



2020 High Level Political Forum

Sectoral Position Paper

*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

United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
BACKGROUND & INTRODUCTION	4
GENERAL THEME OF 2020 HLPF	4
Decade of Action In The Post COVID 19 World	4
Building Back Better after COVID 19	5
THEMATIC REVIEWS	6
Advancing Human Wellbeing and Ending Poverty	6
Ending Hunger and Achieving Food Security	7
Protecting the Planet and Building Resilience	9
Access to Sustainable Energy	10
Responding to the economic shock, relaunching growth and sharing economic benefits	12
Bolstering local action to control the pandemic and accelerate implementation	13
LOOKING AHEAD	13
A Whole of Society Approach for Realising the 2030 Agenda in a post-COVID-19 World	13
UN75: Mobilizing international solidarity	13
ECOSOC / HLPF Reform Process	14
MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION	16
Mobilizing well directed financing	16
Science, technology, innovation	18
ANNEX - Voices from the ECOSOC Youth Forum to HLPF 2020	20
Executive Summary	20
Introduction and Context	26
Resilient health systems in a post-COVID-19 world	26
Starting the Decade of Action	27
Linking the Youth 2030 Strategy to the Decade of Action	27
UN75 Issue Areas	28
Impact of digital technologies and rapid technological change	28
Building and sustaining peace in a new era of conflict and violence	29
Inequality: Bridging and Rebalancing the Social and Economic Divide	30
Climate crisis, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation	30
Shifting demographics: Young people on the Move	31
Gender Equality	32
Circular and Creative Economy	34
Regional Perspectives	35
Africa	35
Asia and the Pacific	35
Europe and North America	38
Latin America and Caribbean	38
Western Asia	41
Multilateralism & Governance	41




EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This is the Executive Summary of the UN MGCY Sectoral Position Paper for the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2020¹. Visit the full paper at: www.unmgcy.org/HLPF2020-paper
2. Current progress towards sustainable development is unacceptable. The decade ahead could mark a crucial turning point in trajectory towards mobilising implementation of Agenda 2030.
3. Impacts of the global crisis due to COVID-19 pandemic point to protracted shocks of human rights injustices, transgression of planetary boundaries, concentration of power, profit-seeking economic systems, historically-accumulated inequalities, and systemic undermining of resilience. The pandemic calls upon people and governments to work in solidarity, uphold universal principles of dignity and human rights, deliver on commitments to Universal Health Coverage, and enact multilateral actions commensurate with the scale of the crisis;
4. Age limits and age-based discrimination persist to impose structural barriers against young people, while their participation in decision making is too often a tokenistic exercise rather than a genuine intergenerational effort based on principles of meaningful youth engagement²
5. The UN, in its growing need for funding, is leaning towards the private sector without accountability mechanisms or rules based frameworks around public-private partnerships.
6. **In order to align our global architecture to respond to known, emerging, and future risks, the UNMGCY emphasizes the following:**
7. Countries must work together to tackle stigma, fear and misinformation. In line with UN's 75th Anniversary, commitments to global governance and multilateral efforts need to be upheld, strengthened, and galvanized to adequately anticipate and address current and future needs;
8. All people - regardless of their status - must be able to access high-quality services provided by strong social safety nets that are financed through the effective redistribution of wealth;
9. Failures in assessing, preventing, mitigating, and responding to risks through a whole-of-society approach need to be addressed before they become disasters.
10. **In order to align our global architecture to meeting the 2030 Agenda and other sustainable development frameworks, the UNMGCY urgently calls for the following:**

¹ Submitted to the Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs on 3rd April 2020

²<https://www.unmgcy.org/meaningful-engagement>

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11. Uphold human rights, promote peace and security, ensure good governance, and exercise the rule of law to ensure well-being and sustainable livelihoods for all;
 12. Overcome oppression and inequalities in all their forms, particularly associated with various sexual orientations and gender identities, bodily autonomy, cultural and language diversity, and those faced by persons with disabilities and Indigenous groups;
 13. Protect the global commons and establish legally-binding frameworks that strengthen environmental governance, especially in the Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, including through just transitions to a decarbonized economy;
 14. Promote integrated territorial development to address inequalities between different types of human settlements across the spatial continuum;
 15. Align macroeconomic frameworks with the three dimensions of sustainable development, recognizing the economy as a subset of society and the planet;
 16. Delink access to basic services from any migratory or other status. The role of different actors benefiting from undocumented migrants and abusive practices should be highlighted and stopped;
 17. Employ knowledge systems from diverse sources, especially through open science, to inform and monitor decisions;
 18. Establish anticipatory governance frameworks that ensure technology justice rather than perpetuate inequalities, while reducing existing technological divides and dependencies.
 19. **In light of the ongoing review process of the ECOSOC and the HLPF, the UNMGCY emphasizes the need for the Forum to:**
 20. Provide political leadership and guidance by assessing progress, identifying gaps, highlighting best practices, and exploring new policy pathways, accounting for recommendations from other intergovernmental bodies and ECOSOC commissions;
 21. Ensure rights-based modalities, meaningful participation, and protected spaces for critical segments of society, specifically MGoS, building on A/RES/67/290;
 22. Establish official mechanisms as part of VNR guidelines to ensure meaningful stakeholder engagement. VNRs should be quality-checked, especially methodologies for using data and engaging stakeholders, before submittal to the HLPF;
 23. Increased resources must be provided to the Secretariat, as well as organizations of the UN system, for strengthening technical and substantive support provided to the HLPF.

BACKGROUND & INTRODUCTION

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 67/290, Major Groups and Other Stakeholders are invited to submit their coordinated sectoral position papers related to the theme of the High-Level



Political Forum. This theme of this year's Forum is "Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development". As part of the session, the Forum will assess the current and long-term implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on sustainable development

This paper details contributions from the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth (UN MGCY). It addresses challenges, obstacles, and opportunities as well as policy recommendations for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other sustainable development frameworks at various levels, highlighting young people's priorities. This report provides specific recommendations around six thematic issues, based on the 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report, as well as on the UN75 issue areas, the ongoing HLPF reforms, regional perspectives, and emerging issues.

