.

Although limited and unconventional, youth who could not have otherwise afforded the opportunity to attend the Forum were given the opportunity to engage. Bearing in mind that children and youth are demanding a place on the world stage now more than ever, it is our responsibility to ensure that we are providing safe spaces for all young people of all places to contribute to high-level dialogue on issues of importance to them.

Thus, as we move with steady endeavour to achieve the 2030 Agenda, we must learn from the 2021 ECOSOC Youth Forum to guarantee that youth voices will continue to be amplified en masse, and that future events will settle for nothing less than as inclusive as they can possibly be. If we do not strive to provide room for all young people to engage in the international system we are doing a disservice to the future of our world.

Since its inception, the ECOSOC Youth Forum has been a key platform where young people can contribute to policy discussions at the United Nations through their collective ideas, solutions and innovations. The success of this 10th annual ECOSOC Youth Forum has given room to the conveners to reimagine the future of the event.

Key Figures from the Forum



Over **19,000 participants** joined the event virtually on **7 and 8 April**, with over 10,000 young participants from **193 countries** having registered in advance to attend the Youth Forum.



60 Member States participated in the **interactive Ministerial Roundtable** at the level of Vice-President, Minister or equivalent. Their interventions were shared alongside **10 young activists** and **5 strategic partners**.



ECOSOC
YOUTH FORUM
10TH ANNIVERSARY



The first-ever [Youth2030 Progress report](#) and the [Youth2030 online portal](#) were **launched** during the first day of the Youth Forum.



Over **50 side-events** on a variety of issues relevant to youth were organized by a variety of partners ahead of the plenary sessions of the Youth Forum, on **6 April**. The **full list is available** [here](#).

Policy Recommendations

Youth participants of the ECOSOC Youth Forum 2021 wish to underline the great importance of unity and meaningful participation in building back better from COVID-19. To better engage youth in the monitoring, review and acceleration of the implementation of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda, **we call upon the UN system and the Member States to:**

01. Make youth equal partners in the implementation of the SDGs.

02. Directly involve young people in the design and implementation of policy. This includes, for example, involvement in elections, the design and implementation of a national Youth Strategy, and additional efforts for youth to inform the policy-making process.

03. Organize legitimate spaces for youth voices to be heard by creating officially recognized spaces where youth can become a part of the decision-making process. These spaces will remove bureaucratic and financial obstacles so that effective participation, not only by those who are the typically active participants, but by the marginalized and hitherto excluded groups for whom participation is difficult.

04. Refrain from treating youth as a homogenous group. Different youth groups should be recognized for the varying ideas that they can bring forth.

05. Eliminate tokenism. UN leadership and government representatives should not only hear young people,

but understand, respect, involve and empower them. This can be achieved through viewing policy responses and formulation with a 'youth' lens. Of a similar token, marginalized youth must be brought to the decision making-table, especially disabled youth.

06. Inquire and understand why certain barriers to achieving the 2030 Agenda exist through desegregated data collection. Further, commit to collectively overcoming these barriers in order for youth to move forward with the implementation of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda in an effective way.

07. Invest in pro-youth solutions across key sectors influencing youth development such as education and employment. This can be achieved by fostering meaningful dialogue and partnerships between young people and other stakeholders. Additionally, increasing young people's role in SDG achievement is possible via cascaded initiatives at the community level. Increased initiatives, such as UN Youth Champions for Disarmament, that enable youth to raise their voices and have a presence in global issues that are vital to achieving the SDGs.



SDG 1 - No Poverty & SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth

We, the youth participants of the ECOSOC Youth Forum 2021, call upon the UN system and the Member States to:

01. Draft a 'New Deal' to rejuvenate and redesign the parameters of youth and employment, based on sound economic solutions, creative entrepreneurship, and inclusive prosperity. Young people ask that they be the custodians of this agenda.

02. Prioritize long-term human wellbeing by investing in economic stability. As major fiscal stimulus and rescue packages are being introduced to manage the recession brought on by COVID-19, governments must avoid repeating past mistakes made in the 2009 Global Financial Crisis.

03. Continue to support the promotion and creation of innovative solutions, especially for young entrepreneurs. Governments, with the support of the private sector, should support and encourage youth-led businesses and initiatives with financial and other resources, such as incubators and startup competitions in the Arab States Region and elsewhere.

04. Invest in education for promoting skills for the next digital transformation and for access to the labor market. Moreover, there should be a greater roll-out of local initiatives through the financial support of organizations and institutional support at the government level to increase the scope and reach of existing and new programs.

05. Provide Africa with infrastructure that will reduce the cost of doing business for young people, for example, through the creation of a market for the products that young people are creating.

06. Reduce the competition that exists between limited resources (i.e. opportunities for a few, though thousands of people competing for them) particularly in lower-income countries.



SDG 2 - Zero Hunger & SDG 3 - Good Health and Well-being

We, the youth participants of the ECOSOC Youth Forum 2021, call upon the UN system and the Member States to:

01. Prioritize youth mental health and access to mental health services.

02. Support countries in the design and implementation of effective mental health support services for young people to address the psychological impact of COVID-19. This entails increased and more affordable mental health services, as well as more resilient systems in general. Public health services should absorb these costs.

03. Co-design youth mental health strategies such that they truly respond to the needs of all youth.

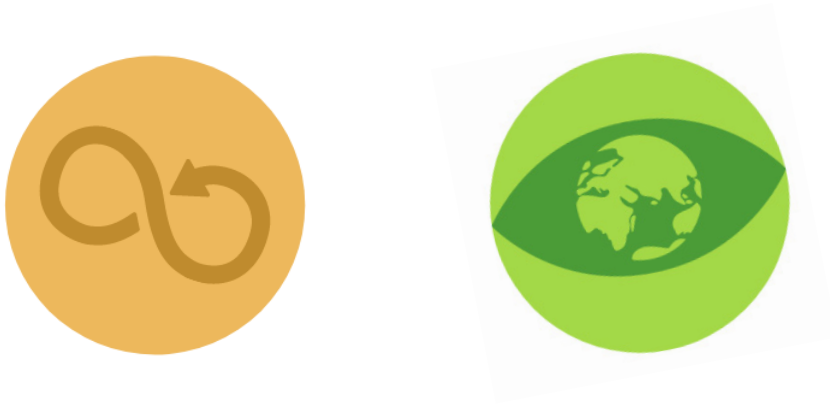
04. Include youth mental health in the context of supporting youth who are mobilizing at local and national levels.

05. Ensure access to quality health services to children, adolescents and youths, ensure access to sexual and reproductive health as essential, and consider youth during the vaccination process.

06. Follow the recommendations made by the WHO through their different constituencies.

07. Educate young people on sexual health and commit to breaking the stigma of sexualizing women's bodies. Youth believe that the international community can do better and do more, to continue fighting until women have full rights and security, and autonomy over their life and body.

08. Eliminate malnutrition in Latin America and the rest of the world.



SDG 12 - Sustainable Production and Consumption & SDG 13 - Climate Action

Youth believe that the **irreversible damage caused by climate change and biodiversity is the most complex and urgent problem** currently facing the world because it encompasses all other issues. We, the youth participants of the ECOSOC Youth Forum 2021, call upon the UN system and the Member States to:

01. Not forget about climate change.

The global recovery from the pandemic serves as the pinnacle opportunity to reorient our system into one that prioritizes environmental protection. The long-term and irreversible damages caused by human behaviour on the environment must be a priority of the international community as we continue to fight COVID-19. This includes building systems that are resilient for the future.

02. Immediately stop all new investments in coal, oil and gas.

03. Ramped up the transition to clean-energy through a focus on climate finance adaptation.

04. Scale up their NDCs. There is a need for long-term approaches to deliver climate policies that are in line with the Paris Agreement. This includes reducing greenhouse gas emissions in line with the Paris Agreement and with national and regional plans of action.

05. Increase taxes and marketing restrictions on processed, nutrient-deficient, and environmentally-harmful foods, in order to level the commercial playing field for companies that produce and/or sell healthier, greener options.



SDG 10 - Reduced Inequalities & SDG 16 - Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

We, the youth participants of the ECOSOC Youth Forum 2021, call upon the UN system and the Member States to:

01. Enhance education specific to its regional and social context. This is crucial to achieving more resilient, inclusive and fair communities.

- a. **In Africa**, the education system should strive to be on par with Western institutions in order to break the systemic cycle of inequitable access to information, and further, unequal opportunities in life.
- b. **In settler societies**, it is critical to implement proper education and information surrounding the truth of colonial history, and further addressing the existing structures of inequality brought forth by colonialism. Indigenous education is vital to this.
- c. **In Indigenous Communities**, implement practices of pre and prior informed consent in any initiative or activity that impacts indigenous lives - this is how indigenous youth understand and aspire to build back better.

02. Integrate e-learning wherever possible. Stakeholders in Asia Pacific are urged to support the development and adoption of technological innovation in education, and expand access to online learning platforms. Parallel to this is the recognition of the inaccessibility of e-learning. The differing situations of youth as they pertain to accessing technology must be considered.

03. Institute a radical shift in the implementation of the global goals to get girls back to school with necessary support systems. This includes: daycares for teenage mothers, psychological help for survivors of abuse, legal systems for justice and simple, precise and understandable proposal templates for Community Driven Organizations to apply for funds to support girls education.

04. Re-evaluate funding matrixes towards girls` education. Likewise, we must break down the barriers that we have put up for young girls by first

recognizing the pertinent role they play in girls education and creating a mechanism to work together with governments to ensure that truly, no girl is left behind.

05. Engage in data collection processes. Governments need to mobilize resources and political will to build data to understand the contexts and challenges for the diverse youths to engage them properly as key actors to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the recovery processes.

06. Recognize the importance of segregated data.

07. Shift towards an intersectional approach to capturing disaggregated data on the experiences of young people. However, they must ensure that the data collection process is inclusive and representative of all.

08. Commit to upholding indigenous rights and protect their common heritage.

09. Improve efforts of consulting and including Indigenous youth, and more sufficiently recognize the effective leadership role they can potentially play in helping to address a number of complex issues we all are facing. This is especially important considering that Indigenous communities are disproportionately affected by both climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic.

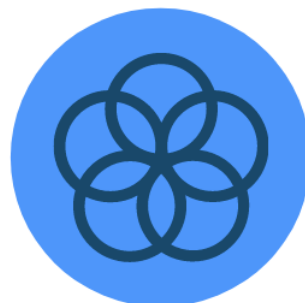
10. Ensure meaningful queer youth participation at all decision-making levels - not to be sidelined and left behind anymore but at the forefront of decision-making. Moreover, LGBTQI+ individuals seek data privacy and acknowledgment of their identity from all governments.

11. Guarantee the inclusion of young people with disabilities in all policy making spaces, with dedicated, accessible platforms within all the intergovernmental systems, the human rights council, all human rights monitoring mechanisms and within all UN agencies.

12. Recognize the evolving capacity of disabled persons, especially those living in the margins of society (youth with developmental, multiple, psychosocial disabilities).

13. Prioritize women's leadership and inclusion should not be ignored. Women and girls must be in those rooms where decisions concerning our lives and our planet are made.

14. Concrete institutional and financial support for local youth actors involved in peace, security, and justice work within their region. This includes the provision of avenues and platforms for youth to share their voices.



SDG 17 - Partnerships for the Goals

We, the youth participants of the ECOSOC Youth Forum 2021, call upon the UN system and the Member States to:

01. Attack and redress the endemic inequalities in our national and international structures – economic, social, racial, gender inequalities; and collectively defeat the rising forces of racism, extremism and fascism.

02. Confer greater agency to farmers, young people, and community leaders in policy discussions, rather than viewing local stakeholders merely as beneficiaries of top-down policy decisions.

03. Commit to building long-term partnerships. It is important to invest in early childhood education around the SDGs. Youth programs should be informed by research examining the issues facing young people.

04. Attentively listen to young people in vulnerable and marginalized situations in order to better understand and respond to their needs. Parallel to this, all relevant stakeholders need to collectively invest in addressing the root causes contributing to youth vulnerabilities.

05. Immediately provide all individuals from all regions with **basic and affordable access to the internet**. This should be a global initiative to ensure that no one is left behind.

06. Allocate the necessary budget to address their youth's regional challenges and ensure its destination reaches the people, having a tangible impact in their lives. Processes need to be transparent and budgets allocated should be publicly traceable by citizens.

07. Equitably distribute the COVID-19 vaccine. No one can be left behind and preferential treatment should not be given to wealthier countries, especially if/when countries and people of countries who cannot be inoculated are supporting the overall vaccination effort.

Recommended Action by Youth for Individual Youth, Youth-led Organizations, the International Community, and other Stakeholders

01. Individual youth are urged to **focus themselves as a generation made up from what others in the past have constructed for them.** To this end, young people should think of future generations and are reminded that though they face a huge burden or responsibility, **achieving the SDGs and the 2030 must be taken into their own hands.** Parallel to this, **children and young people** should no longer only be seen as the future, but first and foremost **as a group that exists here and now, today.**

02. Young people are encouraged to **continue working together to hold both themselves,** as well as overarching **structures of power, accountable** for their actions. Young people are called upon to **amplify the voices of their peers.**

03. Children and youth must not remain silent. They need to have access to programs, processes, resources, and infrastructure that allow them to report attacks and identify situations in which they are victims of violence.

04. The **International Community** is called upon to **hold people, governments and institutions accountable for the injustices** that exist. Stakeholders must start demanding justice for the systemic barriers and inequalities faced internationally, though specifically in the Global South, **as a result of colonialism.** African youth demand that they all contribute to achieving this.

05. There is a need for greater youth support in bringing about much needed change to have **more representation from young people with disabilities in international dialogue.** This is not mutually exclusive to other intersecting vulnerabilities and marginalized groups.

06. The work of young people needs to be taken to scale across all levels of government and public participation. **Collective and intersectional action is imperative.**

Points and Questions

Raised on **Social Media** via Civil Society Members

The following recommendations have been **put forward by young people**, for young people.

The cost of COVID-19 has been huge on young people; they are unemployed and have succumbed to the burden of their problems and expenses. **Young people are calling for help** to get out of the situation that they are in.

In order to **build back better** we need:

- **Investment in new jobs.** This means quality jobs that guarantee fundamental rights at work.
- **Social protection.** It is crucial that young workers and all workers in the informal economy are given the right to social protection.
- **The right to organize** in trade unions and collective bargaining.




Converting to **online school and work comes with the challenges** of protecting youth from screen addictions and other mental health crises. It is suggested that a universal policy is needed to address the **declining mental health of youth** around the world.



How do we ensure that governments involve and/or partner with **youth as central actors in the COVID-19 recovery?**







Youth-advocates who are active on social media must **take initiative on the ground**. Real-life situations demand on-the-ground attention.

Education and health are the key to strengthening the youth movement.


The best way to mobilize actions from young people is by **integrating the SDGs in the educational curriculum** globally.



The challenge of **eliminating overwhelming food waste** while at the same time achieving zero hunger should be a priority. The **use of food technology** has, and hopefully will continue to, combat this.


An intersectional perspective is essential as the risk of being left behind increases when different discriminations overlap.


Pregnant teenage girls need help to get back on track and reach their dreams.



Resorting to one's talent and upgrading our innate skills could **combat unemployment**.



We hope not to falter in the name of experiencing a **good life at present** without compromising the future.






How far have we come in **integrating academia and youth in the policy cycle** in order to advance on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development's Guiding Principle "Stakeholder Engagement"?

We are aware that **road traffic fatalities** are the **leading cause of death** among young people worldwide. What's the plan to ensure a reduction in these Road deaths at this time of recovery from the COVID pandemic?




Youth face a plethora of challenges, ranging from: job stability and other impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, access to information, and political unrest within their country of residence.

A **national youth policy requires regular revisit** as time constantly changes and it has to align with local, regional and global priorities so that it always has to be personal and relevant. It has to be understood by younger and older generations.



How are next generation leaders **mobilizing global action for peace** for all?



Young people **need to have insights** about the SDGs in order to take action!

What is the **proper age for the youth** to join the decision-making in the government and international platform?

What can I do to contribute to meeting the **Global Goals**?



How can I **become a member** of the ECOSOC Youth Forum?



Is there a **synergy between ECOSOC and African Union** that can help drive these messages to the **African youths in remote places**? Because as I travel across various villages, I see a population of youths who are not informed on various economic and social issues and this has been a great limitation.

How can we **loop Africa** into the modern world?



Youth in Asia face an “infodemic” as a result of accessibility, censorship, and false news. This is especially true for youth located in rural and depressed areas who struggle to access and means to connect digitally.

Youth in the Asia and Pacific region are curious if there are programs being implemented to help tackle their situation.



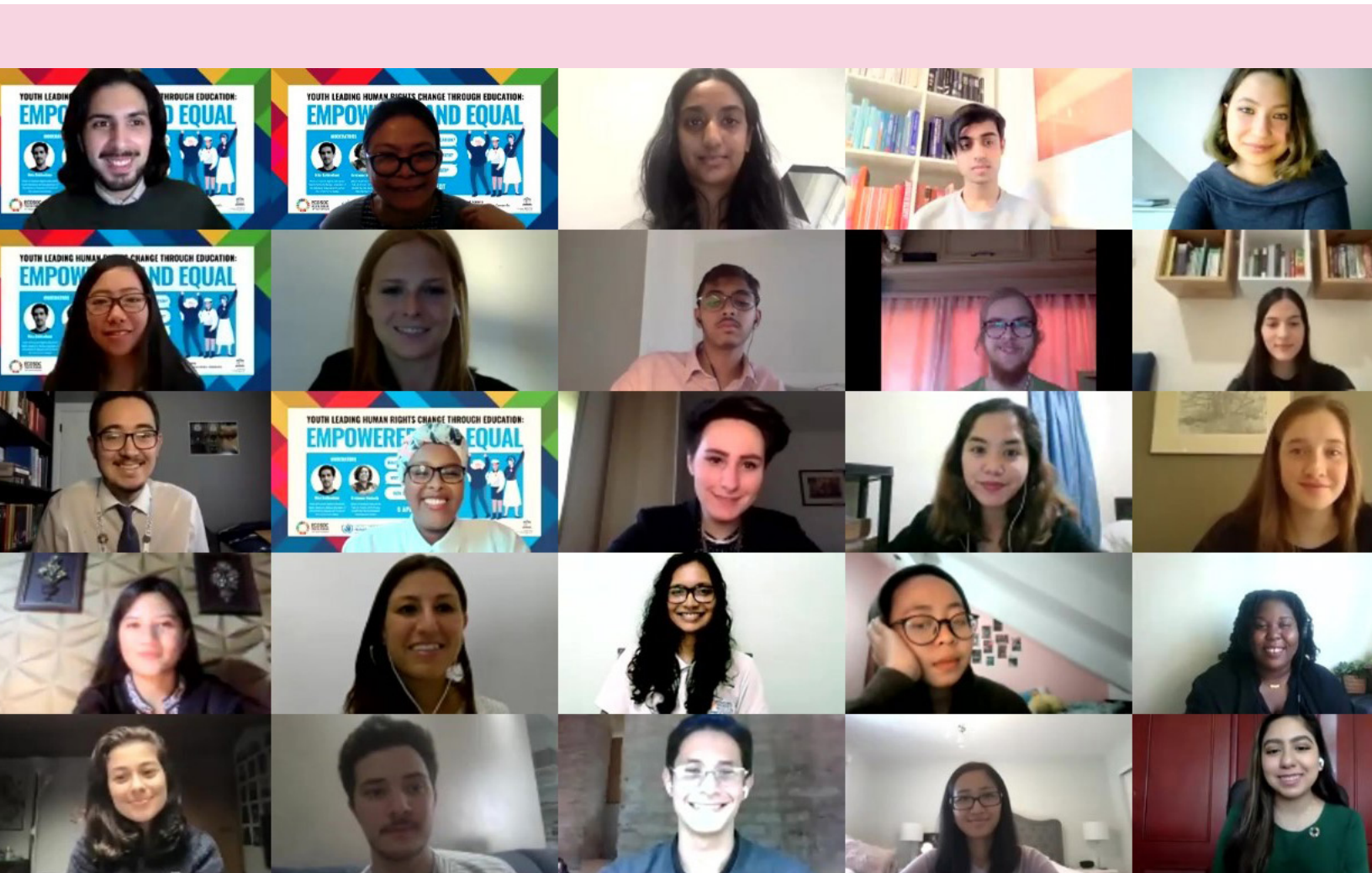
PLENARY SESSSIONS AND MINISTERIAL DIALOGUE



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1.1 10X10: TEN YEARS OF #ECOSOCYF

BUILDING UP FOR A DECADE OF ACTION



Speakers:

- **H.E. Mr. Munir Akram**, President of the Economic and Social Council
- **Mr. António Guterres**, Secretary-General of the United Nations
- **H.E. Mr. Volkan Bozkir**, President of the 75th Session of the General Assembly
- **Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake**, UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth
- **Ms. Anika Jenne Dorothy**, Executive Director of the Green Congress of Kenya

H.E. Mr. Munir AKRAM, President of the Economic and Social Council,

opened the session and thanked the participants. He emphasized the importance of the commemoration, bringing young people back together to reflect on the past decade and work together to build back a better world, and noted that, for the first time in Forum history, young people have joined together virtually.

Mr. AKRAM highlighted the important inflection point that we have reached in history, calling on the global community to respond to the onset of challenges currently faced with wisdom and determination, in a comprehensive and coherent manner.

He presented **four main challenges** of priority:

01. Defeating the COVID-19 crisis

02. Mobilizing national and international efforts especially finance, to recover from the onset recession

03. Doing everything possible to avoid the impending climate-catastrophe

04. Attacking and redressing the endemic inequalities in our national and international structures –

economic, social, racial, gender inequalities; and defeating the rising forces of racism, extremism and fascism.

Mr. António GUTURRES, Secretary-General of the United Nations,

underscored how the current global situation has exacerbated the challenges that young people faced before the pandemic hit.

He called for meaningful opportunities for youth engagement across government and political systems, in democratic processes and in peacebuilding and peace negotiations. He expressed the need for tangible improvements in areas such as education, employment, gender equality, environmental protection and digital connectivity – through a just, inclusive, green and sustainable recovery.

Mr. GUTURRES announced that the role of young people and the rights of future generations will be at the core of his forthcoming report to the Member States on charting our Common Agenda.

H.E. Mr. Volkan BOZKIR, President of the 75th Session of the General Assembly, emphasized the need to hear from youth, especially the most vulnerable voices, and called for the help of young people to amplify the voices of their peers.

Mr. BOZKIR supported Youth Representative Vladislav Kaim, who at the UN General Assembly Special Session on the COVID-19 Response, declared that, 'joblessness among youth is a pandemic that will continue until after the actual pandemic is done.' Mr. BOZKIR underscored that the prioritization of the needs of the next generation of taxpayers, policymakers, and advocates is critical to securing a healthy, safe future that is more resilient to global threats.

Ms. Jayathma WICKRAMANAYAKE, UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, called on the leadership and support of all participants to extend their privilege of participating in the Forum and use it to amplify the voices and concerns of all young people in all their diversity. She further urged youth to show the generations before them that those of us who are Millennials and Generation Z are walking the talk when it comes to inclusivity and equality.

She reminded participants of their duty at the Forum; to hold decision-makers accountable for their actions, which will continue to impact generations for years to come, and to advocate for more young people to be represented where decisions are being made.

Ms. WICKRAMANAYAKE announced that the launch of the first-ever Youth2030 Progress Report later in the day will be a milestone moment on the journey to achieving the SDGs by 2030.



Over the last year alone, we have seen young people worldwide take to the streets and dominate online spaces demanding climate action, racial and gender equality, democracy, and the respect of fundamental freedoms and human rights. And here, I want to take a moment to remember and honour the young people who have lost their lives in the process. Despite their resilience and bravery, young people cannot do it on their own. They need allies who will support them in translating their words into action to reach young people regardless of where they are – in villages, favelas, refugee camps, cities or islands – ensuring that no youth is left behind.

Ms. Jayathma WICKRAMANAYAKE
UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth

Ms. Anika Jenne DOROTHY, Executive Director of the Green Congress of Kenya, addressed distinguished guests and fellow youth with a Nairobi welcome that meant “we must stand for something”. Ms. DOROTHY underscored the power of story: to dispose and to malign, to empower and to humanize, and to break the dignity of a people, but also be used to repair that dignity.

Ms. DOROTHY called on **governments** to:

01. Invest in systems and structures that **enable girls' holistic re-entry into the school system**, including protection from FGM & GBV, provision of school uniforms and sanitary towels and scholarships to fund their education.

02. Invest in systems such as Community Driven Organizations which **fill the gap between school, parents and governments**. These organizations bridge the gap between positive government re-entry policies and actual consistent school attendance by girls.

03. Break down the barriers that we have put up for young girls by first recognizing the pertinent role they play in girls education and creating a mechanism to work together with governments to ensure that truly, no girl is left behind.

She further called on the **global community** to:

01. Urgently **re-evaluate funding matrixes towards girls` education.**

02. Prioritize direct and unrestricted funding towards girl-serving community driven organizations to ensure that all girls get back to school and stay in school.

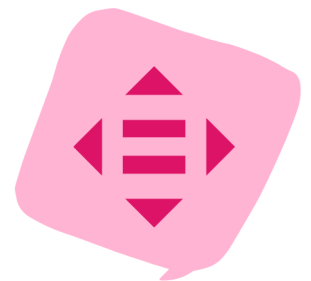
03. Be mindful of localization and where official development assistance actually ends up.

Finally, Ms. DOROTHY pleaded that **Forum participants:**

01. Do not underestimate the value of education.

02. Do not assume that enough is being done.

03. Institute a radical shift in the implementation of the global goals to get girls back to school with the support system they need. Including: Daycares for teenage mothers, psychological help for survivors of abuse, legal systems for justice and simple, precise and understandable proposal templates for Community Driven Organizations to apply for funds to support girls education.



“

When a girl or a woman at a young age is raped or beaten or denied an opportunity because she is a girl or a woman (even if it's the proverbial stick that Chimamanda wanted to hold as a prefect) she picks herself up fights through to get the will to live again and swears to herself, THIS WILL NOT HAPPEN AGAIN, not to another girl or woman, NOT IF I CAN HELP IT.

Ms. Anika Jenne DOROTHY

Executive Director of the Green Congress of Kenya

1.2

#YOUTHLEAD:

YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE
DRIVER'S SEAT TO BUILD
BACK BATTER



#YOUTH2030



Moderator:

- **Mr. Ahmad Alhendawi**, Secretary-General of the World Organization of the Scout Movement

Speakers:

- **H.E. Mr. Carlos A. Alvarado Quesada**, President of Costa Rica
- **Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus**, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO)
- **Ms. Nadine Khaouli**, Co-Founder, Kafe be Kafak and Member of Generation 17
- **Ms. Chandra Tripura**, Founder & Director, Hill Resource Centre

Mr. Ahmad ALHENDAWI, Secretary-General of the World Organization of the Scout Movement, introduced the interactive session by highlighting the commitment the Forum has to bringing people together. Reflecting on the reach and history of the Scout Movement, he underscored the conditionality of impact. He advised that the response to COVID-19 cannot be about giving back only, it is about the condition of building back and it has to be better.

Mr. ALHENDAWI, seconding the opinion of the H.E. Mr. Munir Akram, underscored that “no-one is safe until we are all safe”. He called on stakeholders to learn from the lessons that COVID-19 has taught us, to strengthen the means of our interconnected work.

H.E. Mr. Carlos A. Alvarado QUESADA, President of Costa Rica, challenged the practice of current work which thinks in the moment. He urged individuals to focus themselves as a generation made up from what others in the past have constructed for us. He further urged

young people to think of themselves in terms of future generations, reminding them that though it is a huge responsibility, they need to take it into their own hands.

Mr. QUESADA called on the widespread need for concrete tools, financing and digitalization of education around the world, regardless of regional differences. He highlights that in order to reach universal education for young people across the globe, all governments must put together concrete tools, infrastructure, education, training and skills, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as inequalities in education have become more obvious.



I think it is about dreams. About individual dreams of how to thrive in the present and the future, and collective dreams, about humanity.

H.E. Mr. Carlos A. Alvarado QUESADA
President of Costa Rica

Mr. QUESADA addressed men, urging that they need to be great supporters in the shift of paradigm in how men perceive their relations with women. He suggests that men and women have to be great allies in achieving real equality, a large transformational change, which youth can be great leaders in.

Ms. Nadine KHAOULI, Co-Founder, Kafe be Kafak and Member of Generation 17, responded to Mr. QUESADA, contending that today's development challenges are difficult everywhere, but each context is different. She speaks of her experience living in Lebanon, for instance, to exemplify why work should be tailored to fit the needs of the countries and communities they serve in order to build back better.

The blast came at a difficult time for Lebanon, trying to control the spread of COVID-19, but also the political and economic instability.

Ms. KHAOULI called on local governments, social services, Civil Society organizations, and international entities to help youth in building a better and more sustainable future, and to reinstall hope that they will not lose their home. She concludes that the power of collective, yet united, young voices should not be underestimated.

