



2020 High Level Political Forum

Voices from the ECOSOC Youth Forum to HLPF 2020

Call For Action

*Accelerated Action and Transformative Pathways:
Realizing the Decade of Action and Delivery for Sustainable Development*



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



Voices from ECOSOC Youth Forum to HLPF 2020

Context

Due to the COVID 19 crisis, the 2020 Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum has been deferred to 2021. In that context, the formal youth constituencies and youth partners¹ involved in the different sessions of the 2020 ECOSOC Youth Forum have mobilised and organised numerous youth-led sessions and consultations, including with UN partners. The outcomes of these discussions served as the - *Voices from the ECOSOC Youth Forum to HLPF 2020*. This is submitted as part of the UN MGCY's Sectoral Position Paper to the 2020 HLPF. It addresses challenges, obstacles, and opportunities and provides recommendations (including from regional perspectives) for the ongoing discussion on the themes of UN 75.

Starting the Decade of Action

The decade is a critical step to galvanize collective action to achieve the 2030 Agenda. The current crises of COVID-19 and the fact that the rate of progress has been slower than needed, enhances the importance of this decade and the seriousness with which we need to work towards it, including better accountability.

The implementation of the Decade of Action and UN Youth Strategy are intrinsically linked, so both need to succeed.

Resilient health systems in a post-COVID-19 world

- The pandemic has shown us that we are only as strong as our weakest health system and our response to this global crisis must be founded on equity, solidarity and a recognition of the right to health for all.
- Measures must be introduced to protect the health of groups who are particularly vulnerable or exposed to the coronavirus. Such interventions should include ensuring access to WASH, expanding access and availability of testing, and implementing enhancing social support measures for those most at risk.
- National responses to the pandemic must also ensure the safe provision of health services for NCDs, uphold sexual and reproductive health and rights, and take steps to preserve mental health and wellbeing - especially in the context of diminishing access to care and support.

¹ UN Major Group for Children and Youth, Global Indigenous Youth Caucus, Sendai Stakeholders Children and Youth Group, Global Youth Migration Caucus, Global Youth Humanitarian Caucus, Global Youth Advisory Council (UNHCR), Children and Youth Partner Constituent Group for New Urban Agenda, YOUNGO - Youth NGOs in UNFCCC, SDG7 Youth Constituency, Oceans Youth Constituency, United Nations Forest Forum Major Group for Children and Youth (UNFF MGCY), Global Youth Biodiversity Network - Youth Constituency to CBD (Convention on Biological Diversity), Global Youth Caucus on Desertification and Land, Global Youth Environmental Governance Constituency, SIDS (Small Island Developing States) Youth Constituency*, SCP Major Group for Children and Youth, Civil Society Mechanism for Committee on World Food Security Youth Working Group, Global Youth Health Caucus, Youth Constituency to SDG 4 and the SDG Education 2030 Steering Committee, Global Youth Caucus for Gender Equity, Water Youth Constituency, Global Youth Caucus for Decent Work and Sustainable Economies, Global Youth Caucus on SDG 16, Youth Caucuses at Human Rights Council, CSO FfD Youth Constituency (including CPDE - Civil Society Partnership for Development Effectiveness Youth Constituency), Youth SPI (Science Policy Interface) Platform, International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organisations, Asia Pacific Regional Youth Caucus, Latin America and Caribbean Regional Youth Caucus, Africa Regional Youth Caucus, Western Asia Regional Youth Caucus, Western Europe and Others Regional Youth Caucus

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- Health systems must be at the heart of building back better and this crisis demonstrates the importance of accelerating progress towards universal health coverage. We must strengthen public health and primary health care systems, scale up health financing and invest in the health and care workforce.
 - Strong and resilient health systems in the post-COVID era must prioritise prevention – taking steps to address the social, economic and political determinants of health, shifting power into the hands of patients and communities, and building resilience and adaptive capacity to current and future health crises.

Impact of digital technologies and rapid technological change

- For digitalization to be truly transformative, inclusivity must be there from the outset. Technology justice, both from a people-and-planet centered lens, is an indispensable component of development justice. Digital divides need to be closed by addressing structural and non-structural issues preventing access to the internet, as well transforming education systems to promote lifelong learning, and promoting open science (including software and hardware).
- Emerging and frontier technologies (e.g. Artificial Intelligence, big data, biotechnology, nanotechnology, etc.) driven by the digital revolution will need new models of technology governance. This is especially true, as policy and norm-setting institutions often lag behind technology change.
- Anticipatory and lifecycle technology assessments are needed, with the active participation of all stakeholders. Novel governance models need to better integrate social, economic, environmental, and legal considerations as well address concerns over privacy, surveillance, cybersecurity, transparency, data collection/usage, etc. Special attention should be placed on the growing concentration of data, wealth, and knowledge by a few private actors, unlawful state-sponsored applications (e.g., surveillance) of digital technologies, and the need for ensuring safe digital spaces for young people to fully benefit from the digital revolution.