GENERAL THEME OF 2020 HLPF

Decade of Action In The Post COVID 19 World

2020 is a milestone to celebrate the indispensable role of multilateralism and global governance, it is also a year marked by an unprecedented global crisis due to the COVID19 pandemic. This is not just a health crisis. It has exposed the fragility of global systems under 'business as usual' and points to protracted shocks of human rights injustices, transgression of planetary boundaries, concentration of power, historically-accumulated inequalities, inadequate health systems, and systemic undermining of resilience.

While there has been progress in some areas, we continue to be desperately off track to meet the SDGs and other international frameworks and face the danger to regression. We see this as an intergenerational injustice, and an existential crisis. As we commemorate UN75 and enter the 'Decade of Action', we need to stop, rethink our systems, realign our values, and enact structural reforms. The recommendations in this paper aim to provide practical recommendations, for the UN, Member States, civil society and other stakeholders to collectively undergo a process of course-correction and creating a 'new normal' aligned with the world we want.

As highlighted by the *Report of the Secretary General on SDGs*, the current rate of progress towards sustainable development is unacceptable. Following the first cycle of the HLPF since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda (2015-2019), Heads of State and Government came together at the SDG Summit to renew their determination to implement the SDGs. Yet, aspirations and actions continue to be misaligned. The decade ahead could mark a crucial turning point in the trajectory towards the 2030 Agenda and mobilizing towards it. Age limits and age-based discrimination persists to impose structural barriers against young people, while their participation in decision making is too often a tokenistic exercise rather than a genuine intergenerational effort based on principles of meaningful youth engagement.

The fundamental core of good partnerships is their ability to bring together diverse resources in ways that can together achieve more. People everywhere, and especially the younger generations, are ready to tackle shared sustainability challenges for current and future generations.



Building Back Better after COVID 19

Failures in assessing, preventing, mitigating, and responding to risks through a whole-of-society approach need to be addressed before they become disasters. In addition, applying a preventive, risk-informed focus to all decision making while developing accountability frameworks to support comprehensive risk disclosure and preventive action is the need of the hour. This is imperative to overcome the current COVID-19 pandemic, as well as effectively anticipate future shocks.

Below are some recommendations derived from the statement by the Stakeholder Engagement Mechanism of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction titled *Applying Lessons from COVID-19 Prevention and Risk Reduction to Build a Sustainable and Resilient World*.

1. Implementing a preventive approach as we build back better.

- The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) provides valuable guidance for building back better with the aim to prevent crises. SFDRR includes biological hazards such as pandemics and is the only globally agreed roadmap for reducing risk. Policy-makers have been slow, however, to heed the call of SFDRR to build comprehensive, multi-hazard strategies and support their implementation with well-capacitated institutions and funding.
- Risk-informed development as recommended by SFDRR would, for example, ensure the prioritization of access to goods and services for all in need; require fail-safe systems in trade and supply lines; require that financial and other resources can be allocated on short notice; and encourage members of a community to both be prepared and know where to turn for accurate guidance.

2. Committing to protect the most vulnerable.

- A threat to one of us is a threat to all of us. Each individual has the capacity to advance their family, community, and nation. Therefore, we must leave no one behind. A strong commitment to this principle is needed in our response to COVID-19 and will help build a better and more accessible society and prevent such crises in the future.

3. Strengthening multilateralism based on long-term vision, democratic values, human rights, health equity, accessibility, social justice and respect for nature.

- This moment requires a strengthened sense of global solidarity driven by sustainable development. Global systems driven by a financial profit motive, rather than wellbeing, are one of the main causes of fragile, unsustainable development. This need not be so, as exemplified by countless examples of generosity and solidarity and including calls from the private sector to support those affected by the crisis.

4. Providing messaging consistent with medical advice and ensuring that harmful misinformation is quickly countered.

- Modern technology and social media have the capacity to inform - or misinform - billions of people in an instant. It is therefore vital that we follow the guidance of experts who provide accurate information, based on data and science, on how best to behave in a crisis. The World Health Organisation has been clear in its recommendations since the beginning of the outbreak. Yet conflicting messages have been sent, whether from a place of false hope or even self-interest. Moreover, decisions taken by leaders must be clear and evidence-based in order to have the greatest impact.



5. Encouraging appropriate individual action.

- Each of us must assume our share of responsibility for the wellbeing of the whole and follow the recommendations of the World Health Organisation, national, and local authorities regarding hygiene and physical distancing. Actions consistent with this guidance must be encouraged through clear communication, modeling appropriate behavior, and other approaches.

Crisis leads to opportunity: despite the disruption and suffering caused by COVID-19, we are provided with a rare opportunity to develop case studies, lessons learned and policy guidelines on the risk management of the pandemic and share them globally. It also will lead us to revisit much that underpins our modern world – from governance, investment, production and consumption, to our relationship with nature and each other, placing risk reduction at its heart. By learning from this moment in time and applying long-term prevention and risk reduction approaches now and in the future, we will not only be better prepared and help save lives, but also avoid future crises and set us on a path towards sustainable development and greater resilience.

THEMATIC REVIEWS

Advancing Human Wellbeing and Ending Poverty

Ending Poverty

A realistic and genuine effort to end poverty requires an approach that specifically targets multidimensional poverty. This requires a deliberate move from a neoliberal economic paradigm that, above all, prioritises growth for the sake of growth, and deems people and planet incidental externalities. In order to make this shift, policy makers need to see the economy as a subset of the economy and society, and not as the primary dimension of progress.

To incorporate this in national implementation plans, we specifically ask for the imposition of caps on natural resource use, including on the extraction of virgin resources, on a per capita basis in accordance with global scale planetary boundaries and local bio-capacities.

In addition, all progress on economic and social indicators should be discounted by and compared to the corresponding ecological footprint (including extraterritorial), through mandatory reporting provisions.

More specifically, positive national social protection schemes must be tailored to include workers in the informal sector, migrant workers, refugees, marginalised groups, and those living in precarious conditions, including for reasons of legal status, and with insecure access to housing and basic services. Due to several social, structural and political barriers, these groups are disproportionately affected by multidimensional poverty.


Well Being and Inclusion

A human centric approach to advancing wellbeing focuses on matters like Improving healthcare services, enhancing access to critical medical and water, sanitation and hygiene supplies,

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supporting continued learning and education opportunities, reducing all forms of inequalities, protection of ecosystems, eliminating poverty and hunger etc.