Dr. TEDROS Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) underscored the importance of meaningful and sustained youth engagement. In response to the question posed by Mr. ALHENDAWI, asking what the call to action for governments is to achieve a more unified post-pandemic recovery

that engages all of us, Dr. TEDROS claimed that a youth-focused recovery is the 'right approach'. Specifically, he urged that governments need the skills of young people to advance in areas such as access to digital health services and addressing threats such as climate change.

Dr. TEDROS invited young people from around the world to join the WHO Youth Council, applications for which will be available soon. Additionally, he urged youth to take part in the Global Youth Summit in late April. Dr. TEDROS is committed to engaging with young people across sectors.

Ms. Chandra TRIPURA, Founder & Director of Hill Resource Centre, offered perspective as an Indigenous young woman in Asia and what it means to "build back better". In reminding that livelihoods of indigenous communities depend on co-existence with the environment and are highly at risk, she underscored that **building back better mainly means three things:**

- 01. Recognition** - that is, indigenous livelihood, traditional knowledge, and customary practices, also recognition of self-governance.
- 02. Protection** - protection of our territory from our governments and the right to manage these lands
- 03. Meaningful Participation** - participation in decision making and peacebuilding, implementation process, and monitoring and evaluation, especially in any gov projects that impact the lives of indigenous people's.

Ms. TRIPURA highly recommended that governments implement practices of pre and prior informed consent in any initiative or activity that impacts indigenous lives - this is how indigenous youth understand and aspire to build back better.

Ms. KHAOULI addressed a question towards H.E. Mr. Carlos A. Alvarado QUESADA, asking “in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, which you are still facing, what are the most critical changes that young people need to make in order to be better prepared to face the future?” Mr. QUESADA reiterated that first, **education** is key. Moreover, he suggested the two other biggest challenges are:

- 01. Mental Health
- 02. Climate Change

Mr. QUESADA suggested that youth mental health is something we need to look at very closely, as mental health is key to healthy human beings and healthy young people. He further stressed that in the post-pandemic recovery we cannot forget to address the climate challenge.

Mr. QUESADA supported the opinions of Mr. ALHENDAWI, Ms. TRIPURA and Ms. KHAOULI that young people need to get involved. Gives young people advice for being in the driver’s seat: do what you love and love what you do and find your true cause.



“

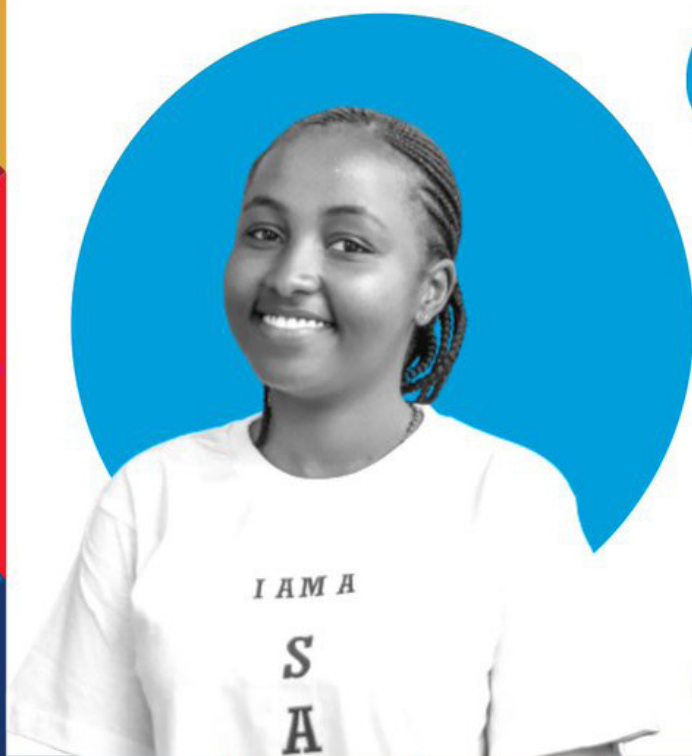
Whenever you have purpose, whenever you feel useful for others, whenever you are a positive tool for change, that is when you will receive the largest respect you can have, which is purpose in sense and direction in your life.

I have hope, because people like you are engaging in what you love.

H.E. Mr. Carlos A. Alvarado QUESADA
President of Costa Rica

1.3 ACHIEVING THE SDGs

WITH AND FOR YOUTH



“

I call upon the private and public sectors to prioritize and increase funding for youth-led efforts. This will strengthen the capacities to respond to emergencies because COVID-19 is not the only emergency that we are facing or going to face.

— Anne Muthoni

Youth Champion of the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action, Kenya



United Nations

#YOUTH2030



ECOSOC
YOUTH FORUM
10TH ANNIVERSARY

Moderator:

- **Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake**, United Nations Secretary General's Envoy on Youth

Interactive Round Table:

- **60 Member States** participated in the interactive Ministerial Roundtable at the level of Vice-President, Minister or equivalent. Their interventions were shared alongside **10 young activists** and **5 strategic partners**. The round table discussed the active role of youth in building back from COVID-19 towards more inclusive societies.

Economic and Social Council (Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake, United Nations Secretary General's Envoy on Youth): Launched the first-ever [Youth2030 Progress report](#) and the [Youth2030 online portal](#). This is a self-reported progress on OSGEY's work for and with youth: 33 UN entities, all 130 Country Teams. The **key findings** of the report were presented:

01. The UN response to the needs of youth during the COVID-19 crisis has been rapid and robust.

02. Across the UN system, **there is growing momentum on the "Youth and the SDGs" agenda** in priority areas of programming, at all levels.

03. The ambitious UN reform process is reflected in youth programming of the "new generation" of UNCTs. Joint planning, implementation and coordination on youth are evident.

04. Effective tracking of results and resources for youth and transparency of reporting on youth in the UN system **needs to be strengthened** at all levels.

05. Two foundational areas of Youth2030 – **internships and youth workforce – require attention.**

06. The UN is delivering well for youth; work with youth varies across UN entities and UNCTs, robust in some and less so in others.

Thailand (Nantaporn Thirapongphaiboon, Thailand's Food Rescue Foundation): Expressed belief that amplifying the voices of youth is the best action to help youth fulfill their roles in society. Further underscored that inclusiveness is the key to accelerating change, thus must not return to the old "normal" after COVID-19 where generations were separated in working together to build a sustainable future.

Palau (H.E. Madame J. Uduch Sengebau Senior, Vice President and Minister of State, Republic of Palau): The engagement of young people has been a part of tradition in Palau since the early days, celebrating Youth Day on March 15th annually.

The Palau government is addressing youth engagement through key areas including: the implementation of a National Youth Policy, provision of a department which has a focus on youth employment, outreach with you to promote their protection under the court system.

Colombia (H.E. Ms María Juliana Ruíz Sandoval, First Lady of Colombia): Underscored that leaders and inspirational figures involved in decision-making processes need to start by securing basic needs. As youth are capable of leading the way forward to a more peaceful, prosperous and sustainable global society, there is a need to invite young people to be critical and participate, to take decisions as a community, to believe in the power of dialogue and solidarity, inspired by diversity, and to improve human networks. The first step for achieving this is establishing fertile grounds for youth to thrive.

Denmark (H.E. Mr. Flemming Moeller Mortensen, Minister for Development Cooperation; Malene Bentsen Laursen, UNYD): Underscored that young people are more than just beneficiaries, they are equal parts and leaders of change. The Minister announced the launch of an International Youth Panel, where 14 young people from Denmark and developing countries will advise him on strategies, projects and programs.

The floor was passed to a Danish UNYD who asked, "what society do we want after the pandemic?" She emphasized that the young people of the world count on the UN to continue to include us, so our presence does not end with this meeting, but is prioritized so our voices will gain true influence.

Portugal (H.E. Mr. João Paulo Rebelo, Secretary of State for Youth and Sports of Portugal; João Pedro Videira, UNYD, President of the National Youth Council): Suggested that multilateralism must be the floor where solutions to global challenges are defined, implemented and achievements made accountable. In Portugal's capacity as Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the Secretary expressed that to make youth engagement work, we need more than listening. We need innovative thinking, and new ways of connecting and learning from each other.

Portugal announced that the week prior, the EU Commissioner Jutta Urpilainen launched the Youth Sounding Board for International Partnerships. This new initiative will provide a space where young people can meaningfully be involved in EU external action and international cooperation. It will be composed of 25 members, aged from 18 to 30 years old, from across the world and all youth were invited to apply.

João underscored that in holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Portugal has Digital Transition as one of the top priorities. They further supported the notion that young people need access to basic rights.



Mongolia (H.E. Ms. Ariunzaya Ayush, Minister for Labour and Social Protection of Mongolia): Ms. AYUSH expressed that the Mongolian government has taken major action, but they are in demand and learning from others. **Areas that progress has been made in youth development** in which she highlighted include:

01. The National Youth Development Councils in all levels have been operating actively in providing

opportunities to express their voice in decision and policy making, program planning, and local budget allocations.

02. Volunteer initiatives have been taken to increase participation of

young people in social life and for the sake of the community well-being, through registering and certifying volunteer work as work experience.

It is also considered an advantage in teamwork, management and leadership skills' assessment at the special civil service examination.

03. During the COVID-19 pandemic, young people have greatly contributed to the context of ensuring public health and disinfection.

Uzbekistan (Mr. Alisher Sadullaev, Director of the Youth Affairs Agency):

Mr. SADULLAEV underscored that Uzbekistan maintains its position as a constant supporter of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. He further emphasized that the development of the International Convention on the Rights of Youth under the support of the UN and the Group of Friends will be instrumental in intensifying the dialogue on youth to guarantee social development of youth.

Uzbekistan announced the newly established Youth Affairs Agency of the Republic of Uzbekistan. As the leading state body for youth policy, it stands ready to develop mutually beneficial

partnership with all countries and engage in practical dialogue with the United Nations and all its institutions.

International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF) (Ms. Louise Mushikiwabo, Secretary General of the Francophone): Underscored three

main priorities: decent work, healthy environment, and quality education.

They **proposed four solutions** to achieving these priorities:

01. Involve youth in the development of public policy.

02. Accelerate the use of digital media by educators and students for distance education during the pandemic.

03. Develop better ways to obtain data and statistical indicators to prepare public policies based on facts and evidence.

04. Stimulate the creation of public investment programs for youth.

Serbia (H.E. Mr. Vanja Udovicic, Ministry of Youth and Sports): Mr. UDOVICIC emphasized that regardless of the challenges we must ensure the conditions for young people to develop potential, learn, improve and acquire skills that better position them in society and in life. Serbia has increased financial support for various projects of importance to young people, despite the pandemic.

Mr. UDOVICIC announced that this has enabled young people to become employed and self-employed, and more than 14,500 young people to participate directly or online in training to increase competencies for the labor market. Furthermore, conditions have been created for quality spending of leisure time for over 100,000 direct participants. Finally, the Minister urged young people to stay safe, stay strong, and be motivated.

Guatemala (Mr. José Alberto Grijalva Gonzalez, Directorate General of the National Youth Council): Mr. GONZALEZ invited all member states to develop real programs for youth development and participation, and implement them as soon as possible. He underscored that despite challenges, Guatemala is engaged in coordinating strategies and positions for youth in achieving the SDGs.

Russia (Mr. Alexander Bugayev, Head of the Federal Agency for Youth Affairs): Mr. BUGAYEV underscored that within Russia particular attention is paid to projects and programs aimed at overcoming negative consequences of the pandemic, comprehensive support for the most vulnerable segments of the population and ensuring a level playing field for comprehensive development of the younger generation.

He announced the establishment of the “We Are Together” international award - an initiative supported by the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, awarded on an annual basis for contributions to humanitarian affairs. Encouraged all youth and youth focused organizations to apply for the 2021 award.

Botswana (H.E. Mr. Tumiso Rkgare, Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sport and Culture Development): Mr. RAKGARE explained that in order to ensure relevance of policies and programmes for development and empowerment of young people, his Ministry is reviewing the Botswana National Youth Policy of 2010 together with its Action Plan through technical support from the UNDP. He further announced that the Botswana National Youth Council has partnered with the National AIDS and Health Promotion Agency to set up a call centre manned by Counsellors to assist youth in precarious circumstances.

Mr. RAKGARE expressed strong conviction and trust that the best practices learned from this Forum will benefit Botswana youth.

Georgia (Mr. Revaz Charkviani, Head of the Youth Agency of Georgia): In 2020, the Youth Agency of Georgia was adopted as a governmental agency and has started the implementation process of the three-year reform plan with ten different reform directions with the main goal to establish an efficient youth development ecosystem. The systemic approach is based on 8 pillars and more than 20 systemic components of those pillars.

Mr. CHARKVIANI further explained that education is one of the key priorities of the government. He underlined Georgia’s strategic vision, which is based on the notion that youth empowerment is a key to build up a truly democratic society; that young people are the core of the human capital, and therefore, activating youth and increasing investments in their development, as a human capital, is a cornerstone for sustainable development of our country.

Tajikistan (Mr. Rahmonzoda Abdullo Quarbonali, Chair of the Committee on Youth Affairs and Sports): Mr. QUARBONALI expressed that the main goal of the state's youth policy is education - fostering an open-minded and patriotic generation. Emphasized the progress that has been made with the implementation of youth policy to date. This includes but is not limited to:

- Formation of the regulatory legal framework of the state youth policy
- Creation of the National Council for youth affairs at President of the Republic of Tajikistan
- Financial support and awards for students in Tajikistan

Additionally, Mr. QUARBONALI emphasized the volunteerism of Tajikistan youth and the positive impacts it has had on combating COVID-19.

Zimbabwe (H.E. Ms. Kirsty Coventry, Minister of Youth, Sport, Arts and Recreation): Ms. COVENTRY underscored that the government's focus has been on SDG 2. The government has revised its National Youth Policy which outlines strategies to support young people in all sectors of the economy including Agriculture. Lastly, Ms. COVENTRY introduced Zimbabwe's first 5-year Medium Term Plan, which mainstreams youth as cross cutting in all sectors.

Ecuador (Mr. Francisco Cevallos Tejada, Technical Secretary of the National Council for Intergenerational Equality): Mr. TEJADA urged that we should make the 234 million young people who live in the Americas strategic/determinant actors of development, growth and social change.

He shared that the National Council for the Intergenerational Equality developed an instrument called "30 Recommendations for the Development of Youth", which includes thirty public policy recommendations that relate to young persons political and economic autonomy through policies on entrepreneurship, economy, education and the development of capabilities in; health, the eradication of violence and preventable deaths, social and political participation, and strengthening/developing the frameworks for improved investigation processes and a growing generation of knowledge.

Nicaragua (H.E. Marley Silva, Vice Minister of Youth): Ms. SILVA urged that to fulfill the spirit of the 2030 Agenda "leaving no one behind", it is necessary to empower youth with the tools and conditions to face challenges such as existing inequality, climate change, unemployment and above all the most pressing: the eradication of poverty. Furthermore, Ms. SILVA explained the current initiatives being implemented within Nicaragua focused on youth, placing emphasis on the role of young women and girls at the forefront of economic development.

Ms. SILVA underscored her conviction that in order to achieve the SDGs, youth must be at the heart of all these processes of change and social justice, in the plans and projects for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and above all ensuring the peace of all the peoples of the world.

Philippines (Paul Anthony Pangilinan, Commissioner of the National Youth Commission): Mr. PANGILINAN urged that we must bid goodbye to the 'business as usual' philosophy. Called on all governments to include young people in their respective post-pandemic recovery agenda. Further, he called on youth to continue their activism as we navigate this decade of action for sustainable development.

Kenya (Ms. Anne Muthoni, Youth Compact Champion of the Compact of Young People in Humanitarian Action): Ms. MUTHONI called upon the public and private sectors, INGOs, NGOs and individual funders to prioritise and increase funding for youth CSO work in protracted crises. She explained that a lack of funding and sustainable income models still remains the biggest challenge facing youth-led organizations, which has therefore limited potential in delivering quality services and scaling up production.

Fiji (Mr. Rovereto Nayacalevu, Permanent Secretary for Youth and Sport): Mr. NAYACALEVU explained that the Fijian Ministry of Youth and Sports has initiated and implemented the Youth Farm Initiative Programme in response to the COVID-19 with respect to Sustainable Development Goal 2. While the pandemic has had negative effects on **food security**, the Fijian Government is committed to ensuring that food systems are sustainable, to end malnutrition and provide access to adequate food and healthy diets.

Bahrain (Ms. Sara Ishaq Hasan, Assistant Under Secretary for Support and Initiatives): Ms. HASAN explained that Bahraini youth contribute positively to public affairs. Despite the pandemic, the government is still determined to continue contributing to youth development. She announced that the Ministry of Youth and Sport Affairs continues to contribute in the interest of the Bahraini and international youth, as it launches the Nasser bin Hamad International Youth Creativity Award. This is an open call for all creative young people around the globe to participate.

Venezuela (H.E. Mr. Mervin Maldonado, Minister of Youth and Sports): Mr. MALDONADO underscored that national youth policy is focused on providing opportunities for study, work, production, health, housing, sports, culture, recreation and political participation. It also focuses on the enjoyment and enjoyment of human rights.

Mr. MALDONADO announced that Venezuela joins the global call to make the COVID-19 vaccine a global public good of equitable access between South and North. He insisted upon international attention to the illegal imposition of Unilateral Coercive Measures being carried out against the entire Venezuelan population. He called for the recognition of these events as a Crime Against Humanity. Finally, on behalf of President Nicolás Maduro and the people of Venezuela, Mr. MALDONADO reiterated their firm commitment to working together with the UN, the international community and other social and global actors to promote young people as agents of social change.



GOAL 2

ZERO HUNGER

Croatia (*Ms. Zeljka Josić, State Secretary from the Central State Office for Demography and Youth; Josip Perkušić, UNYD*): Ms. JOSIĆ

explained that with youth organizations, Croatia launched a project with the aim to ensure professional psychological support for young people. Telephone lines for each Croatian region have been provided. Mainly girls asked for help so far and young people with an average age of 27. She underscored that Croatia supports the intention of reviewing the sustainable development goals before passing the floor.

UNYD Josip Perkušić proceeded to explain the difficult situation that Croatia has been in for the past 30 years. Urged that in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the way for the realization of the SDGs is easier, considering the common position of the whole international community that is facing the same challenge and with only one mission – to maintain just, peaceful and inclusive society on every level.



GOAL 10

REDUCED INEQUALITIES

Commonwealth States (*Ms. Layne Robinson, Head, Social Policy Development (Economic, Youth and Sustainable Development Directorate)*

Commonwealth Secretariat): Ms. ROBINSON urged that as countries battle COVID-19, we must not take our eyes off other public health problems like cervical Cancer. She suggests the following **policy actions** for decision makers, leaders and stakeholders for consideration and adoption including **at the 2021 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Rwanda**:

- 01.** To ensure that by 2025 all **girls aged between 9-13 years will have access to immunity from human papilloma virus (HPV)** infection through vaccination.
- 02.** To integrate and **align cervical cancer services with HIV services** when possible, noting that women living with HIV are six times more likely to develop cervical cancer compared to women who are HIV negative.
- 03.** To ensure countries have a strategy outlining that **every woman will have access to at least two lifetime screenings** during the course of their lives by 2025.
- 04.** To ensure **national cancer plans have a cervical cancer inclusion**, with a recommendation for the strengthening of registries to focus on the linkage to HIV–status, other cancers, vaccination status, screening delivery, gender and socioeconomic status.
- 05.** To ensure that we have **progress reports on progress towards cervical cancer elimination** targets until 2030, in line with the WHO Global strategy target to accelerate the elimination of cervical cancer as a public health problem.

Honduras (Mr. Marco Ayala, Executive Secretary of the National Institute of Youth): Mr. AYALA explained that young people make up 43% of Honduras' population (<70% if including persons under 12). Thus, government action revolves around their needs, is framed around the SDGs and works to promote sustainable and comprehensive development in young people.

Non-Governmental Organization (Ms. Anja Fortuna, Vice-President, European Youth Forum): Ms. FORTUNA posits that in building back from COVID-19, it is fundamental that we learn from the mistakes of the 2008 crisis. Austerity coupled with relaxation of labour laws to stimulate employment allowed the growth of precarity and poverty to flourish among this generation. We cannot afford to make the same mistake again and treat an entire generation as expendable. Our COVID-19 recovery will only be sustainable if it encompasses youth and recognises their rights, moving away from the 'any job is better than no job' mentality to a focus on quality employment. Ms. FORTUNA called on government representatives to ensure that quality jobs (with access to social protection, fair wages, and decent working conditions) are at the core of the recovery.

Netherlands (H.E. Mr. Tijmen Rooseboom, Ambassador for Youth, Education and Work; Manal Moussane, UNYD): Manal MOUSSANE urged the need to address issues that affect young people worldwide. To do so, we all need to work with young people and invest in their prospects as part of the 2030 Agenda. Mr. ROOSEBOOM reminded that achieving the SDGs requires everyone to be on board. For this reason, he urged immediate investment in the prospects of young people, and getting into the habit of listening to them.

Malta (H.E. Dr. Clifton Grima, Parliamentary Secretary for Youths Sport and Voluntary Organizations): Dr. GRIMA underscored that youth empowerment can be achieved through effective youth work practice, including digital youth work, as well as regional and locally based centres and supports. Dr. GRIMA urged that we must keep in mind that young people today are confronted with a number of significant changes such as; new ways and means of learning; rapid economic change, social dislocation, and growing but uneven affluence; increased urbanization and rural isolation; as well as the effects of climate change. Further, Dr. GRIMA urged that in moving forward towards a new state of normalcy post-pandemic, we must increase our efforts for joint cooperation and support.

Hungary (H.E. Ms. Zsofia Racz, Deputy State Secretary for Youth Affairs in the Hungarian Ministry for Families; Mr. Balázs Kelemen, UNYD): Ms. RACZ underscored that as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and such unstable times, we have learned the only thing we can be sure of is that we can always help each other. To support this ideology, she announced that 2021 has been declared the Year of Volunteering in Hungary. Further, the Hungarian Government has decided to introduce a complete personal income tax exemption for those under the age of 25. This sentiment was supported by UNYD Balázs Kelemen, who expressed a firm belief in needing an alliance between Zoomers and Boomers.

Mr. KELEMEN emphasized that we can only achieve sustainable development if generations work together, and not against one another, by gathering the dynamism and creativity of young people and the experience and wisdom of the elders in a joint initiative.

Ukraine (H.E. Mr. Andriy Chesnokov, Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports of Ukraine for European Integration):

Mr. CHESNOKOV informed that the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine has elaborated a National Youth Strategy until 2030 which was approved by the Decree of the President of Ukraine. He underscored that the strategy includes important aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as other UN strategies and documents, providing the principles of youth policy development. The Strategy sets out 4 priorities: security, health, capacity, integration of Ukrainian youth into society and the world. In their closing statement, Mr. CHESNOKOV called on UN member states to increase pressure on occupying power to stop military aggression and guarantee the rights of the population, including young people, in accordance with the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

Non-Government Organization (Mr. Itinterunga Rae Bainteiti, Pacific Youth Council): Urged that for Pacific Youths to participate and implement the SDGs **amidst this global pandemic, governments need to:**

01. Enact policies and legislation that are reactive and are solution-based to the current issues coupled by COVID-19 that young people are facing in areas of education, health, employment among other areas.

02. Support evidence-based research on the impacts of COVID-19 on youth **mental health and general wellbeing** in the Pacific.

03. Invest in economic recovery plans that supports youth entrepreneurs.

04. Finance youth-led initiatives that are COVID-19 responsive and culturally appropriate to social issues spiked by COVID-19.

Further, with respects to **climate change, migration, and displacement**, the Pacific Youths identify **three areas for urgent action:**

01. Identify and address conceptual, knowledge and planning gaps, including developing a robust evidence base on countries' exposure and vulnerability to transboundary climate risks.

02. Explicit and urgent recognition by the UNFCCC that adaptation measures that cross regional boundaries will be necessary in the short, medium, and long term.

03. Develop appropriate policy frameworks, governance approaches and options.

For Deep Sea Mining (DSM), Pacific Youth are urging Pacific and Global leaders for **a total ban of DSM**. The Pacific Youth Council in conjunction with PRNGO Alliance calls:

01. For recognition that, as our common heritage, **the ocean demands our common responsibility** for its protection.

02. On all Pacific and global leaders to join the growing ranks of governments, scientific authorities, CSO's, Church leaders and indigenous groups around the world over **in opposing the rush to mine the ocean floor** and, in doing so, destroy our common heritage.

03. Welcomes the stand taken by some Pacific governments for **a moratorium on DSM within their EEZs** but strongly urges all our governments beyond the Pacific to champion the need to protect the ocean beyond our EEZs.

Finally the PYC is calling on governments to **support National Youth Councils**. They call upon:

01. Pacific and global leaders to **commit core funding** to resource regional youth councils.

02. Pacific leaders to **commit core funding to resource their respective NYCs** to cover core administrative, structural organisational costs.

03. Funding for comprehensive research which will critically investigate the existing work and partnerships of NYCs/ PYC to greater understand current successes and limitations. Such research will provide a clearer guide for NYCs moving forward, creating a clearer evidence base of information.

Non-Government Organization (Mr. Stephen Chukwumah, Youth and Human Rights Activist): Mr.

CHUKWUMAH highlighted that many young queer and marginalized youths worldwide have and continue to be left behind, which is unacceptable. He urged that this should be a concerned effort of world leaders.

Mr. CHUKWUMAH called on governments, institutions, and leaders globally to keep their promise to ensure that challenges faced by youths in marginalized communities around the world are addressed in their SDG responses. Further, they must ensure meaningful queer youth participation at all decision-making levels - not to be sidelined and left behind anymore but at the forefront of decision-making.



Austria (H.E. Ms. Susanne Raab, Federal Minister for Women, Family, Youth and Integration; Ms. Miriam Egger, UNYD): Ms. RAAB emphasized that the cornerstone of a thriving democratic society is the active participation of people of all ages in democratic processes. She therefore proposed that effective youth policy should not only be designed for, but also with young people. She expressed that it is imperative to involve young people in decision-making processes in a meaningful way - this includes, for example, involvement in elections, the design and implementation of a national Youth Strategy, and additional efforts for youth to inform the policy-making process.

To conclude, Ms. RAAB called upon the international community to keep recognising and encouraging young people's desire to participate, and continue to guarantee that indeed meaningful spaces are provided for their participation. Ms. EGGER underscored that we will only be able to meet the challenges of the future if we do not forget the most vulnerable groups among us. She asked individuals to not only hear young people like herself, but to understand, respect, involve and empower them.

Turkey (H.E. Mr. Mehmet Muharrem Kasapoğlu, Minister of Youth and Sports): Mr. KASAPOGLU urged that the world's current most important responsibility is to prepare young people for the post-pandemic period. He announced that through the principle of "Leave No One Behind", Turkey would like to accelerate the actions that they take for and with young people. On behalf of President His Excellency Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Mr. KASAPOGLU reminded that Turkey has potential and will to become a global center for the world's youth. He announced Turkey's interest in hosting a UN Youth Center in Istanbul in cooperation with UN departments.

Canada (H.E. Ms. Karina Gould, Minister of International Development): Ms. GOULD urged paying special attention to children and youth at risk of being left behind, such as children with disabilities, girls, adolescent girls, and especially, refugees and displaced persons. She emphasized that they especially want to see adolescent girls and youth-led organizations be the designers of real change. Ms. GOULD announced that they are a key supporter of the Generation Equality Forum.



Some describe young people growing up during the current pandemic as a "Lost Generation". I strongly disagree. This generation is not lost. This generation is vocal and ready to be heard.

Ms. Miriam Egger
UNYD

Iceland (H.E. Mr. Ásmundur Einar Dadason, Minister of Social Affairs and Children): Mr. DADASON

underscored that as we move towards a post COVID-era, children and young people need to be at the heart of policies. Further, they need to be partners for positive change as we build back better. He urged the need to recognize the enormous sacrifices that children and young people across the world have made in order to contain the pandemic, and the important life events they have sacrificed. Mr. DADASON concluded that the focus in Iceland is to make sure that children are protected.

Uruguay (Mr. Felipe Paullier, Director of the National Institute of Youth):

Mr. PAULLIER urged that the role of public institutions is fundamental in the particular global context we are in whereby youth are affected by the consequences of the pandemic. Mr. PAULLIER presented **three fundamental strategic lines** of the National Institute of Youth of Uruguay for the year 2021:

01. Promotion of trajectories of youth social inclusion (ATM Program).

The program contains components of Socio-educational Accompaniment, University Tutorials and Community Peer Mentoring and is aimed at promoting the processes of autonomy and personal development of young people between 18 and 22, who have not completed basic secondary education and do not have access to formal employment avenues.

02. Youth Participation. This entails the prioritization of actions aimed at promoting leadership and youth communities agents of change, as well as the promotion of spaces for dialogue with organizations youth especially with rural youth.

03. Evidence-based youth policies.

Non-Government Organization (Mr. Davis Sekamwa, Ugandan Sustainable Energy Activist, Project Manager Riseup movement): Mr. SEKAMWA

urged governments to stop all new investments in coal, oil and gas. To build resilient and sustainable communities we need increased investments and incentives in development of cleaner energy to make it affordable even to the low income earning communities. Further, women leadership and inclusion should not be ignored. They must be in those rooms where decisions concerning our lives and our planet are made.

