



WIMUN NY 2025

# STUDY GUIDE

YOUTH COUNCIL

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# "Youth shaping sustainable and innovative solutions: Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of crises" *Engaging Youth and Member States Representatives*

16 - 18 April 2024

## CONCEPT NOTE

Economic and Social Council Youth Forum

### Background

Amidst a world challenged by escalating geopolitical tensions, a worsening climate crisis, and rising poverty, the largest UN annual gathering of young people will take place at the United Nations from 16 to 18 April.

Convened by the President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the **UN ECOSOC Youth Forum** is an opportunity for young people to speak up on how to transform the world into a fairer place and on how to achieve the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. In that context, the Forum is the platform for young people from around the world to engage with UN Member States and other stakeholders on solutions contributing to the realization of the SDGs Decade of Action.

The theme of the 2024 ECOSOC Youth Forum will align with that of the 2024 High-level Political Forum on "Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions". Ahead of the Summit of the Future to be held in September 2024, young people will have the opportunity to present to Member States their views, ideas, and vision.

The 2024 ECOSOC Youth Forum is co-organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the UN Youth Office, in collaboration with the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (IANYD) and co-convened by the Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY) and the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organizations (ICMYO), with technical input from youth organizations relevant to the theme of the forum.

### **0 Did you know that...**

#### DEFINITION

On 25 September 2015, the 193 member states of the UN approved the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, an ambitious plan that sets out to achieve prosperity that is respectful of the planet and its inhabitants. This Agenda is made up of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), further broken down into 169 targets, to be met by 2030 with the intention of "leaving no-one behind". The 2030 Agenda is a continuation of the UN Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015) which were in their day the first international consensus on facing global problems such as the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, and to promote improvements in access to education.

### **2 Did you know that...**

#### DID YOU KNOW THAT...

Established in 2012, the Youth Forum is held annually by the UN Economic and Social Council. The UN ECOSOC Youth Forum 2024 was a three-day event with the last one dedicated to the preparation of the 2024 Summit of the Future. The event was held in-person at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The Forum included opening and closing plenary sessions with representatives from youth organizations as well as high-level and keynote speakers. Accomplished youth speakers also delivered short presentations between sessions, sharing personal stories and innovative solutions related to the SDGs.

### **2 Did you know that...**

#### DEFINITION

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

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### 2 Did you know that...

#### DID YOU KNOW THAT...

Participants of the UN ECOSOC Youth Forum include:

- High-level Government representatives, including Ministers of Youth and other Ministries responsible for the coordination of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Youth Strategy at the national level;
- High-level representatives of national youth institutions and representatives of 6 National Youth Councils;
- Official country youth delegates;
- Representatives of regional and multilateral organizations;
- Youth-led and youth-focused entities, organizations, and groups from all regions, in particular, those representing marginalized and vulnerable young people;
- Youth organizations and representatives working at the grassroots, national, regional, and international levels.

### 2 Did you know that...

#### DEFINITION

The decade of action calls for accelerating sustainable solutions to all the world's biggest challenges: ranging from poverty and gender to climate change, inequality and closing the finance gap.

### 3 Did you know that...

#### DID YOU KNOW THAT...

The thematic plenary sessions have addressed the SDGs under review at the HLPF 2024, along with more in-depth discussions on various related topics. The regional breakout sessions have brought together young people and Member States to explore challenges, solutions, and best practices at the regional level for achieving the SDGs. Member States have participated throughout the program, presenting their national reviews of progress on youth development and engagement within the context of the 2030 Agenda.

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#### 4 Did you know that...

##### DEFINITION

Established in New York, the UN Youth Office aims to strengthen engagement on and advocacy for advancing youth issues across the UN, notably on sustainable development, peace and security, and human rights.

## Context and Substantive Scope

As it faces multiple global crises, the world needs to come together as a collective in solidarity and in support of the most vulnerable, while leaving no one behind. In this challenging context, young people play a critical role as innovators and agents of change. Young people's eagerness, ideas, actions, and courage demonstrate they are ready to tackle any roadblocks to the implementation of the SDGs.

In his report "**Our Common Agenda**", the UN Secretary-General stressed that it is "time to think for the long term, to deliver more for young people and succeeding generations and to be better prepared for the challenges ahead." He called for a meaningful, diverse and effective youth engagement both within and outside the United Nations. Building on the SDG Summit of 2023, the Summit of the Future will have the primary purpose of strengthening international cooperation, responding effectively to new threats and opportunities for present and future generations, and restoring trust in multilateralism and in each other.

From poverty eradication to ending hunger to combatting climate action and promoting peaceful and inclusive societies to strengthening global partnerships, young people represent unique agents of change, for current and future generations.