These interventions and developments have additional synergies and tradeoffs with the other areas of 2030 Agenda. Thus, coherence is critical to move forward quickly. As we have witnessed with the COVID-19 pandemic, while these crises affect us all, marginalised and vulnerable groups are more harshly affected by fluctuations in social balances, inequalities, and face bigger obstacles in accessing services indispensable for advancing wellbeing.

Any effective attempt to enhance wellbeing and recover in a post COVID-19 world requires a special focus on those most affected. National and local systems should be strengthened by preparing plans that are sensitive to these groups. Policy and decision-making processes should give a priority to the specific needs and aspirations of these groups and include them in the decision making.

There is still a huge science, knowledge and data gap in measuring SDGs progress. For instance Countries in Africa and Asia, on average, have data available to monitor a mere 20% of SDG indicators, and the World Bank has found only 35% of the African continent has poverty data collected since 2015 (UN 2018; World Bank 2019). Furthermore, significant numbers of people still go uncounted; such as the 25.4 million refugees in the world who are missing from national statistics (UNHCR 2017).

Supporting citizen data collection to assist government data gathering mechanisms is a crucial way to fill this gap. These efforts to strengthen the data we have and collect that which we don't, can be enhanced by adequate resource allocation for citizen led initiatives that particularly focus on data for SDGs and its indicators.

Building back from COVID-19, national and local systems should be strengthened by preparing plans that are sensitive to these vulnerable groups. Policy and decision-making processes should give a priority to the specific needs, demands of each group in societies and all governments should make sure that each population has a representation in these consultation processes.

Emerging Issues and Barriers

The increasing but unsubstantiated focus on austerity is having significant adverse effects on multidimensional poverty, and reversing previously positive trends. We urge all governments to discuss this issue and abandon austerity programs.

In addition, in the context of the interface of a human rights approach with increasing automation and the changing nature of work, and increasing global volatility governments should move towards implementing a universal basic income and impose caps on maximum income.


Ending Hunger and Achieving Food Security

Zero Hunger, food security and Sovereignty is directly related to the matter of survival in the current situation, where the population is expected to boom to 9.8 billion by 2050. Since 'Ending Hunger and Achieving Food Security' has synergies with many SDGs and requires a multidimensional approach, one of the major steps is collaboration.

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The current COVID-19 crisis has clearly shown us the fragility of our current food systems. So, action must be taken to transition our current food systems into a resilient one, without destroying the rights of any group. In this approach, we expect the ‘UN Food Systems Summit 2021’ to be a milestone and thus, effective contribution from member states.

Agriculture is both a contributor and solution to the climate crisis. After the clear output of Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture (KJWA) under UNFCCC by the end of 2021/22, member states should implement the concrete outcomes in their countries, with proper monitoring, transparency and accountability.

The member states should consider the vulnerabilities of smallholder farmers, indigenous communities, marginalized groups and women farmers. Rural agriculture should be improved with the help of traditional and local knowledge and resources, with the consideration of just transition. Practices like agroecology, agroforestry and permaculture should be promoted.

Nutritional awareness and nutritional access should be increased. The member states should implement the country specific recommendations to address the problems of under-nutrition and overnutrition. The member states should enhance their NDCs and should compulsorily involve the strategies to increase production without deteriorating the environment, while ensuring all the pillars of food security. Substantive engagement of youths should be ensured during any planning, preparation, implementation and monitoring phase, when it comes to the issues of ‘Hunger and Food Security’.

We must address the reality that “By 2050, our world population is expected to rise to 9.8 billion.”, and close to 50 percent being young people under the age of 25. So, with greater need for food, and reduced food security due to climate change and political crises, we need to evolve our consumption patterns, urgently achieve SDG12 and SDG2 targets with inter-generational equity as our driving principle.

In preparation of the Summit, we call for early and structured participation of civil society groups, most importantly the CSM mechanism to the CFS and Major Groups and Other Stakeholders within the UN system. Strengthening the voices of grassroots communities needs to go hand in hand with bringing new voices to the table. Below are specific recommendations:

- Advocating for meaningful engagement of youth and other stakeholders is not only imperative in the participation at the Summit but in the agenda setting, consultations in the lead-up, follow-up, monitoring etc.
- Specifically this includes inclusion of young scientists in the Scientific Group, expanding the Champions Group to include youth champions, representatives from existing grassroots movements to complement engagement of the high-level champions. The youth constituency stand available to nominate these representatives
- Furthermore, the youth constituency proposes the organisation of a ‘Youth Food Systems Summit’ ahead of the main summit so that young people's views on the main summit can be addressed and their role as implementing force for meaningfully and further empowered.



Protecting the Planet and Building Resilience

For young people, climate change and environment preservation is a matter of justice and intergenerational equity. Those who are most responsible for it rarely feel the worst impacts. It is those who are already vulnerable to extreme weather events, rising sea levels, pollution, biodiversity loss; and those who are socially marginalized that bear the brunt.

The Global Sustainable Development Report identifies the global environmental commons as a critical entry point to guide systems transformation towards sustainable development. This implies synergistic action and contribution across the local, national and international levels and that we cannot see environmental problems in isolation. Climate change and environment degradation are exacerbating existing inequality, particularly for those youth in LDCs, SIDS and in vulnerable positions. Competition over scarce natural resources continues to increase the likelihood of conflict and violence, leading to destabilization of societies and governments.

2020 was marked to be Super Year for Nature - where the post-2020 Biodiversity Framework was to be agreed upon, new market rules for Article 6 of the Paris Agreement to be implemented, paving a way for UNEA-5 to move into the “Decade of Action”. Young people were on streets demanding a habitable future - and spreading the message of science: our window to act is closing.

As we #BuildBackBetter from COVID-19 pandemic, we call upon Member States need to urgently-

- Step up their contributions to financial mechanisms, most importantly the Green Climate Fund, Adaptation Fund, among others
- Agree upon an ambitious post-2020 Biodiversity framework that reflects priorities of those grassroot conservationists
- Lead an inclusive way forward to Stockholm+50 where gaps in the environmental governance are addressed, a system which is more inclusive by design is built and we move beyond from silo-ed approaches in tackling planetary crisis
- Enhance their NDCs and Long Term Strategies such that it limits us to 1.5 degrees of warming
- Utilise the opportunity presented by the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030) to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of our ecosystems
- Build a clear strategy to implement ‘Transitioning of Current Food Systems’ in the light of climate crisis for making our food systems and agriculture resilient, through “UN Food Systems Summit 2021”
- Protect the rights of environmental defenders and communities who are in front line of protecting the planet
- Prioritize and mainstream meaningful engagement of youth, designate spaces for their political participation and support their small-scale initiatives via inclusive financial schemes

Preventing and reducing pollution, including marine and plastic pollution, reversing forest loss, ensuring water security, halting and preventing the loss of biodiversity, restoring ecosystems, reaching land degradation neutrality, fighting poverty, ending hunger are all necessary to combat the environmental crisis and restore the earth systems necessary to support socio-economic systems and reduce disaster risk.