China (Ms. Wang Hongyan, President of the All-China Youth Federation):

Ms. HONGYAN underscored that the ACYF is willing to boost exchanges and cooperation with both the UN and young partners around the globe, to build more platforms for youth engagement and development, to advocate the vision of sustainable development and a community with shared future for mankind, and build a world with lasting peace and common prosperity.

Ethiopia (H.E Ms. Filsan Abdullahi, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Minister of Women, Children and Youth): Ms. ABDULLAHI

expressed focus on SDG10, reducing inequality among countries, specifically in the context of COVID-19 deepening already existing inequalities. She underscored the belief that the only way to address the concerns of the youth is through their active engagement and participation. Peace and security remains high on the agenda for Ethiopia.

Ms. ABDULLAHI underscored that inequalities cannot be tackled without addressing climate change, thus it is critical we find a way to resolve climate change to reduce inequalities both between countries and within our respective borders.

The Ethiopian government and her ministry firmly believe that the only way to address the concerns of the youth is through their active participation and engagement. This is emphasized with the announcement of the national youth council that is currently in progress. She put forward **substantive action recommendations**, including:

01. Mobilize and organize youth as a force for change.

02. Ensure that our legal instruments and policies provide an effective mechanism to empower youth to contribute towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

03. Form strategic alliances with youth representatives and youth-led organizations, media and private sector.

04. Strengthen our collaboration at a continental and global level.

Guyana (H.E. Mr. Charles Ramson Jr., Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana): Mr. RAMSON highlighted that his excellency President Irfaan Ali has announced for the first time in Guyana the establishment of a Youth Advisory Council. The government has also re-established the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport to give an amplified voice for young people in the Cabinet and Parliament. They have **set targets for the framework** which include:

01. Increasing free education from primary and secondary **to include university** by 2024.

02. Providing 5,000 scholarships per year.

03. Allocating 10,000 house lots per year.

04. Training thousands of young people every year in the technical vocational institutions and offering hundreds of small business grants including a Youth Innovation and Entrepreneurial project grant.

Non-Governmental Organization (Mr. Davis Sekamwa, Climate Activist and Energy Advocate in Uganda, Project Manager Riseup Movement):

Mr. SEKAMWA proclaimed that climate action is central to achieving other SDGs - the climate crisis is a real, daily reality experienced in unprecedented ways. He reminded that a clean energy transition for all will lead to a reduction of the CO₂ emissions and reliance on fossil fuels.

To this end, Mr. SEKAMWA called on governments to stop all new investments in coal, oil and gas. He stressed a crying need for system change to build sustainable and resilient communities. He called for increased investments and incentives in development of cleaner energy to make it affordable even to the low income earning communities.

Mr. SEKAMWA addressed civil society, suggesting that the disease of climate change is eating away our planet brick-by-brick and global cooperation is needed. He suggested that every community and every country must be included in achieving climate justice, reiterating that true justice can only be reached if the most affected people and places are not left behind.

Mr. SEKAMWA urged leaders to “get out of the comfort zone and face the climate emergency”. Further, he stressed that women's leadership and inclusion are vital and they must be in those rooms where decisions concerning our lives and our planet are made. Finally, Mr. SEKAMWA highlighted the importance of scientific evidence, underscoring that we must unite behind science in order to tackle the climate crisis.

Maldives (H.E. Mr. Ahmed Mahloof, Minister of Youth, Sports and Community Empowerment of the Republic of Maldives): Mr. MAHLOOF explained that the Government of President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih has placed young people and sustainability at the centre of its development policy. This is seen through a relief package worth 2.9 percent of the Maldives GDP, as well as the current drafting of a Youth Bill. He emphasized that the Maldives welcomes the key role that young people play in tackling climate change, and raising the ambition of governments on climate action in the lead up to COP26 in Glasgow.

Further, he reaffirmed that the Maldives remains committed to a youth-led implementation of the 2030 Agenda and supports the United Nations Youth Strategy 2030, while building back better from the pandemic's lingering effects. Affirmed their commitment in joining partners on collective aspiration for achieving more inclusive, fair and resilient communities.

Italy (H.E. Ms. Fabiana Dadone, Head of Delegation): Ms. DADONE underscored that Sustainable Development can only be achieved with strong involvement of all stakeholders, and in particular with a strong involvement of young people. She announced that participation is the main objective of the European Youth Strategy 2019-2027, to which the youth policies of the Italian Government are inspired. Additionally, she announced that Italy, which this year took over the presidency of the G20 and the Co-presidency of Cop26, has created ad hoc youth participation spaces.

The "Y20 Summit" and "Youth4climate: Driving Ambition" events are upcoming opportunities that have been created for youth to express their opinions to international leaders and to draw up

proposals on sustainability, climate change, innovation, digitisation and inclusion. Additional activities that Italy is undertaking, as explained by Ms. DADONE includes the development of an interactive web platform to increase youth participation and dialogue with policy-makers. Ms. DADONE promised that Italy's young people will not be disappointed.

Sudan (H.E. Mr. Yousif Adam Aday, Minister of Youth and Sports):

Mr. ADAY expressed hope that the anniversary of the Forum will return in future years, and will continue to contribute effectively to finding solutions to the challenges facing the world's youth. He underscored that Sudan, as a country built on the landmark actions of young men and women, adopted the SDGs as a reference for the planning of young people. Mr. ADAY emphasized that the work of Sudan since the beginning of the transitional period (with institutional reforms, reviewing youth legislation, and enacting laws) codifies the situation of young people and makes them part of decision-making positions.

He noted that Sudan attaches great importance to civic and political awareness and building concepts for young people to be observers, decision-makers and clear participants in the transitional phase, and to be leaders of the democratic transition phase by initiating the formation of a youth parliament and building and rehabilitating youth-friendly centers that promote youth engagement and education.

Mr. ALAY reaffirmed Sudan's commitment to partnerships with regional and international organizations and building relationships with countries of the world and the institutions of the international community. After years of isolation from the rest of the world, Mr.

ALAY commit Sudan to participating in the implementation of plans, visions and projects, and working together to address systemic issues.

Dominican Republic (H.E. Ms. Luz del Alba Jiménez, Minister of Youth): Ms. JIMÉNEZ expressed that it is an honour to work alongside Ministers and other leaders to increase efforts in the daily work of public policies for the benefit of youth. She underscored that amidst the COVID-19 pandemic an effective institutional response to youth needs, with a human rights perspective, can save many lives and bring us closer to achieving the SDGs. Ms. JIMÉNEZ announced that the government of the Dominican Republic is:

- Planning to reduce the flow of illicit weapons;
- Working to consolidate youth social participation with special emphasis on the most vulnerable sectors of their society; and
- Working to guarantee youth access to quality education and public programs

The goal is to achieve social justice that results in the reduction of the rates of violence and increased opportunities for youth through these efforts. Ms.

JIMÉNEZ expressed her hope for the Dominican Republic to obtain better tools for local policies through the Forum, announcing that the country is making itself available to go the extra mile whenever necessary.

Norway (H.E. Mr. Dag-Inge Ulstein, Minister of International Development; Ms. Sandra Skiaker, UNYD, Norwegian Children and Youth Council): Mr. ULSTEIN emphasized that for Norway it is of great importance to highlight the vulnerability of youth in crisis situations and to contribute to their protection. Further, he underscored it should be obvious that young people play a crucial role in preventing conflict and building sustainable peace. Finally, the Minister expressed the need to foster meaningful dialogue and partnerships between young people and other stakeholders.

Ms. Sandra SKIAKER addressed the importance of including youth in SDG16 work. She suggested that this can be done by continuing the important work on Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security. With respect to COVID-19 and building back better, she encouraged decision makers to scale up their NDCs while also focusing climate finance on adaptation.



The young women and men of Sudan... with will, courage, sacrifice and determination to peacefully overthrow one of the most powerful dictatorships in the world, they presented a message that peace and peace are the basis of change and the strongest weapons of man.

H.E. Mr. Yousif Adam ADAY

Minister of Youth and Sports, Sudan

Non-Government Organization

(Ms. Ramisha Ijaz, Transforming Communities for Inclusion): As a young person with a psychosocial disability, Ms. IJAZ explained that they belong to one of the most marginalized communities that is often denied the most basic human rights. She underscored that:

01. The right to recognize the evolving capacity and to **inclusion must be fulfilled for all youth with disabilities**, especially those living in the margins of society (youth with developmental, multiple, psychosocial disabilities).

02. State parties and intergovernmental agencies must **ensure the right to technology as a human right, and ensure the personhood, right to legal capacity and political participation** for youth with disabilities.

03. Young people with disabilities **must be included in all policy making spaces**, with dedicated, accessible platforms within all the intergovernmental systems, the human rights council, all human rights monitoring mechanisms and within all UN agencies.

04. State parties must not only recognize but also **include young people with disabilities in all policy platforms**, to express our concerns as youth with disabilities and as young leaders.

This work must be taken to scale at all levels of government.

Ms. IJAZ, on behalf of youth with disabilities, requested all ministries present to take this message back to their countries and ensure the full and effective participation of youth with disabilities.

Qatar (H.E. Mr. Salah bin Ghanem

bin Nasser Al Ali, Minister of Culture and Sports; Ms. Muneera Al Baker, UNYD): Mr. ALI proclaimed that the State of Qatar attaches great importance to the issue of empowering youth and enhancing their participation in the process of sustainable development, based on belief in the latent capabilities of young people.

Referencing Syrian refugees in Qatar, Mr. ALI suggested that sustainable development cannot be achieved without residency. That is, if we have people flooding different countries without plans, agreements, resources, etc. Mr. ALI, on behalf of Qatar, expressed commitment and support for achieving SDG 16 alongside Finland and Columbia. He further expressed support for convening a high-level global conference on peace tracks.

Mr. ALI introduced Ms. AL-BAKER, a youth representative in the Education Above All Foundation which is concerned with providing education for marginalized children and youth, and defending their right to education. She presented a statement on behalf of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, President of the Education Above All Foundation, who stressed that "we must provide our youth with the appropriate environment and achieve the elements of prosperity and hope for young people, which is the segment that can push and lead positive changes in societies."

Ms. AL-BAKER underscored that all young people appreciate all the opportunities available to us to raise our voice, and looks forward to young people's participation in the upcoming Global Conference on Comprehensive Peace Tracks.

Egypt (H.E. Dr. Ashraf Sobhy, Minister of Youth and Sports): Dr. SOBHY underscored that the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Egypt and Egypt's National Youth Strategy has overseen over 140 programmes for youth, with an additional 40 programmes to be implemented by the end of this year. These programmes tackle all 17 Goals of the Global Agenda with specific focus on SDG 16.

Moreover, the Ministry has updated the National Strategy for Youth and Adolescents for the next 5 years. This update is inclusive of youth in various governorates, ensuring diversity of backgrounds and that no one is left behind. These steps were taken in accordance with the UN Secretary General's Strategy on Youth 2030. Dr. SOBHY concluded by emphasizing that Egypt will make every effort to enhance the role of youth and work towards Egypt's 2030 strategy and strive for just and sound societies.

Peru (H.E. Mr. Ricardo Cuenca Pareja, Minister of Education): Mr. PAREJA stressed that youth have been increasingly affected by inequalities during the covid pandemic, especially concerning education, work, health, discrimination, violence and participation. He underscored that to better respond to the inequalities Purvian youth face, Peru is undergoing an institutional reform process. Mr. PAREJA stated that this transition will strengthen Peru's youth organizations and place youth as priority within the public agenda.

United Nations Works and Relief Agency for Palestinians in the Near East Relief and Works Agency (Ms. Aseel Soboh, Palestine refugee from Lebanon, member of the UNRWA Agency-Wide Student Parliament): Ms. SOBOH urged that all young people can be the glue of society. She stated that all young people have to have access to the internet and devices to be able to engage, contribute, and innovate. As a representative of Palestine refugee youth, her message underscored that individuals such as herself want to contribute to change. She reminded that young Palestine refugees, like all young men and women everywhere, are change makers; they too are the future.

Costa Rica (H.E. Ms. Margareth Solano Sanchez, Vice-minister of Youth at the Ministry of Culture and Youth): Ms. SANCHEZ urged that as a country with a high and recognized democratic tradition, Costa Rica believes in the broad inclusive and participatory construction of public policy for youth. She suggested that this policy must consider diversities, differentiation by age ranges and the specific approach to rural and urban ecosystems, as well as the approaches of gender, territoriality, social justice and sustainable development.

Ms. SANCHEZ explained that the Public Policy of the Young Person 2020-2024, an unprecedented policy document, was co-created with youth and is methodologically designed to include the participatory consultation process and the final approval by young people from civil society.

Additionally, Ms. SANCHEZ announced Costa Rica's action plan to include 54 institutions with more than 300 actions framed in 4 strategic axes. This was followed by the announcement that Costa Rica is currently developing a

computer system for monitoring and evaluating public policy with the direct participation of young people from civil society.

Ms. SANCHEZ noted that Costa-Rican public policy has been built taking into consideration SDG17, the umbrella goal to leave no one behind. She concluded her dialogue by inviting UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, Ms. Jayathma Wicramanayake, to participate in Costa Rica's National Youth Council, a high-level space chaired by the President of the Republic.

Belgium (H.E. Mr. Benjamin Dalle; Ms Oriane Schmidt, UNYD): Mr. DALLE stated that Belgium aligns itself with their colleagues from the EU. He underscored that children and young people should no longer only be seen as the future, but first and foremost as a group that exists here and now, today. Further, it is crucial to pay attention to

the voice of children and young people and to act on it. Mr. DALLE explained that young people are given the opportunity to have a greater and more direct impact on the implementation of the (youth-related) SDGs when governments structurally anchor youth participation in all policy areas, especially those that concern them.

Ms. SCHMIDT presented the work of Belgian UNYDs in relation to the SDGs. She explained that on a local level, they try to bring these goals closer to children and youth through education, social media platforms and by implementing concrete youth-led projects. Moreover, at the federal level, they are in contact with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Permanent Mission, which allows us to bring the voice of Belgian youth on the international scene and to take the floor at official events.



GOAL 17

PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Advocates for Youth (Mr. Othman Almoamar, Chair of Y20 in 2020): Mr. ALMOAMAR emphasized previous dialogue that the pandemic has not only exacerbated challenges for youth, but also increased the level of ambiguity of young people's future to which they, today, have a difficult time preparing for. He urged that it is imperative to support youth through actions such as:

01. Increasing young people's role in SDG achievement via cascaded initiatives at the community level.

02. Viewing policy response and formulation with a 'youth' lens.

03. Investment in pro-youth solutions across key sectors influencing youth development such as education and employment.

Mexico (Ms. Andrea Ruiz de la Mora, UNYD; Mr. Guillermo Rodriguez, Director General, Institute of Youth [IMJUVE]): On behalf of young people, Ms. MORA expressed gratitude that the Forum has become the space for collaboration, advocacy and participation of youth with the greatest international reference, by bringing together young people from all over the world. She underscored the particular relevance of youth participating in discussions and solutions in the context of COVID-19.

Ms. MORA urged for the continuation of giving youth a voice through the ECOSOC Youth Forum to serve as a reference to other discussion spaces to improve decision making. She underscored that youth are decisive for the implementation in the decade of action for sustainable development. The floor was passed to Mr. RODRIGUEZ who stated the conviction of the Mexican government that youth are at the center of transformation.

He outlined **two primary initiatives of IMJUVE**, that, in the context of the COVID pandemic, seek to face the ravages around mental health and the economy:

01. Young Contact. This program was jointly developed by the Ministry of Health and UNICEF that seeks to contribute to improving the mental health of adolescents and young people through the professional accompaniment of other young people via WhatsApp to deal with cases of stress, violence, and counseling on sexual health and psychoactive substance use.

02. Educational Network of Social and Solidarity Economy. This network was consolidated to promote economic solidarity inline with other entities that offer young people tools and skills in social entrepreneurship. In this framework, more than 3,000 young people were trained and Projects with seed capital were promoted.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ emphasized that the common theme of their projects is "alliance". He urged that the 2030 Agenda can only be achieved if we manage to consolidate what is stated in SDG 17: Solid and inclusive alliances. He underscored that the participation of young people, international and intergenerational solidarity are key, in order to collectively achieve inclusive, fair and resilient communities.

On behalf of the Government of Mexico, Mr. RODRIGUEZ reaffirmed their commitment and will to continue working to achieve a more egalitarian world where all people achieve development with well-being and happiness.

1.4 LEAVING NO YOUTH BEHIND



Youth Speakers:

- **Ms. Nujeen Mustafa**, Syria
- **Ms. Alba Verónica Vicenta Yacabalquiej Salanic**, Guatemala
- **Ms. Lynda Romdhane**, Tunisia
- **Mr. Tushar Kanti Baidya**, Bangladesh
- **Ms. Angelica Ojinnaka**, Australia/Nigeria Discussants:
- **Mr. Clement Voule**, Special Rapporteur on Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association
- **Ms. Fiona McCluney**, UN Resident Coordinator in Albania

Setting the Stage and Closing Remarks:

- **Elliot Harris**, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development and Chief Economist

UN Moderator:

- **Mr. Derrick León Washington**, OHCHR Senior/Regional Minority Fellow

UN Partners (in alphabetical order):

- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN Human Rights)
- Office of the Secretary General's Envoy on Youth (OSGEY)
- United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) - Division for Inclusive Social Development (DISD)
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- United Nations Women

Youth Partners (in alphabetical order):

- International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organizations (ICMYO)
- Major Group on Children and Youth (MGCY)

Opening Remarks

The objective of this session was to discuss the intersectionality of youth vulnerabilities through few case studies/stories, foster an intergenerational dialogue with UN practitioners working at the country level, and identify concrete actions/commitments that would contribute to ensuring that no youth are left behind in global efforts to rebuild after the pandemic and strengthen our shared resilience.

The session featured two UN colleagues, Mr. Clement Vouleand and Ms. Fiona McCluney who works on the ground with young people. They shared concrete examples of how working with and for vulnerable youth can make a world of difference, both for individual youth and their communities. The session also included five youth speakers who shared their stories, followed by a question and answer period.

UN Moderator (Mr. Derrick León Washington, OHCHR Senior/Regional Minority Fellow): Mr. WASHINGTON began the session acknowledging the traditional land of indigenous persons, now known as New York City. He outlined the objective of the session - to achieve actionable steps for intersectional aspects through an inclusive conversational style. The session featured three youth speakers, as well as two UN representatives.

Department of Economic and Social Affairs (Mr. Elliott Harris, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development and Chief Economist):

In his opening remarks, Mr. HARRIS underscored that the principle of leaving no one behind is the cornerstone of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and moreover, it is a commitment to eliminate the inequalities that prevent individuals from accessing resources and seizing opportunities to reach their full potential that applies directly to young people. He affirmed that the United Nations family is painfully aware that a large proportion of youth experience multiple vulnerabilities, such as the combination of poverty, low level of education, gender inequalities, disabilities, and this complex reality too often goes unseen, undocumented, and unaddressed.

Mr. HARRIS underscored that “youth” is far from being a homogenous group. Thus, necessitated doing a better job of addressing not only the different vulnerabilities, but also how they intersect with each other. It is his intention that the Forum fosters an intergenerational dialogue with UN practitioners and identifies concrete commitments for now, and for the near future, to help ensure that no youth is left behind in the global efforts to rebuild after the pandemic and strengthen the world's shared resilience.

Mr. HARRIS suggested that policies and programs need to take into account young people's lived experience, and further, address the root causes of these vulnerabilities and the challenges that they raise. He emphasized the importance of interactive and representative dialogue, such as the session, in addressing the various vulnerabilities faced by young people around the world. He then introduced the youth speakers.

Remarks: First 3 Youth Speakers

Advocates for Youth (Ms. Angelica Ojinnaka, MGCY and African Australian Youth Suicide Prevention Committee): Ms. OJINNAKA expressed that her lived experience of issues affecting women of colour, migrant youth, people with mental health challenges, and those with limited access to youth education, continues to drive her forward in helping others. She proposed **key recommendations** for a just and sustainable future:

01. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided **a chance for the future of this world to be cocreated in an inclusive and transformational way**, one that recognises the disproportionate impacts of equity, discrimination, isolation and marginalisation of youth.

02. However, **youth with lived experience of mental ill-health and girls/young women experiencing gender-based violence are routinely ignored in pragmatic policy decision-making** and institutional processes on key areas in the recovery response such as education, health, and economy rebuilding.

03. Although there has been a shift to using digital technologies to engage these youth that are most isolated by violence and mental health conditions, **many young people still face the challenge of lack of digital connectivity** whilst in unsupportive/unsafe homes or areas. Additionally, these online strategies often ignore the increased vulnerability to abuse and online harassment they may experience.

04. Governments and other power-holders need to **shift towards an intersectional approach to capturing disaggregated data** on the experiences of these young people.

05. Invest into **strengthening collaborative and non-tokenistic feedback mechanisms** for policy that engages community groups that are already providing psychosocial support and advocacy at a grassroots level.

06. To overcome further marginalisation and re-traumatisation of young people with lived experience of mental ill-health and girls/young women experiencing gender-based violence, we need to **prioritise accessible, flexible and timely wellbeing support** that covers all social and economic rights of these youth.

GOAL 3

GOOD HEALTH & WELL-BEING



Advocates for Youth (Ms. Nujeen Mustafa, wheelchair-bound Syrian refugee): Ms. MUSTAFA offered perspective on her journey as a young disabled-refugee. She underscored that the themes of intersectionality and inclusive participation (or lack thereof) have been a part of her life since she was born. Ms. MUSTAFA summarized her experience as a person with a disability in one sentence (see quote below).

Ms. MUSTAFA reminded that young people with disabilities are interested in issues relevant to today's world, such as mental health. She urged that every country, government and organization would benefit from the experiences, ideas and proposals of disabled persons if their potential was supported.

Ms. MUSTAFA declared that it is unacceptable that this year's Forum is the first time since its inception ten years ago that it has attempted to hear

the voices of a young person with a disability. She called for youth support in bringing about much needed change to have more representation from young people with disabilities in international dialogue.

Advocates for Youth (Mr. Tushar Kanti Baidya, Inclusive Bangladesh): Mr. BAIDYA reiterated Ms. MUSTAFA's sentiment that "he was not important enough" as an LGBTQI+ individual. He provided an overview of his intersectional experience in the early stages of the pandemic, suggesting that while COVID-19 shifted the whole world, the LGBTQI+ community was hit in a different way. On behalf of LGBTQI+ individuals, Mr. BAIDYA expressed that people are furious to see what has emerged from the pandemic. Mr. BAIDYA **recommended the need for:**

01. A civil society representative/ contact person to support marginalized communities.

“

I was not important enough.

As a child I was not important enough for schools to be made accessible to me. I was not important enough to be provided with any means for opportunities to grow, or dream, or build and achieve my goals. And as a young woman civil war raged in my country, so I was once again stripped of the right to a safe and peaceful life. When I fled, even the management of the refugee camp didn't think that refugees with disabilities were important enough for something as essential as the restroom to be accessible.

Ms. Nujeen Mustafa

Wheelchair-bound Syrian refugee

02. Data privacy and acknowledgment of the identity of these individuals.

This will inform policymakers and protect the personhood of marginalized and vulnerable individuals.

03. Increased conversations and representation of LGBTQI+ at the intergovernmental level.

Question & Answer Period: First 3 Youth Speakers

In response to a question posed by Mr. HARRIS asking about mental health during COVID-19, **Ms. Angelica OJINNAKA** put forward the following **recommendations to amplify and empower the voices of young people:**

01. Prioritize flexible and attainable support that covers all economic and social supports for youth to overcome the marginalization and retraumatization that has been experienced.

02. Mental health needs to be looked at **beyond a physical diagnosis.**

03. Examining the methods to address social determinants of health and social issues leading to ongoing challenges.

04. Urgently invest in strengthening collaborative, tangible, non-tokenistic feedback mechanisms that allow us to assess the marginalization within communities.

05. Allow youth to scrutinize the efforts being made at all levels.

06. Utilize existing community groups that are providing social support at a grassroots level.

07. Acknowledge that some youth lack access to digital connectivity whilst being in unsupportive and unsafe environments, and further, online strategies may not be the most effective at all times because of increased youth vulnerability to online harassment and abuse.

08. Governments and other power holders need to shift towards an intersectional approach that captures the different capability and accessibility of youth, and further, that captures desegregated data about young people and their experiences during COVID-19 in all different environments.

Ms. Nujeen MUSTAFA built on these comments, further stressing the importance and prevalence of intersectionality within the youth community. She reminded that every individual has different needs and issues that need to be addressed.

Ms. MUSTAFA called for segregated data. She urged that having segregated data/an overview of the youth community needs to be recognized for its importance. The data collection process must be inclusive of everyone so that we can help everyone better.



People with disabilities, and their colourful personalities, are not a liability, but an asset in the collective effort to make the world a better place.

Ms. Nujeen Mustafa

Wheelchair-bound Syrian refugee

Ms. MUSTAFA placed particular emphasis on how data collection helps visibility. Data collection is an inclusive and comprehensive process where marginalized groups are included. To this end, she recommended increasing and centralizing the process of inclusive/ more pervasive data collection.

Mr. Tushar Kanti BAIDYA urged that the government should be active in tackling the stigma that has harmed the LGBTQ+ community during the COVID-19. He called upon governments for the legal recognition of LGBTQI+ individuals around the world, noting that even if there are cultural or religious barriers to achieving this, these individuals deserve to have an identity card at the absolute minimum.

Mr. BAIDYA suggested that community led organizations should be classified as an essential service. Related to this, he urged donors and financial supporters to provide flexible funding for local organizations that work at the grassroots level.

Remarks: Final 2 Youth Speakers

Advocates for Youth (Ms. Alba Verónica Vicenta Yacabalquiej Salanic, Network of Young Human Rights Defenders, Office of the High-Commissioner UN Guatemala, Asociación de Investigación Desarrollo y Educación Integral (IDEI)): Ms. SALANIC gave a brief overview of her journey as an advocate and human rights defender focused on the challenges that indigenous people face. She underscored that the COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare and made more acute the problems that indigenous persons face, including visible poverty, inequality and crisis.

She expressed that it is important for indigenous people to use their mother tongue as a mechanism to exercise against the system that has neglected them for so many years. Further, in light of the pandemic, she called for all acts of violence and discrimination against indigenous persons to be recorded.

She called for greater education around traditional indigenous practices, such as the use of ancestral crops. Additionally, in expressing her fear of the threat of climate change, in particular food security that is under threat, she called for developing lines of communication across sectors to protect one another from these challenges faced and to protect indigenous land from the hands of multinationals who wish to take over land and seize natural resources.

Ms. SALANIC personally committed to raising awareness on the many challenges that indigenous people face. She proclaimed that she wants to make known the abuse of indigenous peoples around the world. Ms. SALANIC concluded that everything young indigenous people do in the agricultural sector should be acknowledged.

Advocates for Youth (Ms. Lynda Romdhane, Researcher in Criminal Law): Ms. ROMDHANE paid testament to her life path and what led to her career in women's rights and sexual health. She referenced how the patriarchal society in which our world is engrained impacts everything, and how communities suffer economically, socially and politically from this discrimination. To destroy the suffering caused by the patriarchy, Ms. ROMDHANE recommended that change has to be made across society. This includes educating young people on sexual health and breaking the stigma of sexualizing women's bodies.

Question Period: Final 2 Youth Speakers

Mr. HARRIS asked the speakers to share anything else that they and their communities have done in reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic, or to share further information about their work.

Ms. SALANIC stressed that her Association has worked on climate change alongside young indigenous people. They have:

- Installed more than 100 agro-ecological allotments;
- Trained young indigenous people in agro-ecology and permaculture. This education is rooted in the uses of renewable energy, information on bio-waste for the treatment of organic waste, sharing knowledge about avoiding the use of pesticides and herbicides, etc.

Additionally, they are:

- Making use of new technologies to ensure youth can access these resources, for example gas, in a sustainable way;
- Looking for solution to reach more youth across the country;
- Currently working with three departments of twenty-two across Guatemala, with plans to expand this reach.

Ms. SALANIC called for:

01. The elimination of kindling in Guatemala. She reiterated the need for communities to access energy in a sustainable way.

02. Continued training of young people and working with more communities on experimental agricultural practices.

03. The roll-out of local initiatives through the financial support of organizations and institutional support at the government level to increase the scope and reach of programs such as those her organization offers. Such programs should ultimately be rolled out nationally.

Ms. ROMHDANE spoke in greater detail about the situation of women in Tunisia, underscoring the importance of economic gender inequality, especially that rural women suffer from as victims of particular working conditions. She emphasized that women also suffer from inequality through the wage-gap as men receive double the remuneration as them. This is linked to domestic violence and other existing gender parities.

Ms. ROMDHANE explained that the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted reproductive health measures, a service that has not been protected since the onset of the pandemic.



Ultimately we can create a new world where she decides about her body, her life, and her future.

Ms. Lynda ROMDHANE
Researcher in Criminal Law

Finally, she reiterated that women and civil society suffer from the patriarchal system. She called upon the international community to do better and do more, to continue fighting until women have full rights and security in a world where they have autonomy over their life and body.

