

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S ENVOY ON YOUTH
OPENING SESSION OF THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF ECOSOC
/MINISTERIAL SEGMENT OF THE HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM
NEW YORK, MONDAY 16 JULY 2018**

Your Excellencies,
Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

With 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10 and 24 in the world today, we are witnessing the largest generation of youth ever. The majority of them, nearly 90 per cent, live in developing countries, where they make up a large proportion of the overall population.

Around the world, my generation faces enormous challenges. One in five young people are not in employment, education or training; about a quarter is affected by violence or conflict; and every year millions of girls become mothers, while they are still children themselves; mental health issues among young people are on the rise in some parts of the world.

Without action to address inequality, intolerance and the climate emergency that faces us all, my generation could face devastating implications.

The 2030 Agenda critically recognizes the key role that today's young people are to play in its achievement.

But despite rhetoric, young people too often are treated as mere beneficiaries of policies and programmes, rather than being actively engaged in shaping the decisions that affect their lives. This needs to change.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

A sustainable and prosperous future is achievable when young people are part of the equation.

Given our commitment to ‘leaving no-one behind’, youth inclusion -not only in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, but also in the follow up and review processes- is of critical importance.

This is why again this year, as in previous years, the annual Youth Forum of the Economic and Social Council convened, offering a platform for Member States and youth representatives, activists and advocates to engage in a dialogue to assess progress in youth empowerment and youth engagement in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Under the theme “Empowered, Included and Equal” a total of 134 Member States, including 34 at the Ministerial level, and over 1000 youth representatives came together to share experiences, ideas, solutions and priorities for advancing the Sustainable Development Goals, with a particular view on the goals under in-depth review this year.

Allow me to highlight some key take-aways from our rich discussions:

- There was strong consensus that we must increase the representation of young people in decision-making bodies at all levels. Young people should be involved in all their diversity in shaping policies, from design to implementation, monitoring and review. They need to be involved in national and sub-national development planning and budgetary processes.

- Access to inclusive and quality education, as millions remain stripped of this fundamental right, was recognized as a critical driver of sustainable development. We must ensure young people can acquire skills for work and life through formal, informal and non-formal education.
- In addition, all learners should acquire skills, values and attitudes for peaceful coexistence. Mainstreaming education for human rights and global citizenship would be key to addressing discrimination, xenophobia, and violence.
- There was strong agreement that it is not acceptable that millions of young people around the world remain unemployed or enter the most precarious and insecure parts of the labor market. Technological advancements are expected to impact the future of work. But this impact will depend on our policy choices today.
- We must invest in capacity-building and training to prepare young people for the labor market of today and tomorrow. Changes are also needed to safeguard worker's rights and improve social protection as more young people engage in the platform economy.
- We must put people and planet at the centre of our policy-making. We must integrate what is invisible, from work that is performed in the informal economy, to volunteering, home care and parenting, which are particularly related to the contribution of women to the economy.
- We need to create decent jobs through multi-stakeholder partnerships, including public-private partnerships.

- Intergenerational justice is fundamental for climate action, and young people are especially impacted by climate change. At the same time, young people are also part of the solution and must be involved meaningfully on all levels. – This is why the Climate Summit this forthcoming September and the preceding Youth Climate Summit will offer a critical platform to drive much-needed action.
- We need to promote the participation of young people in peace processes and empower young people to foster coexistence in and between societies divided by conflict.
- The need to focus on the peace, security and development nexus was underscored to find durable solutions for refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons. This could effectively roll back the drivers of mass and forced displacement, as well as the devastating impacts of climate change.
- It was noted over and over that young women and girls all over the world face multiple additional barriers in accessing equal opportunities and realizing their rights.
- For all this, sustainable long-term financing is necessary for youth initiatives and youth organizations' work. Young people need to be provided with technological tools, data and mentorship, as well as safe physical spaces, to develop their ideas and innovations.

It is hard to do justice to the richness of the outcomes of the ECOSOC Youth Forum debates, but if one thing is clear, it is that the 2030 Agenda is the agenda of the young generation. It is only through inter-generational partnerships we can achieve the 2030 Agenda.

In recognition of the critical importance of this partnership with young people, the United Nations has set out on a new path in its new Strategy, “Youth 2030”, which was launched by the Secretary-General in September last year.

With the strategy we will support young people in accessing education, decent work, social protection and their health, including their sexual and reproductive health. The United Nations will stand with young people when they oppose injustice and will work with them to prevent conflict and build peace.

I wish to close by sharing with you from a consultation with young people that took place last week in which I asked youth representatives to share in one word what they thought of when thinking of the United Nations and the future we want. Hope, fairness, justice, solidarity, peace, cooperation, were among the most mentioned answers.

As we look to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda over the next decade, I call on you to commit to a broader, more meaningful and systematic engagement with young people.

Thank you.