Access to Sustainable Energy

Recognizing affordable, clean, and sustainable energy availability as a standalone goal has been key to understanding the many interlinkages of SDG 7 to the other SDGs. Energy transition is a continuous and lengthy process, within which key issues, such as the availability of jobs and training for youth, the evaluation of implementation needs and new technology availability and the potential for technology transfer, should be urgently addressed. The COVID-19 crisis has negatively impacted the deployment of renewable energy in some parts of the world, but overall, the RE sector emerges as one of the sectors which will drive green post-COVID recovery.

Brief status of implementation of the goal

- As of 2017, over 840 million people still live without access to electricity while about 3 billion people live without safe cooking fuels or technologies (IRENA).
- There is a need for a public-private sector nexus to bridge the financing gap for ensuring access to sustainable energy for all. It has been shown that countries come on board more willingly when international partners support the projects. There has been an uptake in the investments in recent years but this trend may be disrupted due to COVID-19.
- There has been an increase in the support for youth and their involvement by the actors in the multilateral system, such as IRENA and SEforALL.
- The COVID-19 crisis has disrupted economic development around the world and it has varying impacts on the deployment of renewable energy.
- COVID-19 crisis negatively impacted energy access, including electricity and clean fuels, in developing countries with strained energy systems.

Progress on Monitoring

- Reporting from the entities like SEforALL, IRENA, IEA, World Bank, and the UN provide status quo on the implementation and challenges for RES and other sources of energy.
- Agencies and organisations have begun to include in their reports segments on and with inputs from youth in the renewable energy sector.
- Some member states have taken steps to enhance their NDCs by the end of 2020 but only 85 countries included unconditional renewable energy targets in the first round of NDCs.
- Technology Executive Committee (TEC) of UNFCCC facilitates monitoring of technology facilitation and transfer via technology needs assessments (TNA) which also keeps track of requests for technical assistance and two thirds of mitigation requests are related to either renewable energy or energy efficiency in 2019.



Policy recommendations for national implementation

- Ensure the robustness, resilience, responsiveness and flexibility of energy systems in the regions impacted by climate change and other forms of natural and human-induced disasters (including conflict).
- Create spaces for young practitioners to gain access to knowledge and information on sustainable energy tools, renewable energy technologies, supportive policy frameworks, innovative/workable business models and methods of implementation, follow-up and review.
- Increase and encourage civil society engagement in this sector especially youth-led and youth-focused organizations, to boost monitoring, review and engagement. It currently seems to be a closed space reserved for industry stakeholders only.
- Focus on the opportunities stemming from the renewable energy sector, such as stable and gender friendly employment and investment opportunities, to leverage the post-COVID recovery.
- Encourage participation of private sector, small businesses, start-ups, individual owners, youth and young entrepreneurs in the energy mix and engage more actors of the sector, including indigenous communities by offering tax incentives, financial subsidies and favourable legal framework
- Provide critical access to renewable energy workers (as essential workers) for provision of electricity especially for education during the lockdown period due to COVID-19
- Promote energy democracy that allows citizens to own, use and sell renewable energy on their terms

Policy recommendations for international implementation

- Enhance international cooperation to facilitate access to clean energy research and technology including energy generation, efficiency and storage.
- Expand infrastructure and upgrade technology for supplying modern and sustainable energy services for all in developing countries.
- Coordinate activities and monitor bilateral exchange of knowledge and solutions between member states.
- Promote solutions meeting community specific needs and ensuring quality delivery of services as well as exchanging data tracking production, consumption and consumer behaviours.

Emerging issues and barriers

- Lack of designing and implementing suitable policies and regulations considering the decreased prices in power generation through PV and the other Renewable Energy Systems.
- Undermining the capacity of youth as crucial actors in deployment of renewable energy and implementation of SDG 7.
- Trade barriers that hinder international trade of components needed to manufacture renewable energy systems.
- Investment in fossil fuels today will become stranded assets in the future.
- Climate change and increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events that pose a threat to energy systems and the energy infrastructure.

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- Political instabilities and international conflicts that threaten implementation of energy plans and damage existing infrastructure.
- Rolling back support and regulations enabling renewable energy in the face of COVID-19 crisis.
- Create multilateral financial bodies, that include youth as decision makers, to monitor and accelerate policy impact.

Responding to the economic shock, relaunching growth and sharing economic benefits

Now is not the time to relentlessly promote “relaunching growth.” Now is the time to build back better, and that includes dismantling an economic system which perpetuates the concentration of wealth, knowledge, data, and power that leads to growing inequalities between and within countries.. With collapses of economies everywhere, governments are being forced into austerity measures, which will only further hurt economic health and the well-being of people everywhere. Now, more than ever, we need progressive taxation, as per the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, coordinated responses to close all tax havens, and redistribute stolen wealth among all those who have been wronged by illicit financial flows.

Our current economic system based on private ownership, largely unregulated competition in a free market, and the pursuit of short-term profit maximisation has led to a huge increase in economic, environmental and social challenges. A major reason for the highly unequal distribution of wealth is the way our economic system prioritises returns to shareholders over everything else. The pressure to create short-term profits has led corporations to pursue activities regardless of severe adverse consequences for our environment. This growth-centric economic paradigm puts profit over the well-being of people and the planet.

The commodification of almost every aspect of social life in a pursuit of efficiency raises questions. For instance, money can often determine access to basic necessities such as healthcare, education, housing or food. Many feel they have lost control over their lives and are now being left behind by changes in the economy. The current system is based on myths derived from broken traditional economic models. Two of these myths are that wealth will trickle down and pollution will eventually be reduced as economies mature. Both these stories are flawed as inequality is rising in modern economies and emissions are merely outsourced to developing countries. Our current economic thinking needs to be replaced by new models for cooperation that are not based on narrow interests but on the destiny of humanity as a whole.