Remarks: UN Representatives

UN Representative (Ms. Fiona McCluney, UN Resident Coordinator in Albania): Ms. McCLUNEY provided three examples of the work done in Albania in an attempt to incorporate the voices and views of young people:

01. Establishment of a Youth Advisory Group. The group is composed of fourteen individuals from Egyptian minority communities, the LGBTQI+ community, etc, who provide inputs into UN planning processes.

02. Joint program with UN Agencies. It works with 15 municipalities that have set up youth advisory groups at a municipal level who advise municipalities on youth budgeting, including youth activism and being involved in youth policy work at the local level.

03. Youth Peer Education Program. This informal network of several hundred youth deals with more sensitive issues such as sexual and reproductive rights, gender identity, giving them a voice in how the country develops within an increased framework.

UN Representative (Mr. Clement Voule, Special Rapporteur on Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association): Mr. VOULE responded to the prompt asking how he has been working to “leave no youth behind”.

Mr. VOULE underscored that young people are the most crucial and vibrant members of civil society - they are the drivers of protest movements with incredible capacity to mobilize society using digital and non-digital tools. Referencing contemporary examples of young people in Myanmar and Nigeria, Black-Lives Matter, the climate movement, and defending democracy, Mr. VOULE explained that young people are the important stakeholders in leading change.

Mr. VOULE committed to continuing to advocate for the promotion and respect of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association for children and youth, especially marginalized youth. He also underscored that he is present in advocating for the mentoring of youth leaders, especially their inclusion in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda because it cannot be achieved without youth.

Mr. VOULE strongly urged governments to ensure that youth demands and voices are included in building back after COVID-19. He referenced the “10 Key Principles” that he drafted and shared with governments in July 2020, suggesting these principles are a good strategy for governments to achieve and/or maintain spaces for youth in civic spaces while also addressing the COVID-19 crisis.

Group Discussion

The concept of desegregated data was repeated throughout the session. **Ms. OJINNAKA** offered recommendations for the critical tool of desegregated data on gender and sex. She expressed belief in working towards a clear global framework for initiatives on how we obtain gender and sex specific dialogue. It needs to be framed in intersectionality.

She urged governments to engage in a data-collection process that puts the youth representatives of the Forum as co-researchers in obtaining this data. This data about youth needs to be secured and it is essential that there is sex and gender specific data.

Ms. MUSTAFA suggested that stakeholders can address the intersecting obstacles and barriers that young people face by bringing marginalized groups to the discussion table. She called upon stakeholders to ensure that youth are a part of planning, evaluation and implementation of future resolutions.

Ms. McCLUNEY addressed youth seeking to become involved in certain intergovernmental processes, highlighting places within the UN system where they can get involved and where their voices can be heard. She explained that across every sector and topic that the UN system encompasses there is youth consideration, further, she outlined some of the tools available to youth such as the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.

Ms. McCLUNEY underscored that the UN must make the space for these voices to be heard. She reiterated that youth cannot be treated as a homogenous group, and should be recognized for the ideas they can bring forth.

Ms. SALANIC explained how indigenous youth can be centered as part of decision making processes. In her view, it is important that young indigenous people keep working together to hold themselves accountable to being involved in these processes.

She urged authorities to take into account that indigenous youth need to be included in all areas where decisions are being made (i.e. across all levels of government). She explained that it would be illogical to continue this fight if youth are not taken on board by national authorities.

Ms. ROMDHANE gave advice on how youth can meaningfully engage with the public abuse of universal human rights. She highlights the different types of knowledge that youth participants have.

Mr. VOULE responded to the question of how we can continue working on leaving no youth behind and addressing potential concerns as they arise. He stressed that space must be created for young people to participate in shaping their own future. Further, the discussion of the future agenda must be focused on addressing the challenges that young people face in exercising their right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

He stressed that when youth cannot advocate for better education, better natural environments, and a more equal and peaceful society, we all lose and the 2030 Agenda loses. Mr. VOULE committed to engaging with governments to ensure that young people are included.

Closing Remarks

Department of Economic and Social Affairs (Mr. Elliott Harris, Assistant Secretary-General, UN-DESA): To conclude the session Mr. HARRIS underlined that several of the recommendations young people made can be taken on board. These recurring themes and recommendations include:

01. Strengthening multilateral processes and intergenerational dialogue to effectively advocate with and for youth in vulnerable situations.

02. Close the data gap to have a more detailed understanding of the **challenges linked to intersecting vulnerabilities**. Having disaggregated data would help design impactful interventions and develop effective policy guidance. Call for a specific initiative to obtain data relating to social issues exacerbated by COVID-19.

03. Include youth mental health in the context of supporting youth who are mobilizing at local and national levels. Further, co-design of mental health strategies that would truly respond to the needs of all youth.

04. Leverage all knowledge and strategies, including those created by practitioners and identify concrete commitments for now, and for the near future, **to help ensure that no youth is left behind** in the global efforts to rebuild after the pandemic and strengthen our Indigenous peoples, in the fight against climate change.

05. Do a better job at consulting and including Indigenous youth, and more sufficiently recognize the effective leadership role they can play in helping to address a number of complex issues we all are facing. This is especially important considering that Indigenous communities are particularly affected by both climate change and the pandemic.

06. Attentively listen to young people in vulnerable and marginalized situations so that we can better understand and respond to their needs. In parallel to this, we need to collectively invest in addressing the root causes contributing to youth vulnerabilities.

07. Be honest, responsive and accountable, as well as the need to be bold and resilient.

Mr. HARRIS announced that DESA is currently working on the next edition of the World Youth Report which is focusing on youth mental health and wellbeing. This upcoming report – which is being prepared in very close collaboration with young people – will improve our collective understanding of the specificities of youth mental health and wellbeing, and is based on multiple testimonials of the experience of young persons living with these different vulnerabilities, pre and post-COVID.

He summarized the session by underscoring that the dialogue demonstrates that there is no single approach to our work on leaving no youth behind. To conclude, Mr. HARRIS thanked the participants for sharing their stories and ideas, promising that they have been heard and that the “ball is in our court now”.



1.5

REFLECTING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD



“

The farmers in the fields with the immigration issue, social distancing, lack of access to supply, roads interruptions, were forced to speed up digital transformation. It was challenging but ended up being good, so we could feed the world by 2030.

— Mariana Vasconcelos
Co-founder and CEO at Agrosmart



**United
Nations**

#YOUTH2030



**ECOSOC
YOUTH FORUM
10th ANNIVERSARY**

Participants:

- **H.E. Ms. Amina J. Mohammed**, United Nations Deputy-Secretary General
- **Mariana Vasconcelos**, Co-founder and CEO, Agrosmart
- **Abdullah Al-Khafajy**, Liaison Officer, International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA)
- **Dilan Ezgi Koc**, UN Youth Champion for Disarmament

The session featured three youth representatives in conversation with the UN Deputy Secretary General, **Ms. Amina J. MOHAMMED** on the contribution of youth in the SDGs Decade of Action. The session took place through a “fishbowl” dialogue with pre-recorded and live components.

A recorded video featured dialogue taking place between the three youth representatives. **Ms. Dilan Ezgi KOC** explained to the others how art can support the SDGs. She underscored that although science, facts and policy are crucial to contributing to the SDGs, it is her belief that fact and policy often fail to make the necessary change and origin action happen. To this end, Ms. KOC suggests that art can be a catalyst for human action. She, for example, used her musical talents at charity concerts to raise money for refugee resettlement.

Mr. Abdullah AL-KHAF AJY advocated for the inclusion of climate change in medical curricula. He further advocated for the inclusion of SDGs in primary, secondary and even tertiary curricula. Integrating these topics into our education will raise a population that is fully aware and able to make the change.

Ms. Mariana VASCONCELOS spoke about the importance of using data in decision making. She used the agricultural industry as one example of a sector that can benefit from data, and in turn, have positive impacts on the environment and the entire supply-chain more broadly.



Every business should be a social business, and I think we are seeing that with the corporate agenda, but it would be nice to see this for every sector that impacts youth.

Ms. Dilan Ezgi KOC

UN Youth Champion for Disarmament

Readdressing the importance of youth mobilization mentioned by Mr. AL-KHAFAJY, Ms. KOC asked the other participants to share if they think that young people are being effectively engaged with the 2030 Agenda, and what they think can be done to better engage youth.

Mr. AL-KHAFAJY suggested youth have been increasingly engaged and progress has been made, however there is room for improvement in the next ten years. Ms. VASCONCELOS agreed that more can be done, proposing that youth are introduced to the SDGs at an earlier age.

Building upon this, Ms. KOC underscored that a minority of young people are effectively being engaged with the 2030 Agenda and it is not sufficient. She posited that these efforts need to be more concentrated at the individual and community level - they urgently need to move into public discourse because it is an urgent, universal issue.

The speakers put forward the following recommendations to the UN leadership to better engage youth in the monitoring, preview and acceleration of the implementation of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda:

01. Invest in early childhood education around the SDGs.

02. Investment in sectors beyond technology and innovation, supporting a shift for the entire corporate agenda to be socially responsible.

03. Increased initiatives, such as UN Youth Champions for Disarmament, that **enable youth to raise their voices** and have a presence in global issues that are vital to achieving the SDGs.

04. Influence structure, policy and conditions towards Member States and partner organizations to meaningfully engage youth.

05. Eliminate tokenism.

H.E. Ms. Amina J. MOHAMMED,

United Nations Deputy-Secretary General, expressed her gratitude for youth action. She suggested that we need to find better ways of bringing young people on board - not just 'ticking the box', but expanding and connecting the youth movement for SDGs. Further, really looking at the restrictions that are on youth assembly and youth action, creating conditions that allow us to reach the scale that the SDGs need.



We are young, we want to be heard, we want to be engaged in full decision making, we have the capacity, we have the knowledge, we can make the change, and we will be the future that achieves the SDGs.

Mr. Abdullah AL-KHAFAJY

Liaison Officer, International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA)

Ms. MOHAMMED emphasized looking at the intergenerational transition, and having a very clear, meaningful interaction on how that will happen, suggesting that this is more about collective responsibility rather than individual.

On the topic of SDG education Ms. MOHAMMED supported the opinion of the session's speakers. She explained that it is important to contextualize SDG education rather than just to teach it as a set of 17 Goals. She urged making the SDGs real in people's own realities and agreed with the holistic approach to education as proposed earlier in the session. This further includes the need to implement climate into curriculum across the world, which requires teachers having immersion in the topic. Ms. MOHAMMED agreed that education is at the core and that responsible citizenship is key to societal change.

Every single goal is special. I think that when you pick up a goal, like education, just refer to it as a docking station for the other 16, because then you'll see how education works for every other goal.

Ms. Mohammed reiterated the opinion that if we do not invest in education as a part of the COVID-19 response we will be failing an entire generation. She added to this that we will also be failing future generations because the foundation will be weak.

Additionally, she supported the notion that the 2030 Agenda is universal and not age specific, though she underscored that more importantly is learning from the COVID-19 pandemic how universal the 2020 Agenda is, in that every human suffered in one way or another as the pandemic hit, health and socio-economically.

Ms. Mohammed added to Marianna's point, which suggested the use of smarter, greener solutions to achieve the SDGs, by underscoring that science and technology is making food-systems exciting.

GOAL 17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



THEMATIC BREAKOUT SESSIONS



ECOSOC
YOUTH FORUM
10TH ANNIVERSARY

2.1

ACCELERATING ACTION FOR THE PLANET

On Wednesday April 7, the thematic session “Accelerating Action for the Planet” was held. The session offered an opportunity to show and promote solutions at all levels, that address SDG 12 (Sustainable Consumption and Production), and SDG 13 (Climate Action).



United Nations
Convention to Combat
Desertification

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Session in Brief

- **More must be done from a policy-standpoint** to avoid the unsustainable environmental degradation that is currently taking place.
- **Grassroots efforts need to be greater engaged** - this is one of the main findings of the pre-forum consultation.
- Key populations such as youth and other **marginalized groups cannot afford to be left out of the conversation** any longer
- Knowledge is critical to enable the transformation of mindsets and behaviours that we need to happen.
- Numerous calls from audience members for **promoting programs that would enable environmental interest**, programs in schools, campaigns, and calls for action.
- Achieving **sustainable development is a multilateral process** and we cannot expect that the change will happen quickly.
- Strong belief in the **role of education in developing awareness of climate challenges** while at the same time making sure young people acquire the skills needed to implement a sustainable green economy.

Main Policy Recommendations

01. Member states create officially recognized spaces where youth can become a part of the decision-making process. These spaces will remove bureaucratic and financial obstacles so that effective participation, not only by those who are the typically active participants, but by the marginalized and hitherto excluded groups for whom participation is difficult.

02. Scientific research and eco-friendly innovation should be recognized as fundamental tools to acknowledge and address climate challenges.

03. Global leaders continue to **support the promotion and creation of innovative solutions**, especially for young entrepreneurs.

04. Listen to our own communities and to our indigenous peoples to attend to our local needs and our environment-related urgency.

Session co-lead UN:

- **UNEP:** Diego Padilla Duran, Lilah Gaafarl, Ines Pereira
- **UNCCD:** Marcos Montoiro

Session co-lead Youth:

- **UNEP Major Group for Children and Youth:** Yugratna Srivastava and Teresa Oberhauser
- **YOUNGO - youth constituency of UNFCCC:** Marie-Claire Graf, Heeta Lakhani and Saher Rashid Baig

Session co-organizers:

- **Indian Youth Cafe:** Dega Ramya Tulasi
- **Youth advocates:** Devanshu Jha, Lamia Mohsin, Kervelle Baird
- **UNICEF:** Amy Wickham
- **UNESCO:** Xu Hui, Martha-Marie Vogel and Tawanda Gijima
- **UNDP:** Noella Richard, Giulia Jacovella

Session moderators:

- **Elliott Harris,** ASG of UN DESA
- **Cathy Li,** youth advocate, China

Session note-takers:

- **Ujin Jargalan,** Sustainable Lifestyles and Education Intern, UNEP Paris

Speakers:

- **Hailey Campbell,** Climate Ambassador & Program Director, Care About Climate
- **Sancha Conway Holroyd,** Co-founder, Ambassadors of the Earth
- **Gladys Habu,** Pharmacist, Solomon Islands National Referral Hospital
- **Tshianeo Mellda Ndou,** Co-founder and Youth Coordinator, Vhembe Biosphere Youth Network Respondents
- **Archie Young,** Lead Negotiator, COP26
- **Camila Zepeda Lizama,** Director General for Global Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mexico
- **Baaba Maal,** Land Ambassador, UN Convention to Combat Desertification
- **Alberta Pelino,** Chair, Youth 20 (Y20) Italy, Founder and President, Young Ambassadors Society

Summary of Proceedings

Setting the Scene:

On Wednesday April 7, the thematic session “Accelerating Action for the Planet” was held. The session offered an opportunity to show and promote solutions at all levels, that address SDG 12 (Sustainable Consumption and Production), and SDG 13 (Climate Action).

Elliot HARRIS began the parallel session. He explained that with the climate crisis we know what is at stake and we know how to fix it, yet we do not seem to be taking the necessary steps to get us there. He urged that more can and must be done on the policy front to dissuade the unsustainable activity that we see.

Thematic Dialogue:

Saher Rashid BAIG discussed the pre-forum consultations on the voices of young people, informing that the main findings of these consultations revealed that grassroots efforts are not engaged enough in policy processes as they could be. Ms. BAIG urged that young leaders deserve equal voices - this

requires a transition from meaningful youth engagement to meaningful youth leadership.

Eddy Frank Vasquez SANCHEZ highlighted that the interlinkage between SDG12 and SDG13 represents an important opportunity to enhance innovation on action for the planet. He supported Ms. BAIG, reiterating that greater . He supported Ms. BAIG, suggesting that greater grassroots engagement in policy efforts is a must. In his view, the p. Mr. SANCHEZ underscored that the principle of leaving no one behind makes more sense now than ever, thus, we cannot keep key populations (i.e. youth) out of the conversation and the solution.

Mr. SANCHEZ encouraged Forum participants to use these conversations and bring them into action.

Hailey CAMPBELL underscored that it is hard to pick a singular priority for the planet in order for humans to thrive today, tomorrow, or 100 years in the future. She urged that we need policies that set legal responsibilities



If we do not address the climate problem, we will guarantee that those who are at risk of being left behind will be left behind.

Elliot HARRIS
ASG of UN DESA

for polluters to pay and take action that bring marginalized and vulnerable communities to the decision making table and that focus on transitioning on living in a zero-waste, zero-carbon and socially inclusive world.

Unlike political leaders, we are not paid to design or implement policies, yet we continue to be leaders in fighting for ambitious climate action because our lives, those of future generations, and our ecological community depend on it”

Ms. CAMPBELL further underscored that achieving a sustainable future needs to be reflective of everyone's needs and rights. She explained that everyone needs to be empowered, educated, and equipped with tools for living in a zero-carbon world that holds polluters accountable and prioritizes the happiness and well-being of all species. To achieve this, she emphasized the power of empowerment and knowledge sharing, as well as dynamic social norms messaging.

Ms. CAMPBELL explained what her organization, Care About Climate, has done to support youth in taking climate action through: youth mentorship, professional development resources,

and networking opportunities, to empower them to translate their knowledge into action at the local level. She underscored that securing large-scale social change requires all actors, especially policy makers, to integrate the elements of Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) equally into their work plans, commitments, and actions.

Ms. CAMPBELL supported Mr. HARRIS, arguing that empowering action on the ground can encourage political leaders to take more action. She stressed the importance of building capacity for everyone to act, suggesting that we are all agents of change when it comes to the climate movement, some people just may not be empowered to see it yet.

Sancha Conway HOLROYD

underscored that youth-led environmental policy is still lacking and that youth face many barriers. She emphasized the need to recognize the important role that youth play in the climate crisis. She called on the implementation of long-term inclusive youth leadership to be enabled more in climate action and the need for inclusion of minority communities in climate leadership.



Unlike political leaders, we are not paid to design or implement policies, yet we continue to be leaders in fighting for ambitious climate action because our lives, those of future generations, and our ecological community depend on it.

Hailey CAMPBELL

Climate Ambassador & Program Director, Care About Climate

Ms. HOLROYD urged that long-term inclusive and systematic youth leadership in climate action is possible and crucial for the change needed. This is possible through:

01. Recognition of the importance of youth in climate action.

02. Developing partnerships with youth-led organizations.

03. Dedicated resources and funding made accessible that facilitate youth engagement and participation from all backgrounds.

Ms. HOLROYD expressed her belief that young people from marginalized and underrepresented groups can engage more in climate leadership and advocacy by attacking the reasons they were excluded; ignorance, injustice, and environmental racism. This can be solved by:

01. Governments providing specific spaces to enable youth participation.

02. Youth being afforded the opportunity to have input in high level places.

03. Youth not needing to compete with other stakeholders for access to these spaces.

She concluded that when implementing climate action, socio-economic problems should also be considered and fought for - otherwise people will continue to be excluded.

Gladys HABU shared perspective of the challenges faced in SIDS, and highlighted recommendations of importance. She underscored that SIDS geographical nature means they are more susceptible to natural disasters and have limited land resources - people or continuing to see impacts such as sea-level rise, accelerated coastal erosion, saltwater intrusions, frequent floodings, tropical cyclones, and loss, not only in biodiversity but in culture, identity, and history.



As a leader in the climate movement, I have learned that it is not about knowing everything or all of the answers. It is about meeting people where they are at, bringing people with different perspectives, knowledge, and needs to the decision-making table, and building the capacities to empower everyone to act with the climate or global community and natural environment in mind. We are all agents of change when it comes to the climate movement. Some people just may not be empowered to see it yet.

Hailey CAMPBELL

Climate Ambassador & Program Director, Care About Climate

Ms. HABU put forth **two key recommendations**:

01. Equal, or at least increased, representation at the global stage.

Voices of SIDS and LDCs, especially those of youth, need to be amplified more when it comes to international discussions and decision-making in the climate action space. Not everyone can speak or interpret scientific language correctly, personal stories on loss and damage by climate change from underrepresented yet vulnerable or directly vulnerable communities must be spoken louder. This will allow more people to understand, empathise and engage in climate action.

02. Increased institutional support for vulnerable communities on a social and economic front. This includes stronger institutional and technical capacities to support climate adaptation strategies, such as establishing sustainable frameworks for community relocation. This will help bridge gaps between national and international climate action acceleration projects.

Tshiane NDOU underscored that UNESCO Designated Sites provide a solution for environmental conservation and explained that they provide a localized solution to sustainable development. He suggested that bio-prospecting and bio-technology should be brought into the picture due to the multitude of benefits that they offer.

Mr. NDOU further recommended increased environmental education and community engagement, as well as working with indigenous people on the ground, as a solution to the climate crisis. He urged that through sustainable development and modern technology, we can live in harmony with nature and preserve the environment for future generations to come.

Archie YOUNG expressed the frustration he feels when considering the climate crisis, though underscored the importance of identifying clear actions that can be taken. He emphasized the necessity of a multilateral approach to the climate crisis. Mr. YOUNG discussed the upcoming COP26, placing emphasis on the need to focus on the science and solutions. He contends that science has solutions and we need to create space to focus on what is happening and the dangers and the devastation that is happening, as well as considering the opportunities that science can bring.

Camila Zepeda LIZAMA reiterated that we have to consider that we are now not only in a climate crisis, but we are also facing so many enormous challenges with the COVID-19 pandemic that we must innovate, we must change our current lifestyle and current ideas. In this sense, we must listen to our own communities and to our indigenous peoples to attend to our local needs and our environment-related urgency.

Ms. LIZAMA announced that the Mexican government is fully committed to giving youth a voice. For example, in preparation for COP 26, they are working with several partners to invite Mexican, young, environmental activists to participate in an open call to be part of the negotiations. This includes a three-month training for youth candidates from prominent policy makers in the field, some of whom will get the chance to become active members of the Mexican delegation, not as youth representatives going to youth events, but as official negotiators at the table discussing Article 6 and other topics.

Ms. LIZAMA called on other governments to take similar action - not only with the Convention on Climate Change, but also Biodiversity and Desertification.

Baaba MAAL, supported by Ms. LIZAMA urged that youth are the future - young people have the strengths and have the ability to change many things and to do everything that we need to do to protect our environments, to support sustainable living and sustainable development, but also to fight against climate change's impact on the whole planet.

Mr. MAAL suggested that when talking about climate change, the first thing individuals need to understand is the problems of our land. He urged that platforms such as this, with large information sharing, are necessary.

Alberta PELINO spoke on behalf of Youth20 - he announced that climate is the top priority of the group. Mr. PELINO underscored that it is of vital importance to retain the principles of our economic system and ensure the transition to a system based on sustainability and a circular economy.

He urged that we all need to work towards the definition of new, inclusive, and resilient models building on opportunities that the sustainable recoveries from COVID-19 offer to accelerate the energy transition, green economy, and environmental sustainability. Further, he expressed firm belief that scientific research and eco-friendly innovation should be recognized as fundamental tools to acknowledge and address climate challenges.

Mr. PELINO urged global leaders to continue to support the promotion and creation of innovative solutions, especially for young entrepreneurs. He further underscored his belief in the role of education in developing awareness of climate challenges while at the same time making sure young people acquire the skills needed to implement a sustainable green economy.



GOAL 13

CLIMATE ACTION

2.2 A PEOPLE-CENTRIC RESPONSE

The thematic session “A People-Centric Response” featured the contributions of four young people to SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) in their respective fields and communities. Main findings of the pre-event online survey were also shared during the session.



Roman Davas-Fahey



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

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GOAL 2

ZERO HUNGER



GOAL 3

GOOD HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Main Policy Recommendations

01. Effective mental health support services for children and young people to address the psychological impact of COVID-19.

02. Increased taxes and marketing restrictions on processed, nutrient-deficient, and environmentally-harmful foods, in order to level the commercial playing field for companies that produce and/or sell healthier, greener options.

03. International governments and NGOs confer greater agency to farmers, young people, and community leaders in policy discussions, rather than viewing local stakeholders merely as beneficiaries of top-down policy decisions.

Session Title as Per-Program:

- **A People-Centric Response**

Session co-lead UN:

- **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO):** Francesca Dalla Valle

Session co-lead Youth and moderators:

- **SDG2 Youth Constituency - Major Group for Children and Youth:** Pramisha Thapaliya
- **SDG3 Youth Constituency - Major Group for Children and Youth:** Lucy Fagan

Session co-organizers:

- **UNESCO:** Maria Kypriotou, Sue Vize and Zengmei Wang
- **UN-Habitat:** Ahmet Soguktas
- **UNEP Major Group for Children and Youth:** Yugratna Srivastava
- **International Pharmaceutical Students' Federation:** Hera Ali
- **International Federation of Medical Students' Associations:** Eglė Janušonytė
- **WHO:** Eva Kiegele
- **Global Youth Health Caucus:** Lucy Fagan

Session note-takers:

- **Francesca Dalla Valle, FAO**
- **Eva Kiegele, WHO**

Speakers:

- **Kervelle Baird**, Research Officer, WHYFARM
- **Roman Davas-Fahey**, Founder, Climate-Proof Food
- **Louise Mabulo**, Founder, The Cacao Project
- **Hera Ali**, Clinical Pharmacist and Chairperson of Public Health, International Pharmaceutical Students' Federation (IPSF)
- **Mahmood Al-Hamody**, Medical Student, University of Alexandria and Liaison Officer for Human Rights and Peace Issues International Federation of Medical Students' Association
- **Mellany Murghor**, African Director, Young Professional Chronic Disease Network (YP-CDN)

Summary of Proceedings

Setting the Scene:

The thematic session “A People-Centric Response” featured the contributions of four young people to SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) in their respective fields and communities. Main findings of the pre-event online survey were also shared during the session.

The slowdown in economic activity due to the impact of COVID-19 has weighed heavily on household incomes and youth sources of livelihoods. In the face of such challenges, youth have stepped up and are contributing to their communities by engaging in agriculture and rural development in support of SDG 2, thus contributing to addressing youth unemployment, poverty and migration.

Young people working in the health sector (SDG3) are also helping their communities by speaking out for – and in some cases, providing – effective, equitable care and emergency health response. Effective mental health support services for children and young people need to be put in place to address the psychological impact of COVID-19.



Thematic Dialogue:

Ms. Kervelle BAIRD discussed how WHY Farm’s sustainable agriculture and education programs navigate the specific challenges and opportunities that a small island state with a young, growing population like Trinidad and Tobago faces. She observed that her country is rich in human and natural capital, but requires innovative policies and solutions to build stronger and more self-sufficient food systems, as well as to optimize production. Ms. BAIRD also stressed the imperative of employing new technological strategies, such as crop simulation modeling, in response to emerging climate change-related threats.

Ms. BAIRD stated that the four core components of WHY Farm’s programs – food and heritage, youth engagement, agri-entrepreneurship, and technology and digital agriculture – place young people and entrepreneurship at the forefront of efforts to improve nutrition and to build more sustainable local food systems. Because Trinidad and Tobago currently relies on imports to supplement domestic food production, she explains, improving the country’s self-reliance through sustainable local agriculture and entrepreneurial solutions is also key to reducing the financial costs and carbon footprint of the existing food system.

Ms. Hera ALI cited COVID-related disruptions to education as a major issue for current students and future health care professionals. Her organization, IPSF, represents pharmacy students and future pharmacists. She described how insufficient digital learning resources and difficulties transitioning to online

learning not only have impacted the quality of education for students, but also have produced unusually high levels of stress and lack of focus among IPSF members

In response to these challenges, Ms. ALI explained that IPSF, along with international dental and veterinary student associations, launched a global campaign last year that provides greater mental health, education, and professional development support to members.

One of the primary aims of this campaign is to promote meaningful student engagement and representation across various areas that compose the frontline of COVID-19 relief - from medical research and development, to policy making, to combating misinformation about the COVID-19 virus and vaccinations at the local level. As mass vaccination has become the number-one healthcare priority in many countries, IPSF members also now play a crucial role assisting with vaccinations and vaccination management at clinics around the world.

For Ms. ALI, ensuring that the world's future healthcare workers receive adequate mental health support, better professional training opportunities, and a stronger voice in health promotion and education, is vital to addressing the inequities and weaknesses that the pandemic has exposed in many health care systems around the globe.

Ms. Louise MABULO, the founder of the Cacao Project, has worked with over 200 small-scale farmers in the Philippines to incorporate restorative and regenerative agricultural techniques into their farming practices.

Ms. MABULO first highlighted how over the past decade, the Philippines has been hit by a series of devastating typhoons, which have displaced tens of thousands of farmers and contaminated tens of thousands of acres of cropland. Because agriculture is the economic backbone of many parts of the Philippines and because climate change is expected to exacerbate both the severity and frequency of typhoons in the region, she explained, the sustainability and resilience of small-scale farming is a matter of survival for local communities.

To Ms. MABULO, agricultural practices are integral to any discussion about food systems, especially in remote rural areas that are disconnected from global supply chains.

In addition to climate change-related concerns, Ms. MABULO identifies two other **medium-term threats to food security** in the Philippines:

01. As young people flock to urban centers in pursuit of education or more lucrative jobs in ever-increasing numbers, the **average age of farmers in the country is rising steeply.**

02. Arable lands across the Philippines are threatened by unsustainable development - representing both development for non-agricultural purposes and unsustainable agricultural practices that degrade soil and pollute water sources.