SDG 1: End poverty

According to the latest SDG report, if current trends persist, 575 million people, equivalent to 7 per cent of the global population, will continue to endure extreme poverty, mainly in sub-Saharan Africa. The Global Multidimensional Poverty Index reveals that out of 1.1 billion poor people, 566 million are children and adolescents under 18. Despite progress in reducing extreme poverty from 10.8 per cent in 2015 to 8.4 per cent in 2019, **the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted this positive trend**. Therefore, by 2030, only one-third of countries are projected to halve their national poverty levels.

Multidimensional poverty is often associated with hunger, homelessness, health disparities, and educational challenges, which have a long-lasting impact on children and youth worldwide. Inadequate coverage of social protection programs disproportionately affects the younger generation. Conflicts, disrupted global trade, and climate change also exacerbate living costs, negatively affecting young people, who are three times more likely to experience unemployment. **Young people often inherit poverty** and have few opportunities to break this intergenerational poverty cycle. Recognizing and leveraging the skills, experience and immense potential of young people is imperative for advancing SDG 1 globally.

SGD 2: No hunger

An estimated 29.6 per cent of the global population – 2.4 billion people – are moderately or severely food insecure, meaning they did not have access to adequate food. This number has been increasing since 2015, and conflicts, climate change and growing inequalities are exacerbating the situation. In 2022, about 9.2 per cent of the world population was facing chronic hunger, equivalent to about 735 million people – 122 million more than in 2019. It is projected that

### 2 Something to think about

Following the recommendation in the Secretary-General's groundbreaking report "Our Common Agenda", in September 2022, Member States unanimously agreed to the establishment of the UN Youth Office as a dedicated entity for youth affairs within the Secretariat, building upon more than a decade of work led by the Secretary-General's Envoys on Youth, and marking a pivotal breakthrough for the revitalization and expansion of the UN's engagement with and for youth. The UN Youth Office's creation was a positive step: what other measures could be adopted to overcome the ongoing complexities and structural limitations in youth participation within international law?

### 4 Something to think about

How can the Youth Council help ensure that economic and social inequalities do not continue to grow in the post-COVID-19 pandemic recovery in a way that is aligned with the 2030 Agenda?

### 5 Something to think about

How can governments and the international community work together to ensure the economic and social participation of youth?

more than 600 million people worldwide will be facing hunger in 2030, highlighting the immense challenge of achieving the zero hunger target. Children who experienced diseases and nutrient-poor diets, have grown into young people suffering from health and the results of developmental challenges. In addition, as young people aged 15–24 continue to face severe difficulties in securing **decent employment**, that have limited means to secure food as prices are already high and continue to increase. Variables such as transport costs, supply chain disruptions, adverse weather, production shortfalls and trade policy changes are contributing to increasing food prices. Young women entering motherhood are also affected by food shortages such as anemia which is quite prevalent among young women and represents a risk factor for adverse maternal and perinatal outcomes.

#### SDG 13: Climate action

The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports that human activities has caused global warming of 1.1°C above pre-industrial levels. This has led to a surge in extreme weather and climate events in every region, which is now the everyday face of climate change. Vulnerable communities such as young people, despite having contributed the least to climate change, are disproportionately affected. Adverse impacts of climate change have caused substantial damages and increasingly irreparable losses to ecosystems and human lives, triggering food shortages, loss of housing and infrastructure, migration of populations, and more. With further temperature increases, these extreme events will worsen and become harder to manage.

However, young people are taking action and advocating for the world to accelerate its efforts regarding the green transition. The shift towards an environmentally sustainable and climate-friendly world is critical not only for responding to the global climate crisis but also for achieving the SDGs. A successful transition towards a greener world will depend on the development of green skills in the population. In the Our Common Agenda report, the Secretary-General emphasized the critical role of education and skills development to support people's capacity to navigate societal transitions throughout their lives. The green transition is shaping the experience of today's youth in education and work. More should be done to further leverage, and learn from, young people's efforts to lead the transition to a greener future.

#### SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions

Structural injustices, inequalities and emerging human rights challenges are putting peaceful and inclusive societies further out of reach. To meet Goal 16 by 2030, action is needed to restore trust and to strengthen the capacity of institutions to secure justice for all and facilitate peaceful transitions to sustainable development. To achieve this objective, young people need to be adequately represented across all types and levels of decision-making processes. However, the number of young people engaged in national-level decision-processes such as parliaments remains low. In every region of the world except Europe, people under the age of 45 are significantly underrepresented in parliament, relative to their share of national populations. Although the average eligible age to serve in parliament is 23 years, the proportion of members of

## 2 Interesting Fact

Addressing and tackling youth employment issues represent one of the Youth Forum's priorities. What are the best approaches for the creation of decent jobs for youth?

