

*ECOSOC Contribution to the  
75th Anniversary Commemoration of the United Nations*

**Multilateralism after COVID 19:  
what kind of UN do we need at the 75th anniversary?**

*17 July 2020 from 9:45 – 11:30 am.*

***Statement by Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake  
Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Youth***

*Question by the Moderator: Ms. Wickramanayake, as the Secretary-General's Youth Envoy, you have held extensive consultations with youth on the future of multilateralism and global solidarity, as a contribution to the 75th anniversary of the UN. What are some of the main issues that are of concern to youth? Could you share with us youth' perspective, vision and expectations for international cooperation in the future and role of the UN?*

Thank you, Mr. Moderator. Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- Since the beginning of this year and the launch of the UN75 dialogues, I have been engaging in conversations with young people from around the world from South Sudan to the United Kingdom, From Papua New Guinea to Japan, online and offline, to hear directly from them and get their perspectives on the work of the United Nations thus far for the past 75 years and the future they want.
- 2020 is a year when we celebrate the gains from multilateral cooperation and global solidarity, but at the same time we are faced with an unprecedented pandemic COVID-19, which has revealed the fragility of the global systems and exposed the flaws in our political, financial, economic, and social structures, therefore exposing the root causes which stand on our way to meet the SDGs and other international frameworks.
- Young people see UN75, at the start of the Decade of Action, as an opportunity to stop, rethink our systems and dismantle those systems of oppression, realign our values, and enact structural reforms which will put in place the proper mechanisms to galvanize the UN, member states, civil society, young people, towards the world we want.

- In a virtual townhall meeting in early May, my Office hosted in partnership with the Permanent Missions of Qatar and Sweden to the United Nations, the Office of the President of the General Assembly, and Youth Organizations, more than 2000 young people from all regions of the world gathered to share their input to the UN75Declaration. Prior to the townhall, more than 600 young people from 110 countries gave written input through a survey.
- As young people, growing up in unprecedented times, the overwhelming message was that there must be no 'going back to normal'.
- Many young people feel that the needs and rights of marginalized groups should be better represented, given their unique vulnerabilities.
- Young people pointed to the long-standing inequalities between and within countries, as well as continued gender-based violence, ethnic and racial discrimination, , xenophobia, homophobia, transphobia and other types of minority-targeted policies that contradict with values of dignity and human rights.
- Young people also expressed a need to recognize diversity in languages, cultures, indigenous knowledge and heritages that enrich humanity.
- The top 3 most important clusters of issues young people highlighted are:
  - Recovery from COVID-19 and building resilience
  - Maintaining international peace and security
  - Protecting the environment and reversing climate change.
- Following these three issues, the following issues were highlighted: employment and decent jobs, social protection systems, the rights of migrants and addressing refugee crises, quality education and lifelong learning, the rule of law and fighting corruption, addressing macroeconomic issues such as debt, and food security.
- Young people see UN75 as an opportunity to further normalize an intergenerational approach to global governance.
- They believe this could be done through:
  - Ensuring greater accountability to the implementation of internationally agreed frameworks such as Agenda 2030, Paris Climate agreement, at the local and national level with the active participation of young people
  - Including young people in strategic planning and decision-making
  - Assessing the impacts of today's decisions on future generations
  - Consistently engaging with youth not only by inviting them to speak at events; but by supporting their work by allocating adequate financial and non-financial resources and creating safe and enabling spaces
  - And considering young people and youth organizations as partners not mere beneficiaries
- All in all, Young people see a more inclusive, transparent, just, greener and peaceful future and they are ready to co-lead and co-create that future with us, together.
- The question is are you ready to share your power with them?

Thank you.