Ms. MABULO believes that it is necessary to adopt holistic, human rights-based approaches to this set of issues. She calls upon international governments and NGOs to confer greater agency to farmers, young people, and community leaders in policy discussions, rather than viewing local stakeholders merely as beneficiaries of top-down policy decisions.

Dr. Mellany MURGOR has been working on the frontlines of the COVID-19 medical response in Nairobi since the beginning of the pandemic. Dr. MURGOR discusses how the COVID-19 crisis has exposed serious inequities and weaknesses in health care systems in Kenya and throughout East Africa.

She first details how anxieties and fears about COVID-19, combined with isolation measures and spiking unemployment rates, have created major mental health problems among people of all ages. Because substantial health care resources have been diverted away from mental health in order to address the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health among people with pre-existing conditions has deteriorated even more significantly, as they have lost access to treatment and medications.

In addition to mental health, Dr. MURGOR described how COVID-related supply chain disruptions have also adversely impacted people with other

medical conditions. In some parts of Kenya, she explains, diabetics have not been able to acquire insulin.

Aside from the more immediate consequences of strained regional health care systems, Dr. MURGOR called attention to emerging health and food security crises that stem from the pandemic's devastating impact on fragile African economies. A growing number of people in East Africa who have lost their jobs due to the pandemic are struggling to afford food, medicine, or shelter for themselves and their families, which places additional strains on the region's limited health care and social assistance programs.

Dr. MURGOR cited YPCDN COVID-19 support groups for young Africans as an example, describing how widespread access to digital communication and other new technologies has empowered young people to develop and collaborate on innovative, home-grown solutions to some of these problems.




GOAL 3

GOOD HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Mr. Roman DAVAS-FAHEY

underscored the sharp rises in youth unemployment and cuts to COVID-19 relief payments, among other nascent economic obstacles. He illustrated how fresh, healthy food has become inaccessible and prohibitively expensive for a growing number of young Australians.

To Mr. DAVAS-FAHEY, this trend is not only troubling for physical and mental health reasons, but also because higher consumption levels of unhealthy, processed food could have a significant impact on the environment.

Mr. DAVAS-FAHEY expressed his belief in top-down policy solutions as necessary to ensure that young people have access and the financial resources to make healthy, sustainable food choices. However, he also expressed belief that grassroots, small-scale efforts, such as local, community-supported food networks or the cooking workshops run by Climate-Proof Foods, are needed to educate and empower youth to advocate for these resources in the first place. He urges that “large numbers of these types of small initiatives run at the local level can have a massive impact on a global scale over time”.

Further, he expressed support for increased taxes and marketing restrictions on processed, nutrient-deficient, and environmentally-harmful foods, in order to level the commercial playing field for companies that produce and/or sell healthier, greener options.

Mr. Mahmood AL-HAMODY discussed rights-based approaches to building more equitable and resilient health systems in a post-pandemic world. To him, much of the current dialogue surrounding the global recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic revolves around the notion of “getting back to normal”, which is a goalpost he feels is misplaced and insufficient.

He described how the pandemic has exposed the limitations, inequalities, and deficiencies of many health systems around the world, and emphasized his belief that governments, health care professionals, policy experts, and other thought leaders should instead be viewing ongoing recovery efforts as an opportunity to build more effective, efficient, and sustainable systems than were in place before the pandemic.

Mr. AL-HAMODY underscored that the key to creating better health systems is adopting an intersectional lens that employs a much broader set of metrics to gauge overall health. He reminds that it is crucial to look beyond healthcare quality, as health systems are often understood, to place greater emphasis on variables like overpopulation, water quality, age, and obesity rates.

Mr. AL-HAMODY concluded that treating healthiness as the building block of a health system also places youth at the center of solutions, and helps address the underlying health issues that the pandemic has exposed.



GOAL 2

ZERO HUNGER



2.3 PROSPERING AND THRIVING

The thematic session “Prospering and Thriving” identified how the socio-economic COVID-19 recovery can be financed, including which sectors can yield the best response. The session was focused around SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).



Session in Brief

- **Investment made now** to recover from the crisis **can accelerate transition to the SDGs**, promising a better future for youth
- The outcomes of this session should concern itself, at the very base, with what we should be doing to **create pathways for financing development**, attaining the sustainable development goal targets, and living in a just world both individually and collectively.
- The fight will not be won by the loud, poetic voices of few, or a political savior. The **fight for a just and equitable world** will come from those **who continuously chant the lyrics** of the words **of the song that we all envision**.

Main Policy Recommendations

01. Inquire and understand why there are certain barriers to achieving the 2030 agenda, and how we can collectively overcome these barriers to move forward in an effective way.

02. Young people from all different backgrounds urge a new deal to rejuvenate and redesign the parameters of youth and employment, based on sound economic solutions, creative entrepreneurship, and inclusive prosperity. Young people ask that they be the custodians of this agenda.



Session Title as Per-Program:

- **Prospering and Thriving**

Session co-lead UN:

- **Susana Puerto Gonzalez**, ILO
- **Ewa Staworzynska**, ILO
- **Arlette Verploegh**, UNCTAD
- **Raymond Landveld**, UNCTAD

Session co-lead Youth:

- **CS FfD Youth Constituency**: Viridana Murillo
- **My World Mexico**: Saul Zenteno-Bueno
- **International Movement of Catholic Students**
- **Global Youth Caucus for Decent Work and Sustainable Economies**: Peter Loewi
- **Japan Youth Platform for Sustainability**
- **International Union of Socialist Youth**

Session co-organizers:

- **Africa Regional Youth Caucus**: Kawsu Silah
- **African Youth Commission MGCY LAC Regional Caucus**: Rosario Diaz Garavito
- **The Millennials Movement**

Speakers:

- **Msizi Ndumiso Mngomezulu**, Youth Action Hub Coordinator, UNCTAD
- **Anna Fendley**, Director of Regulatory and State Policy, United Steelworkers, Chairperson, Global Trade Unions Youth Committee / International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)
- **Roberto Hinestrosa Mejía, Advisor**, Presidential Youth Office, Colombia
- **Sanya Rajpal**, Development and Policy Expert, Entrepreneur and Lawyer
- **Ronald Ramlogan**, Team Leader of Public Relations and Research, Employers' Consultative Association of Trinidad and Tobago
- **Amélie J. Mariage**, UN Foundation Next Generation Fellow
- **Beatrice Nyamwenge Okech**, Representative of Y-ACT, Amref Health Africa

Summary of Proceedings

Setting the Scene:

The thematic session “Prospering and Thriving” identified how the socio-economic COVID-19 recovery can be financed, including which sectors can yield the best response, particularly for a youth inclusive and responsive recovery. The session was focused around SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

In leading up to the discussion, co-organizers and co-leads held a number of consultations with young people across the world in order to be able to understand their standpoint, grievances, and challenges when it comes to the sustainable development agenda, and the COVID-19 pandemic. During the session, participants were invited to participate in interactive polls which were discussed later on.

Ms. Viridana MURILLO opened the session, underscoring that “building back better is easier said than done”. She suggested that it requires funding and willingness from all sectors to work together for public good, and not just for their own interests. Further, elevating the economic situation of people around the world can be done through promoting decent jobs.

Describing the defects of the global recession heightened by COVID-19, Ms. MURILLO stated that a decent job can dramatically change someone's living condition, by just providing social security and a steady income.

Thematic Dialogue:

Mr. Msizi Ndumiso MNGOMEZULU presented **two main summary points** of the pre-session consultations:

01. The intellectual and academic discussion and argument for a sustained world - a world that is just, a world without any inequality, a world with no poverty, and a world where there is inclusive economic growth - **is an argument that has won and everybody has bought into.** Young people are very clear about the pathways for development, their hopes, and the policy mix that they would like to see.

02. COVID-19 has given individuals immense things to think about with regards to the **regression of work** that has been done to achieve the SDGs by 2030. There is an understanding that there are numerous, necessary, agenda items that need to be addressed in a short amount of time.

He proceeded to present specific findings of the pre-consultation, which reflect the opinions of the loudest and quietest voices of youth from around the world. **Young people suggest:**

01. A need to align the values of the teachings of the educational system with the needs of the job market.

02. Mentorship, skill development, and skill building programs between experienced and young people are of paramount importance.

03. The creation of entry level jobs in order to move forward. Of absolute importance to this is simplifying entry into workplace requirements, and ensuring that internships and traineeships are paid.

04. Stakeholder promotion and investment in green, blue, creative, and circular economy models.

05. Bridging the digital gap to enable young people from developing worlds to enter into the digital world and harness the benefits of this economy. This is fundamental.

06. Increased private public partnerships - they are an essential part of SDGs 1 and 8.

07. Lastly, as policies are made for financing for development, **using the vision for a global new deal that has been put forward**, resoluteness in action has to be at the heart of the response. Young people are clear that they want to be custodians of this agenda. In order for them to do that - they have made it clear that this struggle is not going to be won by singular persons, or the one that shouts the loudest, or that we need a victory from a political leader to save us all. The fights to be kept alive, for the most part, must come from those without poetic tongues, those without words of politics, and those who continuously just chant the lyrics of the words of the song that we all envision, which is a just life and an equitable society.

Mr. MNGOMEZULU underscores that the task is not about repeating arguments for poverty, the dangers of unequal societies, or the importance of inclusive growth. Rather, the outcomes of the session should concern itself, at the very base, with what we should be doing to create pathways for financing development, attaining the sustainable development goal targets, and living in a just world both individually and collectively. He further suggests the need to inquire and understand why there are certain barriers, and how we can overcome the barriers that we face in order to be able to go forward.

Mr. MNGOMEZULU presented two challenges that the world is faced with: to either press forward; or to let the challenges faced from COVID-19 disable us from obtaining the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

In response to a question posed by Ms. MURILLO, **Ms. Anna FENDLEY** explained how governments can ensure that their recovery measures and investments bring about jobs for young people. She framed her answer in the context of previous financial crises, including the 2008 global recession, reminding that with respects to job creation, we are talking in absolutely human terms - that the decisions made about how we build



Keeping the fights alive, for the most part, must come from those without poetic tongues, those without words of politics, and those who continuously just chant the lyrics of the words of the song that we all envision, which is a just life and an equitable society.

Mr. Msizi Ndumiso MNGOMEZULU
Youth Action Hub Coordinator, UNCTAD

back better or recover from COVID-19 will impact people's lives- young people's lives- potentially for the rest of their life.

Ms. FENDLEY underscores that to build back better from COVID-19 and look to meet the sustainable development goals, we must use the lessons learned from 2008 to ensure that the same mistakes are not made for young workers who are coming into the working world now. To this end, she calls for increased international solidarity and innovative financing mechanisms, and respecting rights.

The Global Trade Union, represented by Ms. FENDLEY, called for a **new social contract** in the recovery. There are **five pillars** of the contract:

- 01. Jobs for people of all ages,** particularly young people. These jobs must be sustainable; good for the climate, long lasting, high quality, and in important sectors, including the care economy.
- 02. Ensuring rights are respected.**
- 03. Universal social protections.**
- 04. Equality and non-discrimination.**
- 05. Inclusion** in making sure that the economic recovery touches all nations and all workers around the globe.



2.4 INCLUSIVE PEACE: THE WAY FORWARD

The thematic session “Inclusive Peace and the way Forward” featured young people actively engaging with both SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) to ensure inclusive and peaceful societies across the world.

Ms. Kirsty Rancier from UNODC addresses the Inclusive Peace Thematic Breakout session of the ECOSOC Youth Forum



Kirsty Rancier

Session in Brief

- **Diversity, inclusivity and justice** is what it takes to build sustainable peace and eliminate inequalities.
- Participation cannot be hindered by proximation.
- **Youth are of vital importance** in the peace process. Youth participation from a young age is key to prevent crime and minimize violence, but also to promote social justice.
- There are large risks to youth when it comes to **online harassment**. The risks are high for young women as the internet continues to pose a challenge on mental health
- Youth cannot be left behind and can no longer be the primary **victims of crime and violence**.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has **exacerbated existing inequalities** around the globe. Young people have been adversely affected by the growing uncertainty for their education, employment, increasing risks in digital spaces, their ability to access meaningful participation at all levels, reducing discrimination and upholding the rule of law.

Main Policy Recommendations

01. Implementation and contextualization of **international resolutions that tackle challenges of gender-based violence**, such as UN Security Resolution 1325, Women Peace and Security.

02. **Develop and implement targeted and multidimensional measures**, including groups such as women and girls, indigenous persons in digital spaces.

03. **Governments must pressure local companies to lower the cost of internet** in order for individuals of under privileged background to access and participate in online spaces.

04. **Raise formal participation of youth** in spaces where decisions are being made.

05. **Embed principles and methods of peace education** into all forms of formal and informal education. This means reviewing and designing international and local curricula and education systems that are focused on inclusion, preventing discrimination, and building the mindsets that inspire youth to both reduce inequalities as well as call out prejudice.

(continued on next page)

06. Develop and implement targeted and multidimensional measures, including groups such as women and girls, indigenous persons in digital spaces. Further, governments must pressure local companies to lower the cost of the internet in order for individuals of under privileged background to access and participate in these spaces.

07. Build young people's capacity to peace, and in particular, leadership through funding support, networking building, and capacity strengthening while recognizing the full diversity of youth and how young people organize.

08. Guarantee the human rights and security of all young people engaging in peace-building work.

09. Introduce enabling legislation and specific measures to ensure meaningful youth participation, including temporary measures such as age and gender quotas, voting eligibility ages, access to financing mechanisms and supporting capacity building for young politicians.

10. Advance young women participation in leadership, in peace building through capacity building and coalition building.

11. All stakeholders need to prioritize creating safe spaces and maintaining them for young people to be meaningfully and inclusively engaged at all levels of policy making, including through financial and political support.

Session Title as Per-Program:

- **Inclusive Peace: The Way Forward**

Session co-lead UN:

- **Kirsty Rancier, UNODC**
- **Gilberto Duarte, UNODC**

Session co-lead Youth:

- **Mohamed Edabbar, Global Youth Caucus for SDG 16**
- **Khaled Emam, Global Youth Caucus for SDG 16**
- **Marcela Browne, Education at Fundación SES**

Session co-organizers:

- **OSGEY:** Emilia Harriet Hannuksela, Gizem Kilinc
- **UNICEF:** Regev Ben Jacob
- **UNESCO:** Sue Vize, Maria Kypriotou, Vivian Leung, Romina Kasman, Yvonne Matuturu

- **UNAOC:** Dana Podmolikova
- **UNDP:** Noella Richard, Maria Stage
- **ITU:** Sylvia Poll, Jenny Arana
- **Youth Advocacy Network:** Danish Tariqu
- **Youth Action for Peace and United Community, Nigeria:** Emediong Akpabio, Mathilde Stephanie Ngo Pouhe
- **MGCY LAC Regional Caucus, The Millennials Movement:** Rosario Diaz Garavito
- **MGCY Asia Pacific RCC (ASEAN) and IYC4Peace of the International Youth Centre Kuala Lumpur:** Sharifah Norizah Syed Ahamad Kabeer
- **Asian Youth Peace Network and Asian Youth Council:** Regine Guevara
- **European Youth Forum:** Assia Oulkadi
- **Network of International Youth Organizations in Africa:** Timothy Onyango

Session moderators:

- **Kirsty Rancier,** UNODC
- **Mohamed Edabbar,** Global Youth Caucus for SDG 16

Session note-takers:

- **Sharifah Norizah Syed Ahamad Kabeer,** MGCY Asia Pacific RCC (ASEAN) and IYC4Peace of the International Youth Centre Kuala Lumpur
- **Haneen Abusalah,** Global Youth Caucus for SDG 16

Speakers:

- **Rawan Khalfalla,** USIP Generation Change Fellow, Member, Local Displacement Tracking Matrix team with the International Organization for Migration Libya
- **Wevyn Muganda,** Cora Weiss Peacebuilding Fellow with the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders
- **Mike Gabreil,** Head of the Youth Wing, National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka (NCEASL)
- **Elana Wong,** Asia-Pacific Focal Point & Incoming Global Focal Point, MGCY Migration Youth Constituency, Co-founder, Colours of Edinburgh
- **Bernardo Mota,** Member, Federal District Network of Transactivists, Member, "T Collective", LGBTI+ Advocate

Summary of Proceedings

Setting the Scene:

The thematic session “Inclusive Peace and the way Forward” featured young people actively engaging with both SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) to ensure inclusive and peaceful societies across the world. This session generated youth-led recommendations and deepened the understanding of the COVID-19 crisis within the context of inclusive peace for young people.

Mohammed EDABBAR and Kirsty RANCIER introduced themselves as the moderators for the session. The **four topics** addressed in the session were:

- 01. Digital inclusion and safe spaces.**
- 02. Participation in decision making and peace practices.**
- 03. Reducing inequalities and discrimination.**
- 04. Crime prevention, criminal justice, and the rule of law.**



Thematic Dialogue:

Ms. Rawan KHALFALLA began by explaining that she has witnessed way too many complex and transitional governments for a lifetime. She underscored that all of these repetitive scenarios have few things in common which are: young people in the battlefield; young people, women and vulnerable groups paying the price; and the same male politicians at decision making tables claiming efforts to establish peace.

Ms. KHALFALLA underscored that diversity, inclusivity and justice is what it takes to build sustainable peace and eliminate inequalities. She believes that it is important to adopt an age sensitive, gender sensitive mindset when speaking about women and youth inclusion and in order to shrink the intergenerational gender gap. Further, it is essential to advocate for the implementation and contextualization of international resolutions that tackle challenges of gender-based violence, such as UN Security Resolution 1325, Women Peace and Security.

Ms. KHALFALLA underscored that the key to building healthy, strong institutions is to strengthen the community by encouraging active citizenship and building the capacity of girls and boys and all young people in all fields.

Ms. Wevyn MUGANDA addressed online harassment, highlighting that the risks are high for young women as the internet continues to pose a challenge on mental health. She urged the continuation of use of digital platforms as tools to mobilize action and increase youth participation in civil society processes that heighten peace and security.

Ms. MUGANDA urged governments to develop and implement targeted and multidimensional measures, including groups such as women and girls, indigenous persons in digital spaces. Further, governments must pressure local companies to lower the cost of the internet in order for individuals of under privileged background to access and participate in these spaces. Finally, she emphasized the need to foster collective responsibility amongst internet users through advocating for a responsible digital citizenship on platforms that have the power to radicalize young people and insight violence.

Mr. Mike GABREIL addressed achieving meaningful youth participation and decision making in the COVID-19 context. He underscored that today, youth peace-builders face the challenges of:

- 01.** Shrinking civic engagement spaces.
- 02.** Limited access to financial resources.
- 03.** A lack of transparency from governments.

Mr. GABREIL called for governments to raise formal participation of youth in spaces where decisions are being made. He underscored that ultimately it should be born in mind that young people head agreements for the long term benefit. Further, participation cannot be hindered by proximation. There is importance of young people in the room, outside the room, and around the room of peace negotiations.

Mr. GABREIL stressed that inequalities with respect to access to technologies remain widespread. He put forward the following **recommendations for the UN and Member States:**

- 01. Build young people's capacity to peace**, and in particular, leadership through funding support, networking building, and capacity strengthening while recognizing the full diversity of youth and how young people organize.
- 02. Guarantee the human rights and security** of all young people engaging in peace-building work.
- 03. Introduce enabling legislation and specific measures to ensure meaningful youth participation**, including temporary measures such as age and gender quotas, voting eligibility ages, access to financing mechanisms and supporting capacity building for young politicians.
- 04. Advance young women participation** in leadership, in peace building through capacity building and coalition building.

Ms. Elana WONG suggested that whilst it may seem a less tangible goal the the rest of the other topics, reducing inequality is critical to achieving true sustainable development as a whole. To properly reduce inequality and discrimination, she believes that we must tackle complex and embedded factors that impact communities all over the world.

First, Ms. WONG urged that the principles and methods of peace education need to be embedded into all forms of formal and informal education. This means reviewing and designing international and local curricula and education systems that are focused on inclusion, preventing discrimination, and building the mindsets that inspire youth to both reduce inequalities as well as call out prejudice.

She underscored that youth can call on governments and large education regulation bodies to listen to youth groups and campaigns calling for these reforms, and meaningfully involved youth in designing education for the future.

Further, Ms. WONG called on funding bodies to support and scale innovation promoting the peace mindset.

She also called on governments to facilitate youth intercultural dialogue and exchange programs. Building upon Mr. GABREILS earlier statement on the importance of youth involvement in peace processes, Ms. WONG argued that this meaningful participation needs to extend beyond policy response and into the very fabric of policy and governance to ensure that they become inclusive for all youth. It is imperative that young people from all backgrounds are involved.

Ms. WONG called on governments and political engagement organizations to promote and facilitate meaningful youth participation in long-term decision making mechanisms across all levels (local, national and international).

She urged that vulnerable groups must be accounted for. In the context of COVID-19, vulnerable youth groups have been neglected, thus she calls for specific provisions, resources and funds that protect them.

Importantly, Ms. WONG called upon multi-stakeholder cooperations to ensure that youth, regardless of vulnerability and privilege, are able to fulfill dignified futures. This includes expanding and institutionalizing government intervention, as well as allocating resources to ensure that youth have access to opportunities through technology.

Ms. WONG called on governments to support healthcare providers in guiding youth initiatives designed to support mental health. Additionally, called for the provision of wide-spread media in how specific communities and minority populations are displayed.

The final speaker, **Mr. Bernardo LOPES** addressed key recommendations on crime prevention, criminal justice, and the rule of law. Mr. LOPES underscored that the factors leading to crime and violence work together, increasing marginalized individuals' social and economic vulnerability. In stressing the vulnerability of trans individuals, women, and youth in his country, Brazil. He explained that these circumstances have been worsened in the context of COVID-19 as mass violence has progressively increased.

Mr. LOPES underscored the need to bear in mind that youth crime and violence prevention are complex phenomena and the rule of law only works in the context where inclusion, equity, and changes in social mindset are present. He called for affirmative policies that open doors to decent jobs, especially in the context of COVID-19, to be a top priority of governments if they would like to address youth crime and violence. He suggested that such policies must be influenced by and with you.

On the topic of youth engagement and participation, Mr. LOPES emphasized that youth participation from a young age is key to prevent crime and minimize violence, but also to promote social justice.

Mr. LOPES reminded that the 2030 Agenda demands an integrated approach to achieve the SDGs. This largely applies to peace and inclusion. He called upon the government and private sector to shift their mindset to build a youth-centered approach to

any field. This includes: employment, healthcare, social services, food security, water and sanitation, etc.

He underscored that youth cannot be left behind and can no longer be the primary victims of crime and violence. In order to achieve this, youth must be placed where they deserve, that is, everywhere.

Ms. RANCIER launched the question and answer position of the session. The questions covered themes of youth advocacy, the responsibility that youth have in preventing hate speech, and ensuring that spaces in governments are given to youth and women.

Closing Remarks:

In conclusion, Ms. RANCIER summarized that COVID-19 has exacerbated existing inequalities around the globe. Young people have been adversely affected by the growing uncertainty for their education, employment, increasing risks in digital spaces, their ability to access meaningful participation at all levels, reducing discrimination and upholding the rule of law.

Ms. RANCIER urged all stakeholders to prioritize creating safe spaces and maintaining them for young people to be meaningfully and inclusively engaged at all levels of policy making, including through financial and political support.



GOAL 10

REDUCED INEQUALITIES

2.5 HARNESSING PARTNERSHIPS, RESOURCES & SCIENCE

SDG 17: Partnership underpins all other SDGs. In its own terms it refers to a global partnership—meaning a sort of social contract that involves and enables all to play a part in the achievement of the full set of SDGs.



zoom

Session in Brief

- Young people highlighted that they cannot be alone in making impactful change - **partnerships are essential**.
- Partnerships must be **sustainable and impactful**, though **youth need support** in navigating partnerships (i.e. how to secure them and how to ensure they are meaningful).
- Partnerships can be used to **mobilize youth** on the implementation of the SDGs.
- **Entrepreneurship** can have a large social impact.
- Securing **financial support** is essential.
- There is a huge opportunity for young people in the **circular economy space** and the waste management space, especially in the developing world.
- Youth need to **utilize the strengths of partners**. This entails seeking what they can do for you, and what you can do for them.
- There are people out there who are **interested in hearing what young people have to say** and supporting young people.
- Working together as human beings, reducing the narrative of “good” and “bad” partners will help drive capacity.
- Every partner is **special**.

Main Policy Recommendations

01. Include young people from the onset of any project.

02. Create opportunities for everyone in a partnership to be able to contribute on the basis of their own expertise.

03. Put youth at the centre of any development decision that is being made.



Session Title as Per-Program:

- **SDG 17: Partnerships**

Session co-lead UN:

- **UN ITC:** David Cordobés, Claire Sterngold, Julia Zietemann
- **UNESCO:** April Tash (HQ/SHS), Ardito Kodijat

Session co-lead Youth:

- **CPDE Youth Constituency & CS FfD Youth Constituency**
Represented by My World Mexico, International Movement of Catholic Students & Generation Equality Youth Task Force
- **Salam Al-Nukta**
- **Rasha Haffer**
- **Shantel Marekera**
- **Chamathya Fernando**

Session co-organizers:

- **U-INSPIRE Alliance OIC Youth Forum**
- **Fsahat Ul-Hassan**, MGCY LAC Regional Caucus
- **Rosario Diaz Garavito**, The Millennials Movement
- **Daniel I. Ajudeonu**, Generation Action Africa
- **Department of Global Communications (DGC)**
- **Hawa Diallo**, UNFPA
- **Irem Tumer**, UNDP Youth team HQ
- **Noella Richard**, UN Women
- **Ritah Muyambo**
- **Erik Parigger**, Coordinator Responsible Business Conduct (RBC/CSR/MVO), Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship Advisor
- **Siddharth Hande**, Founder, Kabadiwalla Connect
- **Vensy Krishna**, Founder, Law School 101
- **Maximo Mazzocco**, Founder, Ecohouse Argentina
- **Yamana Zedan**, Development Practitioner and Project Coordinator at Peabody Youth Work
- **Pamela Coke-Hamilton**, Executive Director, International Trade Centre

Session moderator:

- **Claire Sterngold**, ITC, Youth & Trade Programme

Session note-taker:

- **Julia Zietemann**, ITC Youth & Trade Programme

Speakers:

- **Eglė Janušonytė**, #YouthAgainstCOVID19
- **Erik Parigger**, Coordinator Responsible Business Conduct (RBC/CSR/MVO), Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship Advisor | Orange Corners Egypt & Mozambique
- **Siddharth Hande**, Founder, Kabadiwalla Connect
- **Vensy Krishna**, Founder, Law School 101
- **Maximo Mazzocco**, Founder, Ecohouse Argentina
- **Yamana Zedan**, Development Practitioner and Project Coordinator at Peabody Youth Work

Summary of Proceedings

Setting the Scene:

The session inspired and motivated youth participants by showcasing partnerships in different thematic areas where young people played a pivotal role or joined forces with actors from different sectors to engage in achieving the 2030 agenda. It was moderated by Claire STERNOLD who opened the session.

SDG 17 underpins all other SDGs. In its own terms it refers to a global partnership—meaning a sort of social contract that involves and enables all to play a part in the achievement of the full set of SDGs. Everyone in every place can play a part. This vision implies solidarity and a common direction.

Thematic Dialogue:

Mr. Erik PARIGGER underscored that SDG 17 is often a bit of an under highlighted SDG. He suggested that we need to come further and understand what makes a good partnership that is sustainable and impactful.

Mr. PARIGGER expressed the belief that to create impactful change we cannot go alone; that is, everyone in a partnership should contribute on the basis of their own expertise. He underscored that co-ownership is important for partnerships, everyone as equals instead of sponsors or contributors.

Mr. PARIGGER further noted that Internet access is a real problem for young people. A small but important example from Mozambique which can help combat this issue is how cell phone companies provided civilians with internet vouchers.

Mr. PARIGGER spoke from his perspective as a young person involved in government partnerships, suggesting the importance of highlighting the social impact that entrepreneurship can have.

Mr. Siddharth HANDE further elaborated on this point. He underscored the fascinating connection on the policy side, questioning how do you enact the right type of policy to enable partnerships with young people to engage in SDG 17, and what is the goal of policy to drive young people to participate in the SDGs?

Mr. HANDE expressed a firm belief in partnerships, noting that his work has always been pushing the SDG agenda and looking for partnerships to develop their work. He highlighted that there is a huge opportunity for young people in the circular economy space and the waste management space, especially in the developing world.

Ms. Eglė JANUŠONYTĖ proposed putting young people at the centre of the table from the onset of any project. In her view it is necessary to not only give youth spaces, but also meaningfully engage youth in intergenerational dialogue.

Ms. JANUŠONYTĖ asked Yamana ZEDAN how she thinks that partnerships can be used to mobilize youth on the implementation of the SDGs. Ms. ZEDAN resolved that youth need to be put at the centre of any development decision

that is being made. She explained that by doing so, the decisions will be targeted to their needs and meet their expectations.

Ms. Yamana ZEDAN underscored that modest targets in the beginning and forming partnerships with grassroots organizations helps us understand the context of every community. Ms. ZEDAN repeated the rhetoric that utilizing the strengths of other partners will have a positive outcome. She urged that it is really important to understand the context that one is working with, and the partners that they are working with, because every partner is special. She underscored using partnerships to lead youth-led projects and reaching out to people to collaboratively work with them.