Furthermore, inequality is built into our economic system and preserved over generations due to the inheritance of wealth. As wealth is an important source of power, economic inequality is both a cause and consequence of political inequality. Political and corporate capture of the decision-making process can lead to a perpetuation of economic inequality. Privileged groups use their access to decision-makers to reinforce their own advantage, through sweetheart taxes, for example. Conversely, these groups will use their economic power to increase their political influence in many ways, from lobbying to campaign finance, from funding research to owning media (capture of ideas), and from nepotism to revolving doors between civil service and industry (regulatory capture). None of these factors are natural or beyond human control. Inequality is created and perpetuated through the way we shape, regulate, and enforce economic systems and policies.



Bolstering local action to control the pandemic and accelerate implementation

Effective local action is needed to adequately control the pandemic while accelerating SDG implementation. In all cases, local action must adequately involve, empower, and support youth. To this end, Member States, civil society, private business, and other stakeholders, must collaborate with youth to co-create inclusive spaces and mechanisms where young leaders can raise their concerns and participate in solutions that drive SDG implementation, even in uncertain times such as these. These partnerships must take particular care to focus on broadening access to healthcare, adequate housing, effective transportation systems, and in establishing and maintaining infrastructure necessary to support these and other services.

The territorial dimensions of sustainable development have never been more relevant, as place-based strategies and approaches are at the core of addressing the pandemic. Long-standing spatial inequities have been exposed however, making clear the need to address resulting vulnerabilities as well as their root causes. In particular, the connection between individual and population health, and access to adequate housing, has been brought to the fore. Partnerships for effective local action must address access to housing, among other issues, as an urgent public health matter and precondition for pandemic control.


LOOKING AHEAD

A Whole of Society Approach for Realising the 2030 Agenda in a post-COVID-19 World

People across the globe have voiced resounding calls to shift away from the status quo, to put in place a 'new normal' that puts a stop to the perpetuating cycle of inequalities and structural barriers that marginalize many groups within society. Feeling empowered in the context of sustainable development exists across all levels - individual, local, national, regional, and global. Mechanisms and resources are needed to ensure that people are actively engaged in decision-making processes and in the implementation, monitoring, follow-up and review of such decisions. At the global level, universal, equitable platforms that provide a space for people from various rights-holder groups and critical segments of society to join together need to be strengthened. Critical debate is needed to better understand the systemic barriers that prevent inclusion and equality from taking shape and to devise recommendations that can make it a reality. This includes recognising and addressing inherent tradeoffs apparent when integrating social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

UN75: Mobilizing international solidarity

In line with the UN's 75th Anniversary, commitments to global governance and multilateral efforts need to be upheld, strengthened, and galvanized to adequately anticipate and address current and future needs. The interdependent nature of our systems make international solidarity a necessary precursor and catalyzer for accelerating progress towards sustainable development during the decade of action.



Countries must work together to tackle the stigma, fear and misinformation that can lead to harmful and unethical actions. While we must be cautious of misinformation, we must be even more vigilant that affected entities remain transparent, sharing the information they have completely, honestly, and timely. As COVID-19 spreads around the world, putting pressure on strong and weak health systems alike, we recognise the need to balance the UN's critical work with these public health concerns. Nevertheless, this must not stall global progress or undo the good we have achieved together. We urge countries to stay on track with commitments made and to demonstrate global solidarity in the face of this crisis. Gag-orders, attacks on whistleblowers, and the withholding of information from those working together to protect human lives and livelihoods must be considered a direct attack on those lives and livelihoods, just as the virus itself is. Global health security efforts should seek to protect human life, not put lives at greater risk by restricting global understanding of the disease.

In the face of this challenge, we must now find alternative and innovative ways to move agendas forward, exchange ideas, and hold each other to account. As a constituency, we commit to working within the revised timeline of events and encourage all parties to seek out new ways to facilitate and amplify the voice of civil society actors, including children and young people, and support those working on the frontlines of this outbreak. COVID-19 attacks the respiratory system, but it must not take our voice away. International solidarity and strong international cooperation is essential to protect the lives of all people, in every community and every country, and uphold their rights. Ultimately, this is not only a threat to global health security but also a threat to democracy and our humanity. We must take action now to ensure that no-one is left behind.

ECOSOC / HLPF Reform Process

Below are initial recommendations from the Steering Group of the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGoS) High-level Political Forum (HLPF) Coordination Mechanism on various elements of the ECOSOC/HLPF Review, in particular as it relates to Intergovernmental Negotiations on GA Resolution 67/290, 70/299, 72/305.

Role of the High Level Political Forum

- Provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations by assessing progress, as well as identifying and addressing gaps in implementation and obstacles faced, paying particular attention to structural challenges;
- Take fully into account recommendations emanating from official reports submitted for its consideration;
- Review the status of implementation of its specific recommendations;
- Aim to explore new policy pathways, redirecting and redesigning policies, programmes and investments in order to accelerate progress, taking due account of recommendations from other intergovernmental bodies and analyses across the UN;
- Emphasize policy coherence with human rights and sustainable development imperatives, including active participation of relevant Special Procedures, as well as links with Treaty Bodies and UN Specialized Agencies, whose inputs should be discussed in the ECOSOC Integration Segment and reflected in the HLPF;

- The Ministerial Declaration must not be pre-negotiated, but reflect the recommendations of other intergovernmental bodies and discussion at the HLPF, including inputs provided by the MGoS, with concrete actionable recommendations which can be monitored each year.

Stakeholder Participation

- Enhance and strengthen participation and inclusion of rights-holders, specifically MGoS as outlined in 67/290, with the elements outlined in para 15 as the baseline;
- The HLPF should consider and take into account the official consolidated report of discussion papers submitted annually by the MGoS, including providing opportunities for formal interventions from all constituencies;
- Provide specified allocated space for policy dialogue amongst all social groups and constituencies, within a firm rights-based framework. Sufficient speaking time, balanced representation, and procedures allowing for questions and answers are preconditions for success.