Building and sustaining peace in a new era of conflict and violence

- The primary precondition for any such endeavour involves the engagement and protection of young peacebuilders and to support their inclusive and meaningful participation.
- We need to move towards allocating more resources, political will and attention for addressing the underlying factors that determine the nexus of peace and security with issues like fragility, disasters, environmental degradation and digital surveillance.
- The 75th anniversary of the UN provided an opportune moment to implement much needed changes to the peace and security apparatus within the UN. These include the reform of the security council to a more equitable structure and declaring ecocide the fifth crime against peace.

Inequality: Bridging and Rebalancing the Social and Economic Divide

- There is no evidence on the possibility of absolute decoupling of economic growth from environmental degradation. This pushes us to address the fundamental contradictions in the SDGs.. We need degrowth on a global scale in order to live within our planetary boundaries. In addition, we need to accord ecological space for poor countries and poor communities in all countries to grow, by reducing overconsumption in rich countries and rich communities in all countries.
- In accordance with the universality of the 2030 agenda, and the specifics of SDG 10 and the FfD Agenda, we need to address inequality within and between countries, by looking at internal and external equitable wealth redistribution mechanisms.

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- The over reliance on PPP and blended finance is not a silver bullet. In addition these need to operate within principles and frameworks universally agreed through the UNGA.

Climate crisis, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation - a race we can win

- For young people, climate crisis and environmental degradation are matters of justice and inter-generational equity.
- Children and youth, especially on the frontlines, SIDS and LDCs are most prone to impacts, despite having minimal historical contribution to the problem.
- As 2020 was supposed to be the year of nature preservation, we need to address gaps in the implementation of the environmental dimension of Agenda 2030 and ensure a sustainable recovery from COVID19 pandemic.
- This means, among other things, member states and international community to urgently step up their contributions to the Green Climate Fund, enhance NDCs so as to limit under 1.5 degrees of warming, undertake an inclusive process toward Stockholm+50 to address gaps in environmental governance, utilize opportunity presented by the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030, and undertake a consultative process toward Food Systems Summit 2021.
- Interconnectedness of these problems require us to work beyond siloed approaches, and designate spaces for full and meaningful participation of young people.

Shifting demographics: Young people on the Move

- Young people on the move face specific vulnerabilities due to their migratory status and situation. Ensuring they are socially and economically integrated and that their human rights are respected is a prerequisite for young people on the move to - first - not be left behind in the gains towards the 2030 Agenda, and - second - to significantly contribute themselves to the achievement of the SDG through their own skills and work.
- We need commitment from all stakeholders: protect vulnerable migrants and displaced people including children and use alternative care to detention; adapt bureaucracy to ensure young people on the move can enroll in education and receive skills trainings, and get their previous qualifications recognized to meaningfully join the labour market; include them as stakeholders in national and local councils and in policy-making processes; and support narratives that highlight their meaningful contribution to host societies.

Gender Equity

- Review and adapt gender equality policies to safeguard gender equality during Covid-19 and the relevant preventative regulations.
- Drastically increase the inclusion women, young girls, non-binary individuals in the consultation, conceptualisation, implementation and monitoring processes of policies relating to gender equality on a provincial, national and global level.
- Rapidly increasing the accessibility to educational, health care and economic platforms for young girls and intentionally prioritising women, young girls, non-binary individuals in healthcare, educational and economic interventions.

Circular and Creative Economy

- Shift away from economic models that are obsessed with growth, toward those that respect planetary boundaries, that recognize the economy as a subset of the society and environment, and



that support the concept of living in harmony with nature; natural resources have an intrinsic value that cannot be replaced once they are gone.

- Move from a linear model to a circular economy where we buy services and not products; this should be coupled with assessments of ecological footprints and social impact of products across their lifecycle.
- Third: Adopt alternative measures of progress beyond GDP to redefine prosperity to integrate values of human rights, health and wellbeing and those of Mother Earth; this will open up viable paths towards steady-state economies and planned degrowth.
- Promote equity and fairness in the distribution of burden from historic and present unsustainable consumption and production by further investing in technology and knowledge transfer mechanisms, as well as enhancing statistical capacities.
- Reduce distortions in information, as well as embed principles of SCP in education for sustainable development and provide evidence-informed advice to promote behavior shifts towards more sustainable livelihoods.

Multilateralism and Governance

- What we are witnessing in 2020 is not business as usual. While COVID-19 continues to impact the way our societies function and faith in multilateralism continues to erode, implementation of Agenda 2030 is facing glaring gaps. As we #BuildBackBetter, we cannot go back to the old “normal”.
- The UN75 and broader reforms ongoing at the UN need to send a clear message of urgency, action, interconnectedness of the global problems and solutions, and a message of hope. In doing so, democratic participation of young people needs to be realized to the fullest and their meaningful engagement strengthened, in particular by promoting intergenerational governance.