Speakers agreed that Ms. JANUŠONYTĖ key message, suggesting that youth engagement in any partnership that seeks to have an impact on young people, is key. Ms. JANUŠONYTĖ addressed youth by advising that “if they don’t give you a seat at the table, bring a foldable chair”. She is of the opinion that by 2030 youth will not need to bring their own chair when engaging in partnerships.

This thought was supported by Vensy KRISHNA. She suggested that youth need to be included in the whole process, not as an afterthought. Further, she see’s youth as active participants in designing and implementing solutions.



If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a foldable chair.

Ms. Eglė JANUŠONYTĖ
#YouthAgainstCOVID19

Ms. KRISHNA pledged that nothing about youth will never again be done without youth.

Ms. ZEDAN explained how partnerships helped her at a personal level as a Syrian immigrant. Partnership was very useful at a personal level for helping her to understand the Western world. She recommended not to look at partnerships as a complicated task, reminding that sometimes it is really easy and we do it in our daily lives. Ms. ZEDAN further recommended the use of informal individual partnerships by stakeholders to reach out to youth (i.e. messaging youth on LinkedIn).

Ms. Vensy KRISHNA shared how youth partnerships are driving institutional change in India. She suggested improved access to legal education and literacy, getting people more engaged with the law, and encouraging more young people to go to law school, as solutions for further change.

Moreover, she underscored youth-led groups supporting other youth-led groups. In her experience, this is a type of partnership that has been successful within her organization because young people are responsive and adaptive.

Finally, Ms. KRISHNA proposed youth partnering with governments to increase credibility of youth led initiatives, and forming partnerships with initiatives based in data, A.I. and tech, because they will magnify the capabilities of youth ideas.

Mr. Maximo MAZZOCCO shared insight on how partnerships have impacted his work. He underscored that it is important to be humble and remember where we are standing as humanity, as brothers of the planet. He urged that we need to consider the seriousness of the matter of climate change in every decision that we make.

Mr. MAZZOCCO reminded us that it is very difficult to change structural issues if we comply with the existing order. He called for the reduction of the narrative of “bad guys” and “good guys” - suggesting that if we all work together and see one another as allies, we will notice that every human is a good person that can work together. He concluded that intergenerational work is more complete.

Ms. KRISHNA underscored that youth led organizations are struggling with being taken seriously. While it is easier

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In my country, millions of people do not have access to clean water, drinking water, and we are facing one of the worst economic crisis is ever. Half my country is poor already. If we do not reach each other out and seek for help, how are we going to solve this equation?

Mr. Maximo MAZZOCCO
Founder, Ecohouse Argentina

now because of the background that has been created, she suggested that approaching people for partnerships is still hugely difficult.

For the **second segment of the session**, Ms. STERNGOLD invited audience members to the stage to ask questions and speak of their projects. Dialogue was shared on the question of access to finance, including themes of prioritizing youth entrepreneurship and engaging private stakeholders within the sector. Additional questions inquired on how to access partnerships in regions with language barriers, and how to communicate information to them.

The **final segment of the session** was centred around take-aways for youth listening. The speakers all shared their recommendations on how youth can build impactful partnerships and achieve their goals.

Ms. KRISHNA first reiterated the involvement of young people in the project right from the onset. Secondly, she emphasized the facilitation at the policy level of the active involvement of youth-led initiatives on national and international projects that address the SDGs. This looks like, involving youth in project levels, and creating policy level initiatives to ensure that youth involvement is specified.

Mr. MAZZOCCO stressed reaching people with a nice, good, solid, practical and dynamic message. He posits that people want to help, and there is always a person who is able to help you.

Mr. HANDE stated that as young people, the journey is long and the road is long, but finding a group of people who believe in the vision that you have and the difference that you want to make is the most critical aspect. He re-emphasized Mr. MAZZOCCO's point of finding and believing in the 'good guys'.

Mr. PARIGGER confirmed the point raised by Mr. MAZZOCCO, that enthusiasm gets you far. He repeated the need to be open-minded to partnerships. Specifically, one should not have a preconceived idea of what their partner can do for them and what they will be, rather, should be open to seeing what others can contribute. Mr. PARIGGER suggested that the most prominent application of this is through financial support.

Ms. ZEDAN advised youth that they need to know but that need and know why they are reaching out to partners before reaching out to them. She recommended asking prospective partners what they can provide, but additionally offer partners something that you can provide. Ms. ZEDAN stressed that different styles and tools of communication need to be used depending on the stakeholder.

To close the session, Ms. JANUŠONYTĚ emphasized the need to ensure that the conversation on youth lives beyond the event.



REGIONAL BREAKOUT SESSIONS



ECOSOC
YOUTH FORUM
10TH ANNIVERSARY

3.1 AFRICA

The theme for the Africa Regional Breakout Session drew inspiration from both the African Union's theme for 2021, "Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa We Want", as well as the overall theme of the 2021 ECOSOC Youth Forum, "A Decade of Action: Building a Resilient Recovery."



Angela Muruli

Session in Brief

- Africa has **untapped potential for technology and innovation**.
- **Curriculum and policy** need to respond to the innovations needed in Africa.
- There is a **deficit of opportunities** for young people in Africa
- There are serious bottlenecks that need to be tackled with **restricted access to funding**.
- **Corruption is the biggest problem** in Africa and it cannot be ignored
- **Technology needs to be affordable** in order for it to change lives
- Young people need to have **access to the funding** to the support infrastructure.

Main Policy Recommendations

- 01. Provide basic infrastructure** to reduce cost of doing business for young people.
- 02. Provide affordable and accessible internet** infrastructure.
- 03. Create a market for the products** that young people are creating.



Session Title as Per-Program:

- **Africa Regional Breakout Session**

Session co-lead UN:

- **UN-OSAA:** Jainaba Jobarteh, Daniel Malin, Juliet Wasswa-Mugambwa, Claire Sterngol
- **ITC:** Julia Zietemann
- **ITC Youth African Regional Youth Caucus**
- **African Youth Commission**

Session co-organizers:

- **UNESCO:** Jayakumar Ramasamy, Soichiro Yasukawa, Samuel Partey, Nicole Webley, Xu Hui
- **UNDP Africa:** Pauline Deneufbourg
- **UNV:** Sarjo Sarr
- **Child Solidarity Group:** Emediong Akpabio
- **Association of Young Professionals of Water and Sanitation of Senegal (AJPEAS):** Mbaya Diop
- **Africa Youth Advisory Board on Disaster Risk Reduction:** Sandra Delali Kemeh

Session moderator:

- **Gogontlejang Phaladi**

Session note-takers:

- **Daniel Malin**, UN-OSAA
- **Sarjo Sarr**, UNV

Speakers:

- **Sicelo Dube**, Zimbabwe Science ambassador, founder of LEC Biotech and Elevate Trust
- **Alberto Francioli**, African Youth Advisory Board on Disaster Risk Reduction
- **Serge Hounton**, development economist and research associate fellow in the AMAS project at Moore University in Kenya, founder of the Innovation Hub for Migration Research
- **Lorence Kabasele**, the Eastern Southern Africa President
- **Kelly Eve Koopman**, Author and Atlantic Fellow Alumni
- **Weyyn Muganda**, Cora Weiss Peacebuilding Fellow with the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders
- **Angela Muruli**, **United Nations Volunteer**, UN Women Nigeria

Summary of Proceedings

Setting the Scene:

The theme for the Africa Regional Breakout Session drew inspiration from both the African Union's theme for 2021, "Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa We Want", as well as the overall theme of the 2021 ECOSOC Youth Forum, "A Decade of Action: Building a Resilient Recovery".

Ms. Gogontlejang PHALADI began the session, emphasizing the theme that is "Supporting the Culture of Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship of African Youth to Build Forward Better for Sustainable Development". She introduced the panel discussion which featured African young people who shared their experiences, best practices and work that they have been doing with regards to innovation and creativity in their respective spheres of influence

Ms. PHALADI underscored that everything as a whole has been totally changed as a result of the COVID-19 because it has affected all our lives regardless of where we are or what we do. She emphasized the severity of the situation in Africa in particular, explaining that the International Monetary Fund (IMF), estimates that the growth of Africa will decline or has already declined by 5.4% in the previous year, and that more than 26 million people in Africa have been thrown into extreme poverty just in the last year. Countering this, she referenced the silver-lining of the global health emergency, that is the surplus in innovations, technology and creativity all over the world that has risen in response to COVID-19, which, according to the World Health Organization (WHO) 12.8 percent of these innovations came from Africa.

Ms. PHALADI urged that African young leaders have a lot to do to ensure that they are part and parcel of a resilient recovery post COVID-19 pandemic, and that the African people are not just spectators. She reminded that there is immense potential within Africa that is still yet to be leveraged, that is still yet to be tapped on and be used effectively to transform the continent and the livelihoods of Africa.

Thematic Dialogue:

Ms. Sicelo DUBE proclaimed that the starting point for building the future that African youth want is the education system. Ms. DUBE referenced her time as a Mandela fellow, where she visited American post-secondary institutions. She described the classroom setups, clubs and programs, and general access to extracurricular activities to be safe spaces for the students to experiment and do fun things that put practical learning into action.

Ms. DUBE advocated that curriculums across Africa should include and / or complement this form of creativity and innovation. This is basic, she explained, that theory taught in the classroom should be applied afterward. Accordingly, Ms. DUBE believes that issues around creativity and innovation in education should be a pan-African effort, with policies that link innovation and entrepreneurship first country-wise and then throughout the continent.

She reminds the international community that if it is happening in America, Africans should not just hear of it or know that it exists, they should be able to experience it firsthand. She concludes that curriculum and policy need to respond to the innovations needed in Africa.

Mr. Alberto FRANCIOLI discussed the roadblocks that young people in Africa face. Africans are marginalized and excluded from the many strategic opportunities to share ideas, expertise, knowledge, and innovation on a systemic level. Mr. FRANCIOLI explained how young people feel as though they are on the sidelines because African youth have a deficit of opportunities. In his view, this is related to:

01. Lack of resources available such as money, time or social capital.

02. Lack of support for youth driven ideas and initiatives, especially at the local and national levels.

03. Competition between limited resources (i.e. opportunities for a few, though thousands of people competing for them).

04. Exclusion of youth at the local decision-making and policy information levels, especially for voicing things fall within youth interests.

Mr. FRANCIOLI suggested that the deficit of opportunities for African youth necessitates the creation of strategic opportunities and resources that allow for youth to be part of these decision-making processes, to have these opportunities, and especially to be part of intergenerational dialogue.

Youth make up about 60% of the African population and their interests need to be heard. He underscored that if youth are not present for these strategic engagements, especially with policy makers, there will continue to be a blockage.

Mr. Serge HOUNTON underscored potential policy measures that could respond to the challenges and roadblocks that African youth are subject to. His recommendations were grounded in his experience with African and migrants and refugees. The main challenge or recommendation that he posed is for policy makers to help migrants and refugees to be more integrated with their host countries. He broke down the legislative bottlenecks into **two recommendations**:

01. Improve these individuals in their host country - invest in these individuals to improve their situation in the host country, only then will they be capable of showing their potential.

02. Give these individuals business lessons - individuals need the opportunity to assert themselves. Employing them and giving them the space to learn will lead to their success. This is linked to access to funding heck I need to clean this up.

Mr. Lorence KABASELE underscored what can be done to help African youth access funding. He suggests that young people should work with a private public partnership to leverage resource mobilization. He also explains that young people have the duty to understand how they can position themselves to have access to corporate social responsibility funding with different partners, specifically making these partners understand the value of investing in young people's ideas and products.

Mr. KABASELE explained that there are opportunities for funding available from the private sector, though it is a matter of securing those partnerships and investments. His work in the DRC collaborates with funders, what they call Makutano, to have a youth pre-Makutano.

Pre-Makutano positions young people's innovation and brings different actors to see what young people have done to provide a direct link for youth to mobilize on available funding. Lorence explains that during the pre-Makutano professional work to groom and select the best young innovators, to increase the success of private partnerships. Efforts such as this are how he has been able to help young people. He proposes that helping young people as a network that supports young people's entrepreneurship will positively impact their access to funding.

Ms. Kelly Eve KOOPMAN addressed the question of what fundamental and quintessential support young people need from governments. She pronounced that it is very difficult to have this conversation without talking about structural inequality and the ways in which, the Global South/Global North system, and the system of extraction and of expectation that exists on the African continent, as well as its kind of partnering relationship to government corruption and government empathy, race, stifles, creativity and innovation with young people.

She reiterated the opinion of others, suggesting that without infrastructural support to imagine, to design and to come up with solutions, there will be constant competition amongst African youth.

Ms. KOOPMAN argues that first and foremost, there needs to be meaningful investment into the capacity of young people. Young people in Africa do not have the ability to exist; to eat or to have office space. These individuals need not to be functional by only their labor, but to be able to invest in their collective imagination.

Ms. KOOPMAN connected this to the Global North/Global South dichotomy. She contends that the lack of investment in capacity keeps the dichotomy going because within Africa there is a labor class and extraction class, opposed to elsewhere, there's a myriad of opportunities for kind of resource driven engagement.

Ms. KOOPMAN further argued that young people are beyond the idea of government participation and capacity. She recommended that for the government to assist in a manner that will posit high success, Africa needs to engage in direct democracy that is people driven. There needs to be a decentralized approach to capacitance rather than extraction and to investing with the good faith that it is a long-term investment in the collective imagination and innovation of the Youth. She warned that if this form of people-centric government is not adapted, Africa will continue this kind of structure of laboring generation.

Ms. KOOPMAN concluded with the message that the "rat-race" needs to end. Referencing the increase in technology and innovation brought on by COVID-19, as earlier explained in the dialogue, she sends an appeal to how funding should be viewed on the African continent, as to capacitate rather than to create competition. Kelly speaks on behalf of African youth, arguing that our creative and radical solutions and our creative and radical action require creative and radical funding.

Mr. Weyyn MUGANDA underscored the principal challenges that Africa is currently facing. He urged that poverty can no longer be used as an excuse for Africa in 2021 - it cannot be considered the reason why young Africans and Africans are not able to realize their ideas and their dreams and live and achieve the SDGs.

Mr. MUGANDA, supporting the remarks of Ms. KOOPMAN, cautioned that we cannot talk about innovation without talking about systemic inequality and systemic structures. The conversation needs to mention how African institutions of governance and democracy are very weak, bureaucratic, and riddled with corruption.

He underscored that limited rights and freedoms, as well as historical injustices are the major challenges currently stopping or preventing, African countries or Africa as a whole from realizing its SDG targets and priorities.

Mr. MUGANDA called for:

01. The establishment of a **clear relationship between policies and realities.**

02. Government reform that no longer excludes groups or individuals that do not fit in, in society's idea of who a person is. For instance, addressing the lack of accessibility of public services for individuals with disabilities, refugees, those with underprivileged backgrounds, etc.

03. Africans to start demanding justice for the systemic barriers faced by Africans as a result of colonial injustices.

04. The international community to **hold people, governments and institutions accountable for the injustices** that exist.

05. Giving Africans the opportunities that they deserve and have earned.

For example, the COVID-19 vaccine has been distributed equitably to the African continent, while many African professionals contributed to the development of the vaccine.

It was underscored that the problem of corruption in Africa cannot be ignored. She connected this to the challenge facing progress and development in

Africa, explaining that the total money Africa loses to corruption every single year is more than the total development aid received. Without dealing with corruption and economic crime, she stated, corruption will continue to impede progress in Africa.

Closing Remarks:

Panelists converged on underscoring the importance of youth involvement in building back better. Each speaker provided a stated independent commitment for their individual actions moving forward.

To close the session Ms. PHALADI thanked the speakers for their engagement. Gratitude was also expressed towards power corporations in Africa for not cutting out the speakers electricity during this session.

In a powerful statement to close the session, Ms. PHALADI pleaded that "technology needs to be reliable and it needs to be accessible. Not when we're still having these regular power cuts, not when data is still so expensive that you need to decide whether you're buying rice tonight or you're going to be paying for your data".





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Technology needs to be reliable and it needs to be accessible. Not when we're still having these regular power cuts, not when data is still so expensive that you need to decide whether you're buying rice tonight or you're going to be paying for your data.

Gogontlejang PHALADI
Session Moderator

3.2

EUROPE, NORTH
AMERICA AND
OTHER STATES

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Our COVID-19 recovery will only be sustainable if it encompasses youth and recognizes their rights moving away from any job is better than no job mentality to focus on quality employment. This recovery is a great challenge, but also an opportunity to recognize the previous normal wasn't working for young people.

— Anja Fortuna

Vice-President of the European Youth Forum



**United
Nations**

#YOUTH2030



**ECOSOC
YOUTH FORUM
10th ANNIVERSARY**

Main Policy Recommendations

01. Increased respect and protection of the rights of Indigenous persons

across the region and around the world. Member states align relevant national laws, policies, and frameworks with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

02. Full attainment of human rights.

This includes:

- **Addressing systemic racism** and oppression of all kinds.
- Continuation and commencement of **dialogue on the human rights impacts of pandemic restrictions** for the ongoing protection of personal rights and freedoms.
- **Accountability for all human rights abuses** wherever they occur and whoever they are perpetrated by to make most progress towards agenda 2030.
- **Full attainment of all human rights** by all people and to generate the most positive change.
- Member States fully **align their decision and policy making processes with international human rights law** principles.
- **Securing the rights of migrants and refugees** in line with applicable international treaties.
- Reinvigorated commitments to the progressive realization of these and other human rights for all young people.
- **Taking maximum available action** within available resources that is targeted, reasonable and proportional.

03. Protection of civil rights more widely,

especially for young people who have yet another level of vulnerability compared to other societal groups.

04. Urgent action on the climate crisis

by reducing greenhouse gas emissions in line with the Paris agreement and with national and regional plans of action.

05. Prioritization of mental health services,

especially for youth. This entails increased and more affordable mental health services, as well as more resilient systems in general. Public Health services should absorb these costs.

06. Next Generation EU to become a permanent mechanism of public spending in Europe.

The European Commission could incentivize more targeted public investment by the Member States.

Session in Brief

- **Human rights** is the topic that **encompasses every other topic**. Thus emphasis on a rights based approach to the COVID-19 recovery is essential.
- The **pandemic has amplified and reshaped mental health** issues.
- Mental health cannot be left on the backburner as governments continue to address the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The topic of mental health needs to be **made more public** or more of a priority.
- People need to be **educated about mental health issues** and problems so it's not seen as a weakness anymore.
- Anyone struggling with mental health problems should not be afraid to voice their problems.
- The European Union **cannot afford to return to austerity** measures.
- As major fiscal stimulus and rescue packages are being introduced to manage the recession, governments must avoid repeating past mistakes and **prioritize long-term human well-being** by investing in economic stability.
- We must not focus just on recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, but work on **building systems that are resilient** for the future.
- The irreversible damage caused by **climate change and biodiversity is the most complex and urgent problem** currently facing the world because it encompasses all other issues.
- **Climate change cannot continue to be forgotten** in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Rather, the global recovery from the pandemic serves as the pinnacle opportunity to reorient our system into one that prioritizes environmental protection.
- **Youth participation is a civic right** that needs to be upheld.

Session Title as Per-Program:

- **Session on Europe, North America and Other States**

Session co-lead UN:

- **UNECE:** Elise Zerrath

Session co-lead Youth:

- **European Youth Forum:** Jan Mayrhofer, Assia Oulkadi

Session co-organizers:

- **Christopher Bell**, North American Students of Cooperation (NASCO) and Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY)

Session moderator:

- **Ms. Anja Fortuna**, Vice President of the European Youth Forum

Session note-taker:

- **Christopher Bell**, North American Students of Cooperation (NASCO) and Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY)

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Speakers:

- **Christopher Bell**, Global Focal Point, Major Group for Children and Youth
- **Dima Yared**, Human Rights Officer for the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
- **Laura Miranda**, AEGREE-Europe, Mental Health Working Group
- **Andrei Martin Vuikovac**, Permanent Mission for the Republic of Slovenia, UN Office
- **Benedikt Hummel**, Student, London School of Economics and Political Science
- **Maria Teresa Fabregas**, (One of) Director of Recovery and Resilience Task Force of the European Commission
- **Nadege Carlier**, Belgian UN Delegate for Climate
- **Emily Weski**, Vice President of LSE, Swedish Youth Organizations, Global Focal Point, Major Group for Children and Youth, Peaceful and Inclusive Societies
- **Pedro Folgado**, Chair of the Youth Working Party, Council of the European Union, Attaché for Youth and Sport, Portuguese Permanent Representation to the European Union

Summary of Proceedings

Setting the Scene:

A panel discussion on Europe, North America and Other States was held to discuss the systemic challenges that are the root of this region's crises of inequality and sustainability. This session was formatted for each youth representative to present their views on a topic.

The **five topics discussed** in the session are: Human Rights, Mental Health, Economic Recovery, Climate Change, and Youth Participation. A young delegate from Portugal was then given the floor, followed by a Q&A period.

Ms. Anja FORTUNA facilitated the dialogue between youth and policy-makers who brainstormed their ideas and knowledge on: shifting to economic and political systems as part of the recovery that guarantee the rights and promote the well-being of youth in line with the accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda, while ensuring the participation of young people in policy-making and implementation.

Opening remarks were presented by Ms. FORTUNA. FORTUNA drew reference to the special nature of this year's Forum, not only because it is held online, but also special because the world is faced with a lot of different things that are popping up due to the COVID-19 crisis. She stressed that COVID-19 has brought forth a lot of issues for youth across the globe, reminding that many youth are ineligible for emergency support from the state because of age-based discrimination and poor quality jobs.

When talking about the crisis, Ms. FORTUNA stated that we have to be aware that young people are, as well, the

solution to this crisis, not just the issue of the crisis. It is important that young people are included in these debates. We need to work on common costs. We need to have rapid and far-reaching changes, and we need to do it fast.

Thematic Dialogue:

Topic 1: Human Rights

Mr. Christopher BELL underscored that the COVID-19 recovery and programs must center the full attainment of all young people's economic, cultural and social rights. He further added that resources must be focused on those most at risk of being left behind the special attention to rights most impacted by pandemic restrictions.

Mr. BELL **recommended that centering COVID-19 recovery around these rights** includes:

- 01. Transformative investments and quality education** for all, and a decent work for all.
- 02.** Ensuring that each and every young person has the **opportunity to attain the highest possible standard of health**, including mental health.
- 03.** Shaping our cities and our communities to provide for each person's **right to adequate housing**.
- 04. Respect for the rights of indigenous peoples** across our region and around the world. This means guaranteeing the right to privacy, the regulation of surveillance and data collection activities and well-resourced enforcement of these regulations.
- 05. Securing the rights of migrants and refugees** in line with applicable international treaties.

06. Reinvigorated commitments to the progressive realization of these and other human rights for all young people.

07. Taking maximum available action within available resources that is targeted, reasonable and proportional

08. Taking urgent action on climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions in line with the Paris Agreement and with national and regional plans of action.

09. Addressing systemic racism and oppression of all kinds.

10. Continuation and commencement of **dialogue on the human rights impacts of pandemic restrictions** for the ongoing protection of personal rights and freedoms.

11. Accountability for all human rights abuses wherever they occur and whoever they are perpetrated by to make most progress towards agenda 2030.

12. Full attainment of all human rights by all people and to generate the most positive change.

13. All States must fully **align their decision and policy making processes with international human rights law** principles.

14. National accountability mechanisms for both individual and systemic human rights violations must be strengthened.

15. Official development assistance must be increased aligned with an Alliance with SDG 10 to support the progressive realization of economic cultural and social rights globally.

16. States should align relevant national laws, policies, and frameworks with the **UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**.

17. Young people everywhere must stand together in solidarity recognizing the varying status and situations felt with human rights advocates around the globe.

Ms. Dima YARED underscored the opportunity for human rights to build back and recover better than pre-pandemic times. She contends that a human rights approach requires a paradigm shift.

Ms. YARED raised four points for how the region can recover economically, socially and culturally:

01. Make it a **political priority** to invest in social and economic rights of all.

02. Ground our response and recovery measures in **international human rights**, law and standards.

03. Target our funds to those most at risk of being left behind.

04. Collect data on the situation of youth, but which is then desegregated on the basis of sexual and gender orientation and identity, migrant status, minority status, socioeconomic status, or housing status, including situation of homelessness.

Ms. YARED concluded that investing in mental health, in the environment, and in social protection systems will better prepare us for the next shock that will come.

Topic 2: Mental Health

Ms. GOMEZ co-addressed the topic of mental health, and how, by magnifying inequalities, the COVID-19 Pandemic has contributed to increased mental health concerns. She underscored that mental health is a particularly big concern for youth, and, while mental health is seen in agendas, the prioritization of mental health needs to be put into action.

She paid attention to issues surrounding incorrect diagnosis, and the distribution of medicine, which is a result of not having enough psychologists in the core-political system, in her country and other countries according to international sources. Laura also drew attention to mitigation and awareness and the need to prioritize this. She described mental health as a “ghost topic” that we all talk about but do not fully understand.

Ms. GOMEZ suggested that the two most important factors to keep in mind are Socio-economic factors and Environmental factors. This is because socio-economic and environmental factors have a huge impact on individuals mental health and are something that can actually be nullified with wide-scale action and policies. Genetic make-up and lived-experience, on the contrary, are more complex to resolve at a policy level.

Ms. GOMEZ presented **four policy recommendations** as potential solutions to mental health issues:

01. Having more mental health workers in the system, for proactive and reactive purposes.

02. Affordable mental health services. The cost of these services should be covered by public healthcare systems. If it is not affordable, it will lead to further inequalities.

03. Listening to the needs of individuals and taking inspiration from smaller scale initiatives. For instance, implementing mental health days in the workforce.

04. As governments and policy makers develop plans to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, they need to **keep in mind the implications that this has for mental health** and the populations that are being affected. The price that we will pay after the pandemic will be a lot higher than the cost of the pandemic.

Mr. Andrei Martin VUIKOVAC offered further perspective on how the issues youth face today are not new - they have been around for quite some time, though have been made even more apparent because of the pandemic. He underscored that this is the most pertinent takeaway.

Mr. VUIKOVAC proceeded to thank and echo the words of Laura on youth mental health. He underscored that mental health has to be one of, if not the most important issue faced by the youth demographic. He reminded the audience that there is a high prevalence of mental health disorders among young people, there's limited access to mental health services, and sometimes also limited coverage for those services. This includes but is not limited to: stigma, lack of infrastructure, misinformation or lack of information.

In the dialogue, Mr. VUIKOVAC expressed how the COVID-19 pandemic has presented and framed certain mental health challenges in a new light, causing a significant “knock-on” effect to the way individuals live and operate healthcare systems. This includes:

01. Increased fear and anxiety (from the virus itself, that is fear from being infected or infection of loved ones, as well as anxiety that's related to job security for future prospects education).

02. Isolation due to some measures and thus scamped social life.

03. Diversion of resources to deal with the pandemic, which as a consequence, has altered the delivery of other health services.

Mr. VUIKOVAC drew attention towards Slovenia, which has long been regarded as a champion in primary healthcare services provision. He used examples within Slovenia which demonstrate how governments can effectively allocate resources in order to avoid the neglect of mental health. For each point raised, he explained what action has been taken in Slovenia, and what actions can be taken for the rest of the region, as per the Slovenian example:

01. In Slovenia, the assistance of 2.5 million Euros in **grants was a positive contribution for psychosis and psychological support.** Governments should **provide funding to NGO's and academic institutions** for promotion and prevention.

02. Primary healthcare systems are the priority in Slovenia; there are sixty-one health promotion centers nationally and numerous additional units that offer mental health services. Thus, **a strong primary healthcare system should be a priority.**

03. The health promotion centers in Slovenia have adapted to COVID-19 by providing mental health counseling by phone, establishing call centers for those in need. Government should **ensure that they are adapting to the reality of health services** during the pandemic.

04. Slovenia established a **working group for mental health of youth** that comprises members from the national youth council and the national Institute

for public health. This is an example that can be modelled elsewhere as a shared responsibility for finding solutions.

Mr. VUIKOVAC elaborated on Ms. GOMEZ's dialogue. He seconded her argument that youth contributions to finding and demanding innovative solutions to mental health issues is a huge burden to place on the shoulders of young people. Rather than youth demanding solutions from political spheres, different stakeholders need to team up and work together to tackle mental health issues, step-by-step.

He offered **additional recommendations** including the need for:

01. A proper balance between getting out of this pandemic as soon as possible and making sure that essential services are still available until we get there. Mental health services need to be a part of this.

02. Innovative solutions need to be found together; with the community, with the NGOs, and with young people. Platforms such as the ECOSOC Youth Forum are key for this.

03. Using the COVID-19 pandemic as a wake-up call for building more resilient healthcare systems and disease systems. Strong primary healthcare should be the backbone that offers comprehensive and universal coverage, including mental health services.



Topic 3: Economy and Recovery

Mr. Benedikt HUMMEL built off the conversation of failures of current systems that have been exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. He underscored that prior to the pandemic, the economic-system in place was not working for the majority of young people.