Thematic Review

- The goals and targets are the core of the 2030 Agenda and we need to preserve their centrality in the monitoring process. The HLPF is the place where SDGs implementation is evaluated based on the SDGs monitoring framework (with their targets and indicators). Thus, the thematic review needs to maintain the focus on single SDGs, while exploring the interlinkages across the targets and goals. In this respect, the “entry points” featured in the 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report could help highlight interlinkages and foster complementarity of policies; therefore, the “entry points” approach should be complementary but not an alternative to the current thematic review based on individual SDGs review;
- Take fully into account the assessment by lead/custodian UN Agencies on individual SDGs aligned within existing fora (e.g. SDG3/World Health Assembly), with deliberate effort to engage MGoS in accordance with their respective modalities;
- Utilize the HLPF to provide interlinkages and integration across the SDGs (and other sustainable development) framework as well as opportunities for assessing synergies/tradeoffs.
- Include adequate analysis of the root causes and systemic determinants of slow progress, including those related to the global division of labour as well as hindering factors to socio-economic transformation, especially within developing countries, within global economic, trade, monetary and financial frameworks;
- Allocate sufficient time to ensure meaningful and effective thematic reviews, in order to properly address the large body of work;
- Provide space - plenary debate - for Member States to draw together all the discussions in order to come out with a clear message for future action.


Voluntary National Reviews

- Official mechanisms should be established, in accordance with VNR guidelines, at the national level to ensure effective stakeholder engagement in implementation, monitoring, follow-up and review including in the development, drafting, and presentation of the VNRs.

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Member States should report on their processes for stakeholder engagement as part of their VNR presentation;

- VNR presentations during HLPF should be made by each country individually, with sufficient time allocated to Q&A allowing a dialogue, in particular from MGoS;
- VNRs should first be submitted to the regional sustainable development fora for consideration prior to HLPF, with an opportunity for national and regional MGoS to interact more closely with governments, as well as provide an opportunity to quality-check the VNR process and outcomes before being submitted to the HLPF;
- Parallel / spotlight reports should be considered at national, regional and global levels, for the purpose of highlighting lessons learned, challenges faced and where concentrated specific action remains in order to leave no one behind. These reports should also be made available on the UN website;
- In line with its commitment to “promote transparency and implementation by further enhancing the consultative role and participation of the MGoS” (para 14 and 15, A/RES/67/290), MGoS should be allowed to submit key recommendations in writing after each VNR panel; they should equally be entitled to effectively participate in the follow-up of HLPF’s recommendations at the national level.


Other Organizational Aspects

- Regional processes must be strengthened by focusing more on providing political leadership, situational analysis of progress, recommendations and guidance rather than just on exchanging best practices;
- The HLPF programme should be better structured for integrating the outcomes of diverse UN spaces and bodies, creating synergy and cooperation, and should be more focused on building policy coherence in the form of actionable policy guidance and recommendations;
- To maximize engagement from capitals and promote dynamism, the HLPF should be organized on a rotation basis in each of the regional commissions and would be hosted in NYC only in the year of UNGA review;
- Increased resources must be provided to the Secretariat, as well as organizations of the United Nations system, for strengthening technical and substantive support provided to the HLPF, including expanding meaningful spaces for MGoS participation throughout the preparations, during the forum, and in its follow-up.

MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Mobilizing well directed financing

The UN remains the only avenue for global governance on economic issues that follows the principle equitable principle of one country one vote as opposed to one dollar one vote. However this disposition is increasingly undermined by several actors including member states and private institutions. Now, more than ever the UN needs to reclaim the space and enhance its role in these matters of global economic governance



Our current systems, finance, trade and other means of implementation are certainly part of the solution but the skewed power dynamics within these fields and their disregard for the natural world contribute significantly to the problem.

For example, no amount of commitments on financing will reap any benefits unless the rampant systemic issues like tax evasion and illicit financial flows are addressed. These continue to limit contributions to development efforts, while the global economy is unstable and many countries are in debt.

The reality of sustainable development has become an overly politicized agenda, with continued need for the redistribution of power and resources at its core. This will require breaking policy silos, while finding and nurturing new models that are coherent with the overarching aspirations of the 2030 Agenda.

In addition, now more than ever there is a strong need for participatory budgeting, public audits, and other mechanisms that promote accountability. The COVID 19 recovery requires a globally coordinated and locally led response. Domestic public resources are critical to this phase, but should not come at the cost of worsening countries' debt crises.

The reflections and recommendations below are derived from the Civil Society Financing for Development Group, of which the UN MGCY is part:

The complete lack of ambition in the outcome document of the Financing for Development Follow up Forum is disconcerting in the context of our current crisis. The financing needs are high. UNCTAD has calculated³ that a financing package of USD 2.5 trillion is needed to help developing countries cope with the crisis. The FfD negotiations should have been used to proceed with operationalisation and implementation of such a package.

We are also deeply disappointed that the negotiations have been closed to civil society and do not support virtual negotiations to be an excuse for lack of transparency and accountability.


While we appreciate some elements of the analysis, we are concerned that the final outcome document⁴ further regresses on many fronts from the first draft such as:

1. Centrality of WHO being deleted which is a further attack to multilateralism at a time when this is critical (para 6);
2. Deletion of the reference to capital account management which is a regression in policy toolbox crucial at this stage and is being recommended by IMF and UNCTAD (para 10);
3. Over-reliance on private finance in strengthening health systems when current crisis makes evident the importance of investing in publicly funded health systems (para 16);
4. Weak reference on further steps on addressing debt vulnerabilities only through 'existing channels' (para 9). Civil society organisations are calling for a debt jubilee⁵ with the permanent cancellation of all external debt payments due in 2020 by developing countries, with no accrual of interest/charges and no penalties, and the provision of additional, fresh

³ <https://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.aspx?OriginalVersionID=2315>

⁴ <https://www.un.org/esa/ffd/ffdforum/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/04/Final-draft-FFD-Outcome-2020.pdf>

⁵ <https://csoforffd.org/2020/04/08/a-debt-jubilee-to-tackle-the-covid-19-health-social-and-economic-crisis/>



emergency finance that does not create more debt. Crucially, action should be linked to a longer-term approach to addressing unsustainable debt, including progress towards a systematic, comprehensive and enforceable process for sovereign debt restructurings, under UN auspices.

5. While there is recognition of the challenges of social protection coverage in many countries (para 5), the lack of a clear commitment on financing the extension of social protection systems as agreed in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda is deeply disappointing.

Most notably, the lack of clear and actionable responses to the global crisis is unacceptable and equals to an abdication of the UN's responsibilities during such a critical phase in history.

We would like to reaffirm that the FfD process cannot be locked into agreed calendar dates when the world is faced with an unprecedented and unpredictable crisis. There is an urgent need to find another opportunity for the United Nations to assess the situation and step-up its response to the evolving circumstances independently of calendarized meetings.