## 2 Interesting Fact

Decent Work is defined as work that is productive, provides a fair income that allows workers to live above the poverty line, ensures security in the workplace, offers social protection for workers and their families, and gives people the freedom to express their concerns, organize, and participate in decisions that affect their lives. It also emphasizes equality of opportunity and treatment for everyone, regardless of gender, race, or background.

Decent work is a key focus of SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, which aims to promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth while providing employment opportunities for all. This includes eliminating forced labor, modern slavery, and child labor, ensuring safe working conditions, and fostering innovation and entrepreneurship to create more jobs and reduce unemployment.

## 3 Something to think about

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change.

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Adopted in 1992, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has represented the primary international, intergovernmental forum to negotiate the global response to climate change. The Paris Agreement was later adopted in 2015 by the UNFCCC in order to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. It strives to limit temperature increases below 1.5 °C, as the difference could affect rates of poverty, extreme heat, rise in sea levels, and habitat loss, which are all important considerations for security risks related to climate change.

### 4 Something to think about

What measures should be taken to promote green jobs beneficial both for youth and the environment?

### 5 Something to think about

SDG 16 states "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels." What kind of inequalities should be considered when addressing this SDG?

### 6 Something to think about

How can the Youth Council work to enhance youth representation in institutions?

parliament (MPs) aged 30 and under has remained at about 2.0 - 2.6 per cent for the past five years. While the global median age is just over 30 years, the average age of an MP is 51 years. Young MPs hold limited leadership positions, with less than 9 per cent serving as speaker and 17.4 per cent as committee chairs. To increase the participation of younger parliamentarians, efforts must include introducing quotas or lowering the age of eligibility. Given this reality, as well as challenges related to protection of youth engaged in various political and peace processes, young people have turned to the digital world to express their voices and generate an impact.

SDG 17: Revitalize the global partnerships for **sustainable development**

SDG 17 emphasizes the critical importance of fostering innovation and nurturing robust **multi-stakeholder partnerships**, including and especially with young people, to achieve the 2030 Agenda. In a world characterized by multiple crises, rapid technological advancements, climate change, and demographic and migration shifts, young people are set to face significant impacts.

The widening gap between the skills young people have and those demanded by the job market is compounded by unequal access to education, training, **digital technologies**, decent jobs, and social protection. As societies and economies transform, new jobs may be created while others may disappear. In the absence of effective policy responses, these issues could deepen societal and economic disparities among young people and leave them unprepared for the evolving world of work. Recognizing the urgent need to adapt to these changes, it is crucial to harness the **power of partnerships** and collaborative efforts to promote a youth-inclusive, sustainable and resilient future of work.

As the vanguards of tomorrow, the voices and priorities of young people are invaluable to ensure everyone has access to decent jobs. Young people must be treated as equal partners and meaningfully engaged in strategies and solutions designed to shape the future of work and promote shared prosperity. By embracing diversity, fostering positive change, and implementing actionable solutions, we can create a brighter future for all.

## 2 Did you know that...

Sustainable Development was first defined in the Brundtland Commission's final report in 1987 as the "kind of development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need". In June 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) adopted this definition.

## 2 Something to think about

Which partnerships need to be enhanced and where is a lack of cooperation? What are ways to encourage Member States and institutions to participate or contribute to these partnerships?

## 3 Something to think about

Are there any gaps in technology and knowledge transfer between Member States regarding sustainable development that the Youth Council could address?

## 3 Something to think about

Why are partnerships essential to addressing the SDGs?

## 4 Something to think about

Youth networks will bring together youth entities/organizations to prepare the "Voices of Youth" at the ECOSOC Youth Forum. This document would be a complement to the formal Major Group on Children and Youth Sectoral Position Paper, to be prepared for the HILPF in July 2024 and for the Summit of the Future in September 2024. It would be a direct call to action from young people on the current challenges they are facing and their expectations vis-à-vis the international community.



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#### 4 Did you know that...

According to estimates, about 74 million young people around the world cannot find a job. What do you think are the most urgent measures to be adopted to overcome this current issue?

#### 4 Did you know that...

The outcome of the Forum was an informal summary of the proceedings by the President of ECOSOC, a document capturing key messages and findings of the different sessions, and a Presidential Statement as inputs to the High-level Political Forum, the High-level Segment of the Council in July 2024, and the Summit of the Future in September 2024.

#### 4 Something to think about

A Declaration on Future Generations is being negotiated as an annex to the Pact for the Future. It will aim to enshrine the responsibilities that present generations bear towards future generations and result in commitments by Member States to take those into account in policy and decision-making. It will also put in place practical mechanisms for safeguarding their interests and the ability to enjoy their rights.