Ms. Maria Teresa FABREGAS explained the European Union's Recovery and Resilience Facility for the period 2021 - 2026. It is an envelope of 672.5 billion Euros that Member States can use in the form of grants and loans. She explained that the EU's long term budget is coupled with Next Generation EU (NGEU) - a temporary instrument designed to boost the economic recovery from the pandemic.

Mr. HUMMEL made a large reference to NGEU. His dialogue focused on **three overarching key concerns of young people** in relation to the economy and economic recovery, specifically in relation to the European Union.



Concern #1: Not returning to Austerity

Mr. HUMMEL underscores the need to maintain spending beyond the imminent crisis. More poignantly, it cannot be afforded to go back to austerity. He contends that the strong fiscal stimulus of the Europe Recovery Plan, Next Generation EU (NGEU), was decisive and mitigated economic consequences.

As the pandemic draws to an end, Mr. HUMMEL argues that the **reduction of public spending** should be reconsidered for **three main reasons**:

01. Future Challenges - Public challenges can only be addressed with the help of public investment. If the EU wants to meet its own climate investment gap targets, it needs to mobilize almost 470 billion euros each year until 2030. Additional prevalent public challenges, such as digitalization, demographic change, and other social risks, also require vast public investment.

02. Secular Stagnation - The EU has long seen secular stagnation, that is, decreasing interest rates coupled with low growth, which is projected to continue. Active fiscal policy is a key tool to mitigate the risk of financial crisis associated with secular stagnation.

03. Monetary Policy - As Europe is close to a 0% interest rate, the European Central Bank (ECB) baseline interest cannot be lowered further. It is also using unconventional monetary policy, such as quantitative easing, that may have damaging effects in the next few years. Thus, there is increasing demand for the ECB to step up fiscal policy in order to stabilize the future economy.

Mr. HUMMEL called for the need to ensure that major investment meets the needs of the future. He recommends a possible avenue of doing so is making the NGEU permanent to support the investment needs of the EU.

Concern #2: Intergenerational Equity

Mr. HUMMEL underscored that simply spending money will not solve problems - solving problems is dependent on how money is spent. He referenced findings on the Aggregate Spending of National Recovery Plans submitted by Germany, Spain, and France in March, 2021. He concludes that it over all represents a bigger problem, that:

- 01. There is a missing balance** between short-term and long-term objectives.
- 02. Social and environmental risk-reducing investments have to be maintained** beyond the pandemic.
- 03. Revenue-side** needs to be taken into account.

Mr. HUMMEL suggests that the European Commission could incentivize more targeted public investment by the member States.

Concern #3: Rethink the European Union's Fiscal Rules

Mr. HUMMEL highlighted the Debt-to-GDP Projections for the Eurozone in 2021, compared to pre-crisis levels, thus revealing how debt has mounted in Europe. Greater number of countries are now exceeding the 60% depth limits indicated in the EUs fiscal rules as a product of the suspension of the current fiscal framework as an escape clause.

He warns that there will be consequences if/when the EU returns to a standard fiscal framework because the EU's fiscal rules require deficits to not be higher than 3% - a GDP ratio that will not support 60%. He further warns that this will force many Eurozone countries into austerity.

Mr. HUMMEL offers the striking example of Italy, which, under these potential circumstances, would be required to produce very high surpluses in the future in order to reduce debt. He echoes his recommendation of making NGEU permanent because it will mitigate some of the prospective pressures.

Miss. FERNANDEZ supported the integrity of the EU, underscoring that the reforms and investments will help Member States to strengthen their social and economic resilience, their economic growth, and potential and job creation, while at the same time by supporting digital and green transitions.

Miss. FERNANDEZ called on member states and the European Commission to continue to work together to design their resilience and recovery plans, in order to comply with the requirements highlighted by Benedikt in the European semester. She summarized what role member states have in fulfilling this obligation according to the Recovery Plan, and how this intends to help young people secure opportunities in the long term.

Miss. FERNANDEZ expressed that National ownership is of major importance in building back economically from the pandemic. She contended that plans for reforms and investments need to belong to the citizens - and that this is the key for resilience in the future. Miss. FERNANDEZ, supporting the opinion of Mr. HUMMEL, advised that intergenerational equity should be the basis of current investments.

Topic 4: Climate Change

Ms. Nadege CARLIER commenced the dialogue on climate change, underscoring that climate change and biodiversity are the most complex and pressing problems in society, yet, the implications caused by a changing climate are seen as long-term. She suggests that this results in a collective focus on other emergencies such as the COVID-19 Pandemic. She said indeed there are lives to save, vaccines to discover, and an economic crisis to avoid, nevertheless the climate crisis cannot be placed on the back-burner.

She reminded policy-makers that it is absolutely necessary to maintain a focus on the environmental crisis. She cautioned that as the pandemic disappears, the climate crisis will not, and not prioritizing the environment will have dramatic, irreversible consequences.

Ms. CARLIER supported the overarching theme of the Forum, underscoring the importance of building back a better post-pandemic world. She sees the pandemic as an opportunity to take a step back and realize how interconnected global issues are. She underscores that all issues, spanning from racism, sexism, mental health,

inequality, and oppression, are a result of an overall systems thinking which exploits the lives of humans and nature for the benefit of a few. Accordingly, she argues that all individuals should deeply question and rethink our lifestyle, economic systems and our relationship to nature, and to each other.

Ms. CARLIER concluded that ambitious, intersectional, objectives are the solution to an effective recovery. Including youth in the decision making process and hearing the voices of young people is a part of the solution because youth will have to live with the consequences of climate change. She called on policy makers and other stakeholders to reorient the system away from harmful activities. She called for the phasing out of all direct and indirect subsidies to fossil fuels, and further calls on the elimination of financial incentives for exploitative farming practices.

In ensuing discussions on the live chat, Ms. FORTUNA expressed agreement with Ms. CARLIER, supporting the notion that in focusing on the urgency of the COVID-19 pandemic, governments are forgetting the importance of the climate crisis. Ms. FORTUNA reiterated that we cannot focus on just one issue by virtue of how interconnected they all are.

GOAL 13

CLIMATE ACTION



Topic 5: Youth Participation

In the last topic of the day, **Ms. Emily WESKI** underscored that civic and democratic spaces are shrinking globally. She calls for the inclusion of voices of children and youth as the world builds back from COVID-19.

Ms. WESKI referenced her experience working with youth and youth organizations. She reminded that until the pandemic halted all action in early 2020, the world was witnessing a global transitional force within the youth movements rising up to stand up against - for fair elections for democracy, justice, equality, peace, and a sustainable future. She uses the response of youth organizations during the pandemic as an example on how to continue to build off of pre-existing mechanisms to support intergenerational exchange.

Ms. WESKI expressed concern with clear strategies to exclude certain voices and in some countries to become just not a method for violating civic rights and in some cases, a way to directly target political opposition or cause further harm via pre-existing structural discrimination.

She stated that even though youth have proved their inherent worth, as valuable and fundamental members with our own agency during the pandemic, as well as before, platforms for children and youth in particular have been compromised.

She pointed to a statistic from CIVICUS, outlining that only 3% of the world population lives in a country where fundamental civic rights are protected. Taking note of this, Ms. WESKI called for the protection of civil rights more widely, especially for young people who have yet another level of vulnerability compared to other societal groups.



3.3 LATIN AMERICA

Note: The following is taken from the Co-leads Report on Latin America Regional Breakout Session of ECOSOC Youth Forum 2021. These proceedings do not reflect the chronology of the session, or indicate the origin of the recommended political action.



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In order to build back better, it is crucial that national, regional and local governments work together to evaluate priorities and consolidate potent and effective action plans. Now more than ever it is necessary for leaders to listen to their community.

— Sandrine Gouvêa

MGCY Latin America Regional Youth Focal Point in support of the UN Food Systems Summit



United Nations

#YOUTH2030



ECOSOC
YOUTH FORUM
10TH ANNIVERSARY

Session in Brief

- After almost a year of multidimensional impacts (health, economic and social) of the COVID-19 pandemic, **the Latin American region faces the most severe crisis** in recent decades.
- The increase in **youth unemployment, violence against children and youth** (especially young women and girls and vulnerable groups), **gaps in access to education, digital technologies, political instability**, as well as **extended periods of confinement**, considerable threats for youth activists, among other challenges in already precarious systems with systemic challenges, **place current and future children and youth at risk**, generations that have a critical role in the success of the 2030 Agenda in the region and the recovery process.

Main Policy Recommendations

01. Government responses need to have a regional, multidimensional, holistic, non-isolated, intercultural, intergenerational and gender approaches to address children, adolescents and youth's needs.

02. Governments need to mobilize resources and political will to build data to understand the contexts and challenges for the diverse youths to engage them properly as key actors to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the recovery processes.

03. Governments need to ensure, especially during the pandemic, the **access to quality health services** to children, adolescents and youths ensuring the access to sexual and reproductive health as essentials, and consider them during the vaccination processes. It is important that the Member States follow the recommendations made by the WHO through their different constituencies.

04. Governments need to work to **ensure food security** and fight against malnutrition in the region.

05. Invest in education for promoting skills for the next digital transformation and for access to the labor market.

06. Generate platforms in rural areas to generate fair development with equal opportunities and support the agricultural spaces to provide opportunities.

07. Governments must provide normative frameworks that ensure youth wellbeing, accurate participation and their participation in the different social spheres and agendas in their communities and nations, reformulating existing norms if necessary to ensure youths rights and engagement have a normative backup in observance of their human rights.

(continued on next page)

08. Governments need to ensure and **accelerate climate action** to protect the planet and our ecosystem, allocating the resources needed and participatory decision-making processes, and having a long-term approach to deliver climate policies.

09. Governments fulfill their duty to **regulate the production systems** in its different stages, articulating their climate focused policies to the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.

10. States are asked to ensure, promote and **create spaces for youth participation in decision-making and formal public policy design** processes. These spaces must ensure the safe and inclusive participation, with parity and a gender focus, of diverse youths, considering native communities, community leaders, and competent entities to address the climate crisis; promoting a dialogue on the existing needs and gaps but also on the proposed solutions without romanticizing their participation.

11. Promote local and community networks that make it possible to disseminate the real needs of children and youth from rural to urban areas.

12. It is essential that in the process of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, **children and youth are recognized as subjects of rights**, as well as teaching them to recognize their bodies as the first territory that must be defended and protected not only by the State but also by society.

13. Gender violence against young women and girls is **considered a priority** by our decision makers.

14. Children and youth must not remain silent and need to have access to programs, processes, resources, and infrastructure that allow them to report attacks and identify situations in which they are victims of violence.

15. Governments need to ensure there is a **path to achieve peaceful environments, free of structural violence** against children, adolescents and youths, respecting their identity and having as the center of public policies their integrity, providing them with the necessary spaces to protect them from violence.

16. Governments need to **allocate the necessary budget to address the youth's regional challenges** and ensure its destination reaches the people, having a tangible impact in their lives. Processes need to be transparent and budgets allocated should be publicly traceable by citizens.

17. Member States are asked to **respect the existence of diverse families** that do not embrace the traditional idea of family; it represents an important advance in terms of youth rights.

Session Title as Per-Program:

- **Latin American and the Caribbean Regional Table: LAC Children, Adolescents and Youth Engagement for a Sustainable Recovery**

Session co-lead UN:

- **ECLAC:** Daniela Trucco

Session co-lead Youth:

- *Spanish session:* **LAC IANYD Regional Caucus The Millennials Movement**, Rosario Díaz Garavito
- *English session:* **Commonwealth Youth Council (CYC)**, Franz George & **Caribbean Regional Youth Council (CRYC)**, Roshanna Trim

Session co-organizers:

- **ECLAC:** Catarina Camarinhas, Maria Ortiz, Mareike Eberz
- **UNESCO San Jose Office:** Andrea Gisselle Burbano Fuertes
- **UNESCO Cluster Office for the Caribbean:** Giuliana Neumann
- **UNFPA Latin America & the Caribbean Regional Office:** Allán Sánchez Osorio

Session moderators:

- *Spanish session:* **Max Trejo**, OIJ
- *English session:* **Dominique Noralez**

Session note-takers:

- **Spanish session:** **Andrés Cabanzo**, Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY)
- **English session:** **Anya Edwin**, CYC/CRYC

Speakers:

- **Rosario del Pilar Díaz Garavito**, Coordinadora de Caucus de Juventud Regional de América Latina y el Caribe para la Red InterAgencial de Desarrollo de la Juventud de Naciones Unidas - Perú
- **Eliana Riaño Vivas**, Punto Focal Adjunto, Grupo de NNAYJ - MeSCLAC / Red de Salud de las Mujeres Latinoamericanas y del Caribe - Colombia
- **Benjamín Thomas Cofré Yáñez**, Vicepresidente, Red Kimlum - Chile
- **Irigoyen Canto Rivera**, Voluntaria, Somos + Decididos A.C. - México
- **Abel Aronátegui**, Director Ejecutivo, Fundación Contra-Peso - Panamá

Speakers (continued):

- **Manuella Corrales**, Estudiante de Relaciones Internacionales de FECAP- Centro Universitario Álvares Penteadó, Brasil
- **Daniella Solano**, Oficial de Alianzas estratégicas y derechos humanos, Fundación Gente Positiva - Costa Rica
- **María Sujkowska**, Representante, Grupo de Niñas, Niños, Adolescentes y Juventudes del Mecanismo Regional de Participación de la Sociedad Civil - MeSCLAC / Corporación de Estudios y Desarrollo NorteGrande - Chile
- **Ana Karen Garita Sánchez**, Investigadora, Asociación sin fines de lucro Mujer&Mujer - México / Ecuador
- **Valery Salas**, Representante, Grupo Principal de Niñez y Juventud para el Programa de Naciones Unidas para el Medio Ambiente - UNEP MGCY - Perú
- **Joyce Mendez**, Representante, Grupo de trabajo regional del ODS 7 del Grupo Principal de Niñez y Juventud MGCY / Observatorio Latinoamericano de Geopolítica de la Energía - Paraguay
- **María Alejandra Teleguario Santizo**, Coordinadora Nacional, Jóvenes Artistas por la Justicia Social - Guatemala
- **Hanna Wong Bobadilla**, Investigadora, Asociación sin fines de lucro Mujer&Mujer - México / Ecuador

Image: Promotional material for the Latin America, Regional Breakout session of the ECOSOC Youth Forum 2021



Summary of Proceedings (Taken from the LAC Session Report)

Key Issue #1: A PEOPLE- CENTRIC RESPONSE

Youth have been especially affected by the **increased unemployment rate, malnutrition prevalence, poverty** and extreme poverty figures, and the lack of comprehensive States' responses. The persistent **lack of access to quality education** has prevented the continuity of life projects in a dignified way and out of precarious situations.

Young people emphasize that a **hegemonic health model is maintained** that exercises various physical, symbolic, and obstetric violence. Member States have not given a comprehensive response to this groups' needs, where practices such as female genital mutilation, forced marriage, and mental health issues, among other problems, are very prevalent. There is **concern about discriminating conceptions** such as fatphobia, adult centrism, and gender stereotypes inserted in health systems.

Health systems in the region were precarious before the pandemic and are now collapsing, leaving youth in the region in a vulnerable situation during the pandemic, who concentrate a relevant percentage of deceased due to the COVID-19 compared to their peers in other regions. **Lack of access to sexual and reproductive health**, including family planning and hygiene products was also highlighted as a problem in this crisis.

Finally, **youths are the last groups that will access the vaccination processes**, which is very limited in most countries of the region and is added to the complex challenges they face. This situation can isolate regional youths from the global recovery process.

There is **lack of access to nutritious foods** and a weak normative framework to improve the agricultural sector and provide food security, affecting the health of children adolescents and youths, increasing the rates of malnutrition and anemia. Access to basic services such as potable water is a needed condition to prevent infections to COVID-19.

MESA REGIONAL DE AMÉRICA LATINA

de abril de 11:20 a 13:00 hrs. (EST)



Key Issue #2: ACCELERATING ACTION FOR THE PLANET

Four areas of urgency were highlighted:

01. Public participation: Persistent discrimination due to adult centrism, has an impact on unequal access to the few spaces for participation and information for youth, seeing how environmental decisions have violated the principle of intergenerational equity and justice.

02. Lack of environmental education with a rights-based approach: This is a critical issue that worsened with the pandemic. Also, the difficult access to science limits the possibilities of youth to contribute to the resolution of the climate and health crisis.

03. Types of pollution: From the poor air quality seen in Mexico City, poisoning by agrochemicals in Paraguay and Argentina and mining in Peru, and to the so-called sacrifice zones, all place the health and education of thousands of young people at risk, just by attending classes in rural and urban areas. This has been a latent concern. Also, with the pandemic context, special consideration was shown for the increase in waste such as plastics and sanitary products that are not assertively managed.

04. Governance: The Latin American region has been deficient to address the climate crisis as a human rights crisis, an axis where youth have expressed their rejection in the consultation process of the smear campaigns against the Escazú Agreement seen in Paraguay, Colombia, Peru, or even Chile and Costa Rica that acted as co-chairs in the treaty negotiations. This is essential to deal with the destruction of marine and terrestrial ecosystems, which puts the water, food, and other human rights of our communities at risk, especially

indigenous ones. In addition, the criminalization and the violence against environmental defenders is a reality that added to the lack of preparedness in energetic transition through regional and national policies, is leaving our children, adolescents, and youths current and future generations behind.

Key Issue #3: PROSPERING AND THRIVING

Young people show high concern about the **presence of organized crime** that complicates the mobility to educational establishment and workplaces.

The **proximity of drug sales to schools and poor safety nets** put students at risk. Such is the case of the recently discovered prostitution networks, where girls and adolescents are victims of sexual violence which results in sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancies, and eventual school dropouts. The lack of programs and resources to support adolescent mothers to continue their studies was also highlighted.

The lack of opportunities and the current context aggravated by the pandemic has increased poverty in the region, generating **economic uncertainty due to the lack of income and protection systems** for youths and their families during the crisis. It is important to mention the gap between the urban and rural areas and the increasing effects of poverty and lack of opportunities for youths in rural areas who are forced to migrate abandoning the agricultural sector which does not represent an opportunity.

Different forms of **discrimination continue against the LGBTIQ community**, such as denying them

opportunities and the physical violence to which they are exposed when traveling to the workplace. Additionally, women experienced violence at work. Opportunities are limited because in some cases vast experience and knowledge of a second language are required, and lower-income populations have no access to second language learning opportunities.

Youth are more **exposed to non-formal job opportunities**, where labour rights are not respected and a meritocracy culture is not considered. The pandemic has also affected entrepreneurial youths who have abandoned their projects at the same time has increased the workload for young women and girls who are caretakers and young mothers.

Key Issue #4: INCLUSIVE PEACE: THE WAY FORWARD

The pandemic has had a strong impact on the population, particularly in youth that already faced a series of problems due to the exclusion and structural inequalities. However, it has **affected in a greater way the population groups that have been historically excluded**, who have been most affected by the pandemic, such as Afro-descendant, indigenous, women, disabled, LGBTIQ, migrants, refugees, and youth in a condition of detention or deprived of their liberty.

Young people highlight the **increase in violence during the pandemic**. The structural violence in the Latin American region generates an unsafe context for children, adolescents, and young people who are murdered, disappeared even in their own homes, criminalized, and persecuted when they raise their voices and have taken to the streets to demand their rights, incurring in the violation of their human rights.

Additionally, they are **victims of government violence**, recruited by illegal criminal gangs who offer them protection, trafficking and victims of sexual exploitation networks. During the pandemic, domestic violence and sexual violence against children and adolescents increased impacting mostly young women and girls, LGBTIQ youths, indigenous youths, youths with disabilities and others. The confinement has in many cases let the perpetrators at home and online.

With the pandemic the **participatory spaces for decision making processes have reduced** even more for children adolescents and youths, allowing in some cases only privileged youths to engage and causing the reduction of social cohesion.

At this point the criminalization of the protest and the insecurity as well as lack infrastructure, lack of preparedness of government official and police forces to attend children, adolescents and youth denounces and the lack of access to justice accompanied by impunity, affecting youths safe engagement in the decision making of their future and the future of their communities. The adult centism approach does not allow an intergenerational approach needed to build societies with and for younger and future generations.

Currently **the region is facing a migration crisis** due to the complex context in the region. Children, adolescents and youth are leaving their homes, communities and nations to find better opportunities. However, in many cases this means being subject of violence, abuse, discrimination and facing different challenges during their transition process and after arriving to the destiny countries.

Key Issue #5: HARNESSING PARTNERSHIPS, RESOURCES AND SCIENCES: WORKING TOGETHER TO GET THINGS DONE

Students face a shortage of resources to pursue a future in science and technology programs. Education is not accessible or inclusive for everyone. Outside of school, when seeking employment, youth face discrimination. Countries such as Peru and Colombia face technological limitations to access education online, with students being the most negatively affected.

During the COVID-19 pandemic working at home became the rule, where people living in the margins of society were completely excluded from the virtual dynamics that dominated the world during the pandemic. Lack of infrastructure and conditions for a standard Internet connection, not having adequate equipment to attend classrooms or teleworking, are some problems that the region is facing.

There is a lack of articulation spaces in the region within different sectors of society, which affects regional youth engagement and the possibility to build intergenerational alliances to follow up the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the recovery process of our communities.

The work of civil society organizations led by and for youth and children is highlighted, who need technical and financial support to continue their work in the defense and promotion of human rights during the COVID-19 pandemic. Civil society organizations are vital agents in recovery processes, democracy, and political participation and advocacy.

Colombian officials highlighted that the National Youth System, created by statutory law in 2013, has been put into operation. It was initially created from the empowerment of youth platforms in all departments of Colombia. Now, with the election of municipal youth counselors, there is real participation of young people in the decisions that matter to them. Colombia emphasized the importance of being in the territory, to seek solutions from the local areas. Besides pointing out that a comprehensive care policy for young people, from 0 to 28 years, is being built.

Mexican officials stated that the political constitution was recently reformed, explicitly including young people as subjects of law.

It was recommended that the government responses need to have a regional, multidimensional, holistic, non-isolated, intercultural, intergenerational and gender approaches to address children, adolescents and youth's needs.

Governments need to mobilize resources and political will to build data to understand the contexts and challenges for the diverse youths to engage them properly as key actors to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the recovery processes.

Governments need to ensure especially during the pandemic the access to quality health services to children, adolescents and youths ensuring the access to sexual and reproductive health as essentials, and consider them during the vaccination processes. Is important that the Member States follow the recommendations made by the WHO through their different constituencies. On the other hand, Governments need to work to ensure food security and fight against malnutrition in the region.



GOAL 17

PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Furthermore, thinking about human development beyond economic growth and working with those left behind, generating effective opportunities. It is key to invest in education for promoting skills for the next digital transformation and for access to the labor market. It is necessary to strengthen education and promote education for global citizenship, peace and climate change, as well education in other fields since it allows to inspire youth in individual and collective transformation in an informed and inclusive way.

Generate platforms in rural areas to generate fair development with equal opportunities and support the agricultural spaces to provide opportunities. It is necessary to involve children and youth to accelerate their participation and guarantee their full access to all technological and digital services and infrastructure.

It is important that governments can provide normative frameworks that ensure youth wellbeing, accurate participation and their participation in the different social spheres and agendas in their communities and nations, reformulating existing norms if necessary to ensure youths rights and engagement have a normative backup in observance of their human rights.

Governments need to ensure and accelerate climate action to protect the planet and our ecosystem, allocating the resources needed and participatory decision-making processes, and having a long-term approach to deliver climate policies. Is important that governments fulfill their duty to regulate the production systems in its different stages, articulating their climate focused policies to the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.

States are asked to ensure, promote and create spaces for youth participation in decision-making and formal public policy design processes. These spaces must ensure the safe and inclusive participation, with parity and a gender focus, of diverse youths, considering native communities, community leaders, and competent entities to address the climate crisis; promoting a dialogue on the existing needs and gaps but also on the proposed solutions without romanticizing their participation.

Promote the social agency of these populations, which implies their active participation in their communities, both on the problems and the existing needs to create sustainable solutions for all the people involved, especially children and youth. Is important that governments recognize and respect the agency of youths of self-organize as well as the autonomy of youth spaces.

Promote local and community networks that make it possible to disseminate the real needs of children and youth from rural to urban areas.

It is essential that in the process of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, children and youth are recognized as subjects of rights, as well as teaching them to recognize their bodies as the first territory that must be defended and protected not only by the State but also by society. It is important that gender violence against young women and girls is considered as a priority by our decision makers. Children and youth must not remain silent and need to have access to programs, processes, resources, and infrastructure that allow them to report attacks and identify situations in which they are victims of violence.

Governments need to ensure there is a path to achieve peaceful environments, free of structural violence against children, adolescents and youths, respecting their identity and having as the center of public policies their integrity, providing them with the necessary spaces to protect them from violence.

Governments need to allocate the necessary budget to address the youth's regional challenges and ensure its destination reaches the people, having a tangible impact in their lives. Processes need to be transparent and budgets allocated should be publicly traceable by citizens. Also, governments should caution that debt increase is not extreme, since this will impact future children, adolescents and youths' generations. On the other hand, concrete actions should be taken to ensure there is a better wealth distribution in the region which is the most unequal region in the world.

Member States are asked to respect the existence of diverse families that do not embrace the traditional idea of family; it represents an important advance in terms of youth rights. Likewise, it is requested that hate speech, discrimination, and violence towards the most vulnerable groups such as migrants, people with disabilities or functional diversity, the LGBTIQ population, Afro-descendants, the youths that inhabit the outskirts of large cities, among many others, are sanctioned and eradicated in favor of greater awareness of our humanity.

3.4 THE CARIBBEAN



Session in Brief

- The concept of **health** shone forth throughout the session.
- Mental health must be **de-stigmatized**.
- Children and young people have felt the **effects of the pandemic firsthand**. This includes: education, job security, health and nutrition, and more.
- Young people have been active throughout the pandemic with **innovation and solutions** for addressing the needs of the region.
- It is clear that young people in the region cannot expect the government to do every single thing. The process needs to be both **top-down and bottom-up**.
- The Caribbean is predisposed to **many vulnerabilities**.
- The Caribbean is **a diverse region** that cannot have a one-size-fits-all approach. While **cross-region collaboration is needed** and even though countries face similar challenges, the differences need to be taken into consideration.
- It is important that young people **apply pressure to governments and themselves** to hold people accountable for implementing real change.
- To ensure that young people are equipped to respond to the challenges that they face, youth need to **raise the level of accountability** among themselves.

Main Policy Recommendations

01. Include more young people in decision-making, and further ensure that young people still are represented as some of the most vulnerable within societies.

02. Young people must be given the opportunity to be in **safe, innovative platforms** where their voice can be heard.

03. The government needs to support young people by **providing resources**

such as access to quality, education, information, and knowledge.

04. The government needs to be looking at ways to **help small businesses sustain themselves**. Further, support entrepreneurship and allocate greater resources.

05. Governments are urged to **continue conversation beyond the Forum** and turn conversation into action.

Session Title as Per-Program:

- **Latin American and the Caribbean Regional Table: LAC Children, Adolescents and Youth Engagement for a Sustainable Recovery**

Session co-lead UN:

- **ECLAC:** Daniela Trucco

Session co-lead Youth:

- *Spanish session:* **LAC IANYD Regional Caucus The Millennials Movement**, Rosario Diaz Garavito
- *English session:* **Commonwealth Youth Council (CYC), Franz George & Caribbean Regional Youth Council (CRYC)**, Roshanna Trim

Session co-organizers:

- **ECLAC:** Catarina Camarinhas, Maria Ortiz, Mareike Eberz
- **UNESCO San Jose Office:** Andrea Gisselle Burbano Fuertes
- **UNESCO Cluster Office for the Caribbean:** Giuliana Neumann
- **UNFPA Latin America & the Caribbean Regional Office:** Allán Sánchez Osorio

Session moderators:

- *Spanish session:* **Max Trejo**, OIJ
- *English session:* **Dominique Noralez**

Session note-takers:

- **Spanish session:** **Andrés Cabanzo**, Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY)
- **English session:** **Anya Edwin**, CYC/CRYC

Speakers:

- **Franz George**, Caribbean and Americas Regional Representative of the Commonwealth Council
- **Priyanka Lalla**, Student, Trinidad and Tobago
- **Christopher Laurie**, Barbadian Medical Anthropologist
- **Claudia Taboada**, Founder, EducAcción
- **Jenna Thomlinson**, PhD candidate
- **Dalano DaSouza**, Carbon Policy Analyst, St Vincent and the Grenadines
- **Kurba-Marie Questell**, Peace and Security Specialist, Caribbean Coordinator Ambassador, Young One World

Summary of Proceedings

Setting the Scene:

On Thursday April 7th, stakeholders met virtually to identify gaps and scalable solutions intended to lead to rapid transformational change in the region.

The objective of this session was to collect youth recommendations on the frame of the five areas prioritized for the 2030 Agenda review process for informal mechanisms of innovative youth participation in decision-making around the COVID-19 recovery process and the progress towards the 2030 Agenda in the region. This session occurred simultaneously with the Latin American session. The LAC region was separated into two independent sessions because of language.

Dominique NORALEZ and Java SEALY introduced the session. They stated that their intention is to ensure that dialogue flows as freely and candidly as possible.

Thematic Dialogue:

Mr. Franz GEORGE underscored that there are many challenges that need to be addressed in order for youth to achieve their maximum potential and the achievement of the SDGs. He stressed that in the Caribbean region they are in a situation where there are a lot of young people and these young people are critical to development, and fulfillment of the SDGs.

One of the key barriers he highlighted is access to healthy and nutritious food. He explained that the restriction and other measures enforced by governments in order to deal with the pandemic actually caused an increase in unemployment

and financial stability. Additionally, he underscored the strain that the COVID-19 pandemic has put on young people's mental health. Sexual and reproductive health has also been on the decline.

Mr. GEORGE referenced the increased pollution that has resulted from COVID-19. Plastic waste in the region's oceans, for example, from disposable face covers, has been damaging. He emphasized that climate can no longer be put on the back burner in the post-pandemic recovery. He recommended that young persons who are actively engaged in climate advocacy and activism should keep the momentum and make use of the online space.

Mr. GEORGE underscored that young people need to advocate for societies that are free from violence in all forms and promote equal inclusion. He called for more youth entrepreneurship opportunities for young people to acquire the skills necessary for decent work, and to place emphasis on the implementation of economic empowerment for young people.

Ms. NORALEZ commenced the second part of the session, a conversation amongst panelists on **four main questions**.

Question #1: What were the most pressing challenges for young people, including children prior to the pandemic?

Mr. Christopher LAURIE suggested that we cannot focus on the physical aspects of health, although those are crucial, especially when we talked about COVID and how it has affected us, but we also have to talk about the mental and social aspects, which will span across all of the speakers talking points. He brought up mental health and security-aid.

Ms. Claudia TABOADA elaborated on Mr. LAURIE's point, emphasizing the need for proper access to medical treatments and mental health services. She urged that young people need social security, and this is seriously threatened.

Question #2: What were some of the issues with health and environmental justice before the pandemic?

Ms. Priyanka LALLA tackled this question, suggesting that the most pressing challenges for children and youth in Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean before the COVID-19 pandemic were health care and violence. She underscored that diet is a major contributor to poor health. This is because many children from low socioeconomic levels receive their only balanced meal at school.

Furthermore, as many children are victims of abuse and neglect at the hands of their own guardians and caregivers, bullying in schools affects all demographics, although higher amongst the lowest socioeconomic status. She

explained that both of these issues have adversely affected the well-being, growth and development of children and young people in the region, and that many are denied the opportunity to explore their full potential due to these challenges. Ms. LALLA called for immediate action on addressing these problems.

Question #3: How do we fix the problem or alleviate the issue of mental health stigma?

Ms. Kurba-Marie QUESTELL underscored that mental health is taboo. However, similar to what was previously stated, she expressed that there has been more light shed on it as a parallel to the pandemic. Ms. QUESTELL suggested that as young people we do need to start having that conversation, but also, ensuring that this conversation makes its way to policymakers. She provided an example from within Trinidad and Tabago, whereby increased conversation surrounding mental health awareness led to the Minister of Health renaming the primary mental health centre, which has previously been referred to as the "mad house".

Ms. QUESTELL proposed that small actions such as this help to change the narrative around mental health. Additionally, she expressed support for educational campaigns on and surrounding mental health.

Ms. QUESTELL noted that de-stigmatizing mental health should be both a top-down and bottom-up process. To ensure action is enacted at the policy level, there needs to be a balance between young people discussing it and older generations understanding it.

Question #4: How do we deal with the citizen security aspect that has arisen as a result of the pandemic?

Ms. QUESTELL suggested youth can play a role in advocating for this. Further, ensuring that each Caribbean island is not working in silos, rather from the Caribbean perspective on the whole. She suggested that if we work together we can genuinely move towards a rhetoric of creating Caribbean movements and put them into practice.

Ms. QUESTELL concluded the segment of the session by underlining that there is still a large group that is being left behind within the pandemic, and those are all things we need to pay attention to. She urged continuing discussions such as this in order to create what the Caribbean really wants to see, and that these conversations should be taken to the High Level Political Forum.

Mr. Dalano DaSouza emphasized social safety nets as an important solution, especially given the fragility of the region that was exposed from the pandemic. With respect to education, he argued that while the region has been focused on heavy access for so long, it has neglected quality education. Mr. DaSOUZA urged investment in making sure that everyone who goes to school is a recipient of high-quality education. This way people will not be put behind.

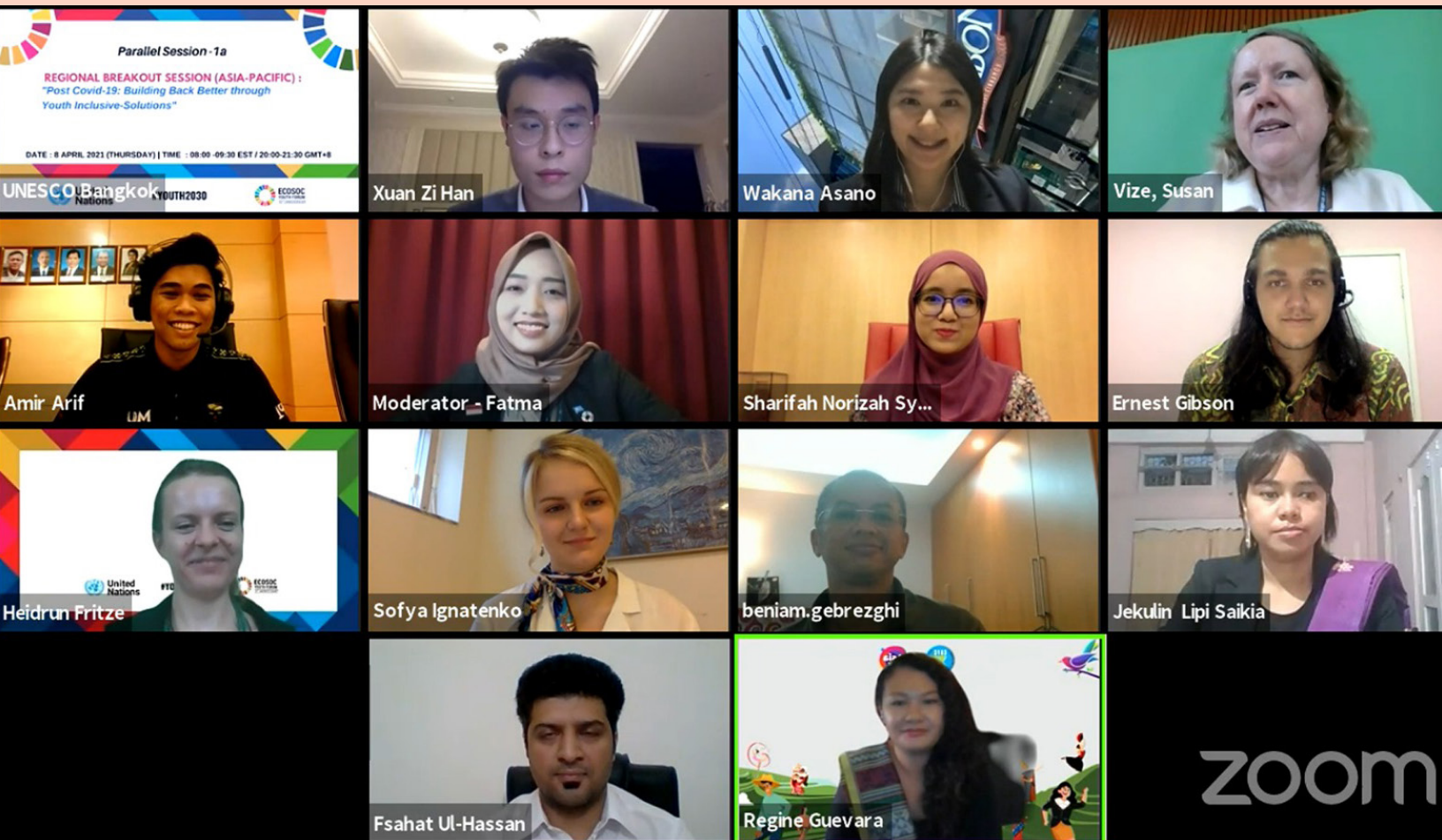
Claudia TABOADA elaborated on this, particularly in the context of non-formal education. Ms. TABOADA underscored that COVID-19 has highlighted the

deficiencies of the region's education system, thus it should be used as an opportunity to get the system working for people that will prevent the gap in access from further deepening and widening. She seconded Ms. QUESTELL's point that there is a great potential and need for the youth work force and people to come together to actually change this narrative. We all need equitable access to the basic human rights.

Mr. DaSOUZA urged that all economies, governments and other parties need to be focusing a lot more in terms of their ability to weather the storm. This refers to how economies are running their fiscal policies, how they are spending, and how they are allocating funds and putting in frameworks that are forward thinking. He urged that we have to be looking at creative ways to squeeze as much out of the resources that we have. Related to this, he urged that governments have to be able to afford what they need to do. Thus, governments in the region need to look at securing revenue streams and having contingency plans.

Dialogue proceeded throughout the session on what young people have been doing throughout the pandemic. Speakers shared their personal experiences and perspectives on how the region has suffered and why it is integral that youth take action to address all of the issues that they face.

3.5 ASIA AND THE PACIFIC





Main Policy Recommendations

01. Greater investment in youth-led initiatives and employment opportunities, especially entrepreneurial activities that enhance social welfare and provide sustainable livelihoods.

02. Acknowledging and giving a voice to the millions of young rural migrants to the region's growing urban centers, many of whom suffer from substandard living conditions and social alienation.

03. Concrete and sustainable action to protect and support the rights of youth who face systemic discrimination, particularly rural youth with disabilities and non-binary and LGBTQ youth.

04. Integrating e-learning into economic development plans at all levels.

05. Meaningful youth representation in the governance and implementation of the 2030 agenda, as well as in national climate action plans. Two critical elements for successful youth inclusive approaches:

- Good evidence.
- Representation.

Youth programs should be informed by research examining the issues facing young people. Representation and meaningful participation is crucial to ensure that policies and programs address the needs of the youth population.

06. Concrete institutional and financial support for local youth actors involved in peace, security, and justice work in the region. This includes the provision of avenues and platforms for youth to share their voices.

Session Title as Per-Program:

- **Asia-Pacific Region Post COVID-19: Building back better through youth-inclusive solutions**

Session co-lead UN:

- **APINY (Asia Pacific Interagency Network on Youth)**
- **Heidrun Fritze**, UNFPA Asia Pacific

Session co-lead Youth:

- **Sharifah Norizah Syed Ahamad Kabeer**, Asia-Pacific Youth Caucus, Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY)

Session co-organizers:

- **IYC4Peace initiative, International Youth Centre Kuala Lumpur Asian Youth Peace Network UN and development partners: UNDP, UNV, UNESCO, ILO, UN Habitat, and ADB**

Session moderators:

- **Regine Guevara**, Asian Youth Peace Network (Panel 1 - How Youth Actions Foster Solidarity During COVID-19: Barriers and Success)
- **Adenantha Swietenia Fatma**, Regional Focal Point Asia-Pacific MGCY (Panel 2 - What are meaningful tools and support mechanisms to promote youth SDG advocacy)
- **Fsahat ul Hassan**, Youth Advocacy Network (YAN)/SAARC Youth Platform

Session notetakers:

- **Heidrun Fritze**, UNFPA
- **Sharifah Norizah Syed Ahamad Kabeer**, MGCY
- **Ayasha Sarybayeva**, Central Asia Youth Network (Intro)
- **Undral Ganbaatar**, UNESCO (Panel 1)
- **UN Notetaker** (Panel 2)
- **Bagdat Akbiyeva**, Central Asia Youth Network (Closing)

Speakers:

- **Sapan Hamal**, Executive Director, International Youth Media Summit
- **Afruz Tanzi**, Founder, Pratipa
- **Mahina Nanau**, YWCA Girls Rise Up initiative
- **Obontuya and Baljaa Chih**, Founder, Youth INC
- **Chandra Tripura**, Founder, Hill Resource Centre
- **Chananchida Maliwan**, Founder, Plastic Be More
- **Regine Guevara**, UN Representative, Asian Youth Council
- **Sharifah Norizah Syed Ahamad Kabeer**, Regional Caucus Coordinator Asia-Pacific, Major Group for Children and Youth
- **Wakana Asano**, Policy Advisor, East Asia Region
- **Muhammad Amir Arif**, President, Young Humanitarian
- **Jekulin Saikia**, Regional Focal Point, Major Group for Children and Youth Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group

Summary of Proceedings

Setting the Scene:

The Asia-Pacific Regional Session explores the role of youth in responding to COVID-19 and building back more inclusive societies in the post COVID-19 period.

The session also explores how youth participation and leadership has contributed to youth SDG advocacy. As many young people in the region lack adequate representation and opportunities to politically, economically, or socially engage, the role of youth in responding to COVID-19 provides many valuable lessons on inclusivity and empowerment.

Thematic Dialogue:

Following introductions from Ms. FRITZ and Ms. GUEVARA, Ms. NORIZAH, the session's keynote speaker, highlighted the COVID-19 pandemic's profound impact on the Asia-Pacific region, which is home to about 700 million people under the age of 30.

Ms. Sharifah NORIZAH subsequently issued **six recommendations** for strengthening effective and impactful youth-led actions, not only in the context of pandemic recovery efforts, but also as components of broader sustainable development blueprints, from conceptualising new policies through to evaluating their impact.

01. Greater investment in youth-led initiatives and employment opportunities, especially entrepreneurial activities that enhance social welfare and provide sustainable livelihoods.

02. Acknowledging and giving a voice to the millions of young rural migrants to the region's growing urban centers, many of whom suffer from substandard living conditions and social alienation.

03. Concrete and sustainable action to protect and support the rights of youth who face systemic discrimination, particularly rural youth with disabilities and non-binary and LGBTQ youth.

04. Integrating e-learning into economic development plans at all levels.

05. Meaningful youth representation in the governance and implementation of the 2030 agenda, as well as in national climate action plans. Two critical elements for successful youth inclusive approaches are a) good evidence and b) representation. Youth programs should be informed by research examining the issues facing young people. Representation and meaningful participation is crucial to ensure that policies and programs address the needs of the youth population.

06. Concrete institutional and financial support for local youth actors involved in peace, security, and justice work in the region. This includes the provision of avenues and platforms for youth to share their voices.

07. Mobilization of young people in service provision capacities.

08. More inclusive processes in climate and youth organizations to engage and secure representation from marginalized groups.

09. Greater Central Asian youth representation at international events not specifically youth conferences, which do not always involve stakeholders with decision-making powers.

10. Reimagination of traditional models that seek to engage youth.

Panel Discussion #1: How Youth Actions Foster Solidarity During COVID-19: Barriers & Successes

Ms. Wakana ASANO first shared her experience as a technological strategy consultant and as a policy advocate for youth representation. She expressed belief that acquiring hard project management skills in the private sector has helped her become a far more effective and valuable advocate in her volunteer policy work.

Further, she believes that it is important to equip aspiring youth leaders and activists around the world with similar types of technological and management skills in order to ensure they are able to contribute effectively to policy development.

Mr. Muhammad Amir ARIF highlighted existing barriers to education for youth in Asia and the Pacific. He mentioned that approximately 300 million people in Asia still do not have access to the internet, many of whom live in impoverished rural areas.

Mr. ARIF cited financial stability as a common reason for why youth cannot pursue or drop out of higher education - a barrier that has metastasized in the past year due to COVID-related economic problems in many parts of the region.

Using the example of how his organization established a food bank for students at the University of Malaya, Mr. ARIF underscored that the first step to tackling education barriers is ensuring that the basic needs of young people are met. He urged that mobilizing young people in service provision capacities is a simple, yet vital response to these obstacles.

Mr. ARIF issued **two recommendations** for how Member States can better **support youth volunteerism and participation**:

01. Young people should heavily be involved in designing youth engagement efforts right from the beginning, because they are uniquely equipped to understand the needs of other young people.

02. Provide training on topics such as positive youth development for older generations working in youth engagement spaces. This will help improve collaboration across wide age gaps.

Ms. Jekulin SAIKIA stressed the importance of including and connecting all stakeholders and decision-makers in discussions about climate change. As climate is a global issue that is experienced differently in local communities across the globe, Ms. SAIKIA explained that it is imperative to connect local stakeholders, including youth activists, to decision-makers at all levels.

Panel Discussion #2: What are Meaningful Tools and Support Mechanisms to Promote Youth SDG Advocacy?

Fsahat UL-HASSAN introduced the second panel. **Mr. GIBSON** discussed misconceptions about climate change, good/bad policy practices, and how to better engage youth in climate action initiatives. He first charged that climate change, other environmental issues, and economic inequality are not “three separate monsters”, but rather closely intertwined appendages of the same root problem: an international system of profit-driven societies.

Mr. GIBSON underscored that a widespread failure to acknowledge this root cause is what has prevented serious headway from being made on climate change, and calls upon participants to take a holistic approach to climate change and economic inequality.

Mr. GIBSON called for more inclusive processes in climate and youth organizations to engage and secure representation from marginalized groups. He added that youth are a valuable resource without whom development completely comes to a halt. Thus, innovation through capacity development must include youth from the get-go when planning, developing, implementing, and monitoring projects.



Young people, women and girls, persons with disabilities, people of color and marginalized peoples are not seasonings to be added whenever you feel like it to help the product that you're selling go down better.

Ms. Nujeen Mustafa
Syrian youth refugee

Mr. WANG discussed how personal initiative and social entrepreneurship should occupy a greater portion of the conversation about youth SDG advocacy. Because the pandemic has restricted the ability of youth to conduct volunteer work in-person, Mr. Wang expressed belief that traditional models that seek to engage youth in established organizations need to be reimaged.

Mr. WANG broke his discussion into **three main discussion/recommendation points:**

01. While external resources are often necessary to empower young people in policy spaces, **youth should not and do not need to be dependent on external resources to make their voices heard.** Online platforms, such as social media networks, are a tremendous potential source of power that are relatively accessible. There should therefore be additional focus on personal empowerment in discussions about engaging youth.

02. Starting one's own volunteer initiative or philanthropic organization can be just as effective and helpful as joining an established organization, and in some cases far more effective. Organizations like the UN should provide more information and resources for youth interested in starting their own volunteer initiative or project.

03. Social entrepreneurship borrows business school principles and applies them to philanthropy, community service, grassroots activism, and other volunteer initiatives. **This model helps create more sustainable, versatile, and effective volunteer efforts** that can be independently designed and implemented by youth themselves, and should be incorporated as one of the tools to strengthen youth engagement.

The panel's final speaker, **Ms. IGNATENKO**, discussed how international forums provide important platforms for young people who lack a political voice in their own countries. She explained that many young people in Central Asia struggle to influence political decision-making via traditional channels, and are therefore forced to seek alternative, informal methods of remaining politically active, like volunteering for non-sanctioned grassroots NGOs.

Ms. IGNATENKO expressed the need for young people from this region to receive more attention from the global community, including greater representation in UN seminars, networking events, and international internship opportunities. She called for greater Central Asian youth representation at international events that are not specifically youth conferences, which do not always involve stakeholders with decision-making powers.



3.6 ARAB STATES

Mr. Sameh Kamel, Executive Director of Arab Youth Platform for Sustainable Development, addresses the Arab States, Regional Breakout session





Main Policy Recommendations

- 01. Youth need to be engaged as effective partners in COVID-19 response** and recovery plans, and Member States need to cultivate environments that are conducive to enhanced, meaningful youth participation.
- 02.** Member States should support the development and adoption of **technological innovation in education**, and expand access to online learning platforms.
- 03. Volunteer work that helps youth develop skills** that are relevant to the labor market could be an important and creative way of engaging youth.
- 04.** Governments and the private sector should support and **encourage youth-led businesses and initiatives with financial and other resources**, such as incubators and startup competitions.
- 05. Youth should be included as partners** in designing and implementing these types of initiatives that are aimed towards youth.
- 06.** Governments should integrate **skill development and capacity-building opportunities** for youth across the region with pandemic recovery efforts.
- 07.** Strengthen and enable environments for **enhanced youth participation** in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.
- 08. Tuition ceiling** at private education institutions.

Session Title as Per-Program:

- Arab States Region: Youth as the drivers to Build Forward Better

Session co-lead UN:

- UNFPA, UNV, UNESCO, UN ESCWA

Session co-lead Youth:

- Arab Youth Platform for Sustainable Development (AYPSD)

Session co-organizers:

- Arab Youth Platform for Sustainable Development (AYPSD), UNFPA, UNV, UNESCO, UN ESCWA

Session moderators:

- *General Moderator:* **Samir Anouti**, UNFPA
- *Moderator Focus Group 1:* **Ghida Krisht, Lebanon**, UNESCO
- *Moderator Focus Group 2:* ESCWA

Chatbox moderator:

- AYPSD through application

Session note-takers:

- *Introduction and 3 Stories Session:* **Eliane Assy**, UNESCO
- *FOCUS Group Innovation for Inclusion:* **Yara Ouda**, AYPSD
- *FOCUS Group Solutions:* **Anan El Boseily**, AYPSD
- *Recommendations:* **Narendra Mishra**, UNFPA/UNV
- *Closing Remarks:* **Abdul Rahman Ibrahim**, AYPSD
- *Simultaneous translation Arabic/English:* UNESCO
- *Chatbox Manager:* IFMSA Egypt lead, on behalf of AYPSD

Session co-lead Youth:

- Arab Youth Platform for Sustainable Development (AYPSD)

Speakers:

- **Jason Pronyk**, United Nations Regional Manager, Arab States
- **Hatim Aznague**, Lead, Interagency Task Force for ICPD Commitments, Regional Focal Point, Major Group for Children and Youth
- **Sameh Kamel**, Arab Youth Platform for Sustainable Development

- **Seiko Sugita**, UNESCO - Arab States Regional Bureau for Education
- **Heidi Mirza**, Voice of Sudan
- **Stephanie BC**, ABAAD
- **Samer Sfeir**, ProAbled Academy
- **Abdelaziz Bouslah**, Field Officer, MEA-Africa and the Middle East, European Association for Local Democracy
- **Sarah Badr**, Regional Focal Point, MENA, Major Group for Children and Youth
- **Osama Sofa**, S-corps
- **Samya Hussain**
- **Ahmed Abusini**, Youth Engagement Support Officer, UNICEF Jordan
- **Amr Dawood**, Founder, The Good Summit
- **Hala Khresat Hajhasan**, Head of Aid Coordination, Prime Minister's Office, Ramallah
- **Narendra Mishra**, Programme Specialist, United Nations Volunteers

Summary of Proceedings

Setting the Scene:

Aznague HATIM opened the session with praise for how contributions from young people have helped to accelerate the COVID-19 recovery in the Arab region. He highlights how regional cooperation on vaccinations and medical relief has also been strong in the past year, and states that continued multi-stakeholder, multinational collaboration is necessary to ensure a swift and full recovery.

Thematic Dialogue:

Mr. Jason PRONYK highlighted how the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing challenges to economic development and political stability in the Arab region, and expressed a sense of urgency over the need to better integrate youth into COVID-19 national recovery plans.

Because the percentage of the population under the age of 35 is so high in the Arab region, Mr. PRONYK identifies high existing rates of unemployment, underemployment, exposure to conflict, and other forms of social alienation among young people as not just 'youth issues', but major threats to the economic and political stability of the region as a whole.

He therefore suggests that the COVID-19 recovery is a historical juncture for the Arab region; in order to avoid a lost decade of development, governments need to harness youth as a strategic resource for community resilience and for driving innovative solutions to existing challenges.

Mr. PRONYK issued **two main recommendations**:

01. Strengthen and enable environments for enhanced youth participation in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.

02. Integrate skill development and capacity-building opportunities for youth across the region with pandemic recovery efforts.

Mr. Sameh KAMEL briefed attendees on the results of the survey that was sent out to youth participants prior to this session. He highlighted **several key findings**:

01. More than 50% of respondents reported that the **pandemic has precipitated major changes in their careers and education**, including abandoning future education plans and losing their jobs.

02. 45% of respondents answered that the **pandemic has affected their mental health**, primarily due to loss of social contact.

03. 90% of respondents reported that they have **volunteered in some capacity** since the beginning of the pandemic, 80% of whom performed online volunteer work.

04. 50% of respondents who have volunteered or conducted advocacy work in the past year reported that **they organized activities on their own** initiative.

05. 85% of respondents reported that they did not receive any financial or logistical support from local authorities.

Mr. HATIM Aznague shared the main recommendations of the youth roundtable for the Arab region that was recently held as part of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development.

[19:30-24:30 Aznague Hatim spoke in Arabic, translation unavailable]

The next three speakers shared personal experiences with youth initiative, civic engagement, and volunteerism during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ms. ZOHNY described how she brought together youth and health NGOs in Egypt to raise awareness about mental health issues that disproportionately affect youth, to combat stigma about publicly discussing mental health issues, and to provide better and more accessible mental health resources to young people. She credits the success of this initiative to how IMSA and other stakeholders meaningfully engaged youth as actors rather than spectators.

Ms. ZOHNY urges that mobilizing youth capacities to place young people at the center of the pandemic response is not only effective and resourceful, but the only way that countries in the region can rebuild resilient communities.

Ms. Heidi MIRZA illustrated how, as her organization's social media manager, she helped raise international awareness about the plight of impoverished families in Sudan during the pandemic, which greatly expanded the organization's donor base.

[32:20-41:34 Stephanie, Samir Anouti, and Sameh Kamel spoke in Arabic, translation unavailable]

Ghida KRISHT introduced the session's first focus group, which sought to explore the challenges and the progress that the Arab region has experienced in regards to the UN SDG of education quality.

Mr. Samer SFEIR, founder of ProAble Academy, discussed the need for innovation in the disability inclusion space. He highlighted how ProAble Academy's online curriculums for HR managers, architects, engineers, and business leaders offer accessible training resources for organizations that wish to create more inclusive workspaces for people with disabilities.

Mr. Abdelaziz BOUSLAH explained Tunisia's education sector, providing insight on the differences between the country's private and public education systems, and highlighting the links between class discrimination and the bifurcated education system.

[46:53-51:49 Abdelaziz Bouslah spoke in Arabic, translation unavailable]

To combat widening, entrenched class differences, Mr. BOUSLAH called for a tuition ceiling at private education institutions. He further recommended the establishment of an online platform to connect Tunisian students with young Tunisian expatriates around the world in order to strengthen the Tunisian diaspora's ties with domestic residents.

Ms. Sarah BADR, the focus group's final speaker, believes that education is the key to economic prosperity in the Arab region. She believes that governments have a crucial role to play in supporting innovation in the education space and highlights **two areas where governments should take greater action:**

01. Improving technological and financial literacy by promoting affordable online learning platforms and ensuring that all young people have access to both the internet and these platforms.

02. Providing funding and incubator spaces for startups and young entrepreneurs, particularly in the tech sector.

The second focus group discusses volunteerism in the Arab region, how the pandemic has impacted volunteer work, and how programs are continuing to engage youth as volunteers.

Ms. Samya HOSSEIN discussed how the Arab Voluntary Union has spearheaded volunteer and developmental work in the Arab region by investing in youth and encouraging creativity, capacity building, and community awareness.

She explained how the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted many of the organization's activities while introducing new, pressing challenges, and accordingly, how the organization has redesigned its programs to engage youth volunteers with pandemic response efforts. She expressed belief that employing youth volunteers in meaningful capacities during the pandemic has enhanced the quality of the organization's programs.

[1:02:03 - 1:07:35 Osama Safar and Ahmed Abusini spoke in Arabic, translation unavailable]

Mr. Amr DAWOOD highlighted how insufficient and unequal access to professional networking opportunities can make it difficult for youth in the Arab region to discover internships, job opportunities, scholarships, and education programs.

He underscored that this problem inspired him to develop an online platform that will allow companies, universities, and NGO's to reach greater numbers of youth in the region with these types of professional opportunities. The platform will also allow youth to showcase their creative talents, professional skills, and passions.

[1:10:30 - 1:11:14 Osama Safar spoke in Arabic, translation unavailable]

Ms. Hala Khresat HAJHASAN provided an overview of the Palestinian government's new national volunteer program that was established in December 2020 in cooperation with UNFPA, UNGP, and UNICEF. Youth between the ages of 20 and 29 account for 22% of Palestine's population and struggle with perpetually high unemployment rates and limited job opportunities.

Ms. HAJHASAN explained that these barriers are a major source of frustration and anger for young Palestinians, and that the national volunteer program accordingly aims to harness youth energy towards productive ends for both youth and Palestinian society as a whole.

Narendra MISHRA synthesized this session's main discussion points and recommendations from speakers:

- 01. Youth need to be engaged as effective partners in COVID-19 response** and recovery plans, and Member States need to cultivate environments that are conducive to enhanced, meaningful youth participation.
- 02.** Member States should support the development and adoption of **technological innovation in education**, and expand access to online learning platforms.
- 03. Volunteer work that helps youth develop skills** that are relevant to the labor market could be an important and creative way of engaging youth.
- 04.** Governments and the private sector should support and **encourage youth-led businesses and initiatives with financial and other resources**, such as incubators and startup competitions.

“

Our program aims to encourage young people to participate in public life, in both formal and informal political spaces, and to prepare them to be a generation capable of change.

Ms. HAJHASAN expressed the opinion that this program will help young people discover their potential and develop their capabilities.



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