We reiterate our call for an **International Economic Reconstruction and Systemic Reform Summit under the aegis of the United Nations/FfD** and call on the President of General Assembly and President of ECOSOC to move in this direction by:

1. Calling for a dedicated meeting in September or October 2020 to review the evolution of the situation and decide on next steps;
2. Calling for an International Economic Reconstruction and Systemic Reform Summit under the aegis of the United Nations/FfD in 2021 to ensure a comprehensive multilateral response to the crisis.

The Intergovernmental Group of Twenty-Four on International Monetary Affairs and Development ('G24') in its recent communique⁶ also highlighted "the need for an inclusive forum to examine the adequacy of the existing international financial and economic architecture and its ability to respond equitably and rapidly to global crises". We believe the United Nations should lead on the response to the current crisis as it is the only institution that can do so in an inclusive manner. The economic disruptions induced by the COVID-19 crisis will hit developing countries and marginalised sections of society hardest. The response to such a global crisis, therefore, cannot be left to forums and groups that suffer from serious democratic deficits.

Science, technology, innovation

Science, technology and innovation play an indispensable role in accelerating progress towards the SDGs. However, the direction and speed of technological change needs to be in line with the principles, goals, and targets outlined in the 2030 Agenda.

Indeed, technology justice is an integral part of development justice. GA resolutions 72/242 and 73/17 as well as the Secretary General's Strategy on New Technologies specifically address the benefits and risks emerging from frontier technologies, while providing a framework to talk about how applications of technologies can better align with the values enshrined in the UN Charter, the

⁶<https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2020/04/14/cm041420-intergovernmental-group-of-twenty-four-on-international-monetary-affairs-and-development?cid=em-COM-456-41414>



Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the norms and standards of International Laws. Building on the important work of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism and Commission on Science & Technology for Development, below are some recommendations:

- There should be recognition for the valuable and complementary contributions from diverse knowledge sources - formal, informal, indigenous, local, etc. Para 117 of the Addis Agenda explicitly recognizes the important contribution of traditional and indigenous knowledge systems and innovations and the importance of participation of and partnership with communities and civil society for the achievement of the SDGs. Traditional innovations that contribute to the wellbeing of communities should equally be incentivized and access innovation funds.
- Capacity building is key to ensure consistency in regulatory guidelines across different jurisdictions, as well as increase the speed of regulatory change through systems such as planned adaptation, integration of real-world evidence, and feedback loops that allow for changes in regulations/policies based on observed impact.
- In light of UNESCO's ongoing consultation to develop a standard-setting instrument on open science, to be adopted by UNESCO member states in 2021, there should be a commitment by Member States and stakeholders to promote open science and the democratization of science.
- Gender divides need to be addressed more thoroughly and systematically, beyond statistics around degree completion. It should recognize conscious and unconscious bias in the design of technologies, including digital technologies like AI. Risks emerge from viewing technological systems as being value-free decision aids and social equalizers, because in practice systems created by humans inherently reflect their biases. Examples of this are discriminatory design and algorithmic bias in the context of machine learning, as has been recently addressed in the EU's GDPR. Building on various Human Rights Council Resolutions, STI in practice should ensure designs sensitive to and inclusive of a broad spectrum of sexual orientation and gender identity. There needs to be more substantive recommendations around cultural and structural barriers that perpetuate gender gaps in STI.
- There is a need to operationalize multi-stakeholder, anticipatory technology assessment mechanisms that better account for the potential short-and-long term social, economic, environmental, and legal considerations of technologies. This should be done not only for new and emerging technologies, but also those that have already been deployed to consider new policies to mitigate their negative impact in a more proactive rather than reactive manner. Governance mechanisms for technology assessments need to be strengthened to make technology assessment possible and useful.
- Human decision making processes may be susceptible to bias, but accountability frameworks for AI systems are more ambiguous and new governance systems are needed for the emerging class of technologies and their applications. A risk that may emerge is the diffusion of responsibility.

ANNEX - Voices from the ECOSOC Youth Forum to HLPF 2020

Executive Summary

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 partners 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.
- 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.
- 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.


Regional Sessions

Latin America and Caribbean

The COVID 19 pandemic has aggravated the pre - existing unstable regional context, increased inequality and exposed the lack of governmental resources allocation on the health and educational systems.

In the LAC region we are 168 million youth between the ages of 15 and 29 years old, who have a key role in the SDGs success by 2030. The recommendations included:

- We face a double challenge and opportunity of responding to the crisis and also strengthen efforts to ensure a path to achieve the SDGs by 2030. This involves ensuring inclusive access to essential care quality systems, sexual rights and education, reducing violence against young women and children, free quality education, the reductions of the digital gaps, climate change responsive policies and climate justice as well as intergenerational justice.
- A clear response to ensure decent jobs for youths that contribute with an economic sustainable development in the region that provide these and future generations a prosperous region where living with dignity be the norm and no the exception are part of the recommendations of youths in the LAC region.
- There is also an call for action in order to include a multicultural and universal approach that respond to the needs of the most vulnerable youths in a differentiated way and to



ensure the implementation of the Escazú Agreement, the Resolution 2250 about Youth, Peace and Security as well as the internal and external migration crisis and violence that hits our region day by day; considering effective youth participation and engagement that influence the decision making process for the people and for the planet.

Asia and the Pacific

- Lack of inclusivity across all genders, sexual orientation, age groups, and marginalized communities remains as one of the most important challenges in accelerating transformations in this region.
- The structural dimensions of marginalisation, faced by young people has resulted in wider inequalities in relation to healthcare access, education, and employment, most adversely affecting indigenous young people, young people in rural areas and young migrants in the informal economy.
- We need to start implementing people-and-planet-centred, people-led accountability mechanisms - to meet the ambition of this transformative agenda to address systemic barriers and historic exclusion.
- Integrate the prevention of violence against sexual and gender minorities in CoVid-19 response plans facilitated by governments. Put in place functional helplines and connect people who need essential SRH services. Key SRH services should be provided in relief packages and made accessible.
- Life-saving measures like travel bans, community quarantines, and lockdowns must be carried out in strict adherence to human rights standards and proportionate to a legitimate health goal.
- Economic recovery of developing countries must be based on the national economy and aim not only for temporary fiscal and monetary response but for the financing for development.
- Responses to COVID-19 must stem from scientific research and advice provided by health experts and epidemiologists to ensure that the responses are evidence-based and complementary to scientific data. Responses to the pandemic must therefore be geared towards alleviating the situation of marginalized communities rather than influenced by political gains.

