



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Statement by:

- **Khaled Emam, The Major Group for Children and Youth.**
- **Anja Fortuna, Vice-President of the European Youth Forum**

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Assalamualaikum,

Allow us to express our appreciation for the ECOSOC President and UN DESA for inviting us today to share views of young people.

This past April, thousands of youth leaders came together from around the world for the ECOSOC Youth Forum to engage with government officials, policymakers, and civil society to share their challenges, hopes and solutions in advancing the many pressing issues facing our world today.

I am Khaled Emam, a human rights lawyer and I am representing the Major Group for Children & Youth.

Young people and Excellences,

Youth was and is at the frontline of the coronavirus crisis. Young delivery workers, nurses and retailers and others put themselves at risk to ensure that our societies did not collapse. We did not have a choice because our livelihoods had become insecure in the years of austerity that followed the financial crisis. Often overworked, poorly compensated, and undervalued, youth has shown an incredible amount of solidarity during the pandemic.

Excellencies, we young people are expecting the same solidarity from you by developing and implementing policies that work for young people!

My name is Anja Fortuna, I am the Vice-President of the European Youth Forum, representing millions of young people across Europe and today speaking on behalf of young people across the world.

Your excellencies,



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While the majority of the world's population are young people, they remain excluded from the position of leadership and decision making, both nationally & globally and their participation in political processes remains scarily low. This is the result of shrinking civic spaces and rising **oppression**.

We can do it! Youth around the world from Sudan to Myanmar, Yemen to Nigeria, Syria to Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Ukraine and elsewhere continue to support local communities by delivering food, promoting education and advocating for strong and democratic institutions, and risking their lives to ensure peaceful, just and inclusive societies become our realities. In order to this we need three actions:

First, Increase youth meaningful participation. It should go beyond ad-hoc engagement into an impactful and equal process.

Second, Protection for youth. The UN and member states should enhance the safe spaces for young people to enable them to express their opinion and reach their full potential.

Third, Finance for youth. Around 97% of youth-led groups around the world operate with unpaid staff, this must be ended, and donors should ensure that financing mechanisms are accessible, equitable and effective for youth-led groups.

Your excellencies, by now, it is very clear that where good governance is lacking and the rule of law, justice, and democracy are undermined, governments will continue to fail in meeting even the most basic needs of the people by 2030. This is why the principles of democracy and human rights must become a reality for everyone everywhere.

It is what we - young people - are able to do today that will build the future where no one is left behind.

We need your support, trust, and action! Thank you!

The pandemic offered us a lesson in transformation. It has shown us that governments can act quickly and efficiently. Recovery must build on the foundations from this experience. It must be guided by a vision of a fairer, greener economy in which young people's rights are protected.

Young people must be empowered as active-rights holders, and their rights must be fully enshrined, respected and protected. Current human rights treaty instruments do not sufficiently uphold and protect the rights of young people.

Therefore, we are calling on you to adopt a legally binding International Convention on the Rights of Young People with an accompanying monitoring mechanism.



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Young people's needs and rights, however, will only be met if we realise a systemic transformation of our economic system.

During the lockdown economic growth was set to one side. Health became our priority. The crisis provoked systemic change. But change cannot stop here.

"We are calling on governments in the global North to address overconsumption and adopt binding targets to reduce material consumption. "

Building back better means building an economy that is no longer dependent on endless GDP growth and in which wellbeing is the primary goal of economic decision-making.

We have a unique opportunity to learn from the devastating mistakes of the past and the present. We can create a better system focusing on the essential rights and the wellbeing of young people. Let's not waste it. Thank you.