Africa

- We recognize the existence of systemic gender and other forms of inequality. We seek commitment to work with national governments to advance a rights-based approach to sustainable development.
- We will apply culturally adapted and friendly scientific methods and utilize appropriate technology to advance development on the continent and speed up the achievement of sustainable development.
- Member states must integrate major groups, civil society, and other stakeholders in national multi-stakeholders coordination mechanisms, committees and commissions for agenda 2030 and agenda 2063 implementation, follow-up and monitoring.
- Member states must strengthen already existing national development coordination platforms and mainstream the sustainable agenda into those already existing platforms.

Western Asia

- Respect all human rights including all economic, social and cultural rights recognizing this as a fundamental of the success of all public health responses
- Encouraging the cooperation of youth-led organizations across borders to enhance the development of solutions to the secondary effects of the pandemic particularly in education and employment.
- Investing in the creation of an DRR training that aims to train and educate youth on safety guidelines, survival techniques and essential medical and rescue training in light of future natural or man-made disasters including pandemics, earthquakes and conflict. Youth have been key first line respondents and caretakers amidst the current crisis, and essential training must be provided to ensure adequate response in future disasters.
- Establishing a research cooperation targeting the identification, reporting and resource mobilization of multiple sectors, including the health, education and economic sectors, to prevent the rise of neglected tropical (NTDs) and zoonotic diseases that may be endemic to the region such as Polio among Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Fasciolosis in Egypt (NTD), MERS, Malaria and Tuberculosis, among others. The research will aim to establish epidemiological trends as well as feed into national and regional policy on prevention.

Europe and North America

- This public health crisis is exposing our societal values' crisis. Instead of extending health-care resources to all across borders and to those who cannot afford it, governments and public authorities have focused on "us first", the closing of borders, segregation, isolation and centralised control. Large corporations are getting bailouts while people struggle to feed themselves, locked out of work.
- We have a great deal to learn from the current crisis. It tells us that there is something deeply wrong with the way the world works and that we need to transform our economic system and our political system to address the deep-rooted values crisis in our societies.
- The reason for these crises is evident: we care about value and not values, about money and not morals. Our society of savage individualism perpetuated by an economic system of winner-takes-all is hindering solidarity and cooperation.
- We can build new systems that are based on human rights, open mindedness and cooperation.

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.

Introduction and 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 youth partners and formal youth constituencies⁷ 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 in addition to UN MGCY's Sectoral Paper to the 2020 HLPF. This is submitted in addition to UN MGCY's Sectoral 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.

Resilient health systems in a post-COVID-19 world

COVID-19 has exposed and exploited many of the deeply rooted structural inequalities in our economies, societies and health systems. Even now, as countries seek to respond to the crisis - the impacts are being felt most acutely by the most vulnerable and most marginalised in our communities. This pandemic has shown us that we are only as strong as our weakest health system and our response 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. This should include access to water and sanitation, ensuring the availability of testing, and implementing enhancing social support measures for those most at risk - including those experiencing homelessness, refugees and migrants and other vulnerable groups. Furthermore it is important to recognise that COVID-19 is not the only challenge that communities face and new factors such as the redirection of funding and the introduction of lockdowns and other

⁷ 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



social distancing measures may exacerbate already existing health concerns. A comprehensive national response 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 increasing levels of fear and anxiety.

As we consider the possibility of a post-COVID-19 world, we must not only look towards recovery but also commit to building back better - especially for our health systems. The pandemic puts a spotlight on the need for strong and resilient health systems and underscores the critical importance of moving towards universal health coverage. We must strengthen public health and primary health care systems, in all countries but especially in low and middle-income countries and scale up long term investment in our health systems. This is essential not only to protect countries from the immediate threat of outbreaks but also the myriad of daily health challenges that threaten the current and future wellbeing of people around the world.

Now is a defining moment for health, a moment to reflect and rebuild health systems that can help deliver a fairer world. It is also an opportunity to truly pivot towards prevention - addressing the social, economic and political determinants of health, shifting power into the hands of patients and communities, and building our resilience and adaptive capacity to current and future health crises.

Starting the Decade of Action

The Sustainable Development Goals are gaining global momentum. Today, progress is being made in many places, but, overall, action to meet the Goals is not yet advancing at the speed or scale required.

The year 2020 is a milestone to celebrate the indispensable role of multilateralism and global governance, it is also a year marked by an unprecedented global crisis due to the COVID19 pandemic. This is not just a health crisis. It has exposed the fragility of global systems under 'business as usual' and points to protracted shocks of human rights injustices, transgression of planetary boundaries, concentration of power, historically-accumulated inequalities, inadequate health systems, and systemic undermining of resilience.

While there has been progress in some areas, we continue to be desperately off track to meet the SDGs and other international frameworks and face the danger to regression. We see this as an intergenerational injustice, and an existential crisis. As we commemorate UN75 and enter the 'Decade of Action', we need to stop, rethink our systems, realign our values, and enact structural reforms. The recommendations in this paper and the call to action aim to provide practical recommendations, for the UN, Member States, civil society and other stakeholders to collectively undergo a process of course-correction and creating a 'new normal' aligned with the world we want.

As highlighted by the Report of the Secretary General on SDGs, the current progress towards sustainable development is unacceptable. Following the first cycle of the HLPF since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda (2015-2019), Heads of State and Government came together at the SDG Summit to renew their determination to implement the SDGs. Yet, aspirations and actions continue to be misaligned. The decade ahead could mark a crucial turning point in the trajectory towards the 2030 Agenda and mobilizing towards it.



Linking the Youth 2030 Strategy to the Decade of Action

As we kick off the decade of action we are also experiencing the operationalisation of the UN Youth Strategy: Youth 2030. This aims at resetting and reorienting the United Nations' focus on youth with a more ambitious scope, and was launched by the UN Secretary-General during the High Level Segment of the UN General Assembly in September 2018. It sets the vision for the United Nations' work with and for young people, to accelerate to the 2030 goals. It seeks to significantly strengthen the UN's capacity to engage young people and benefit from their views, insights and ideas and ensure the UN's work on youth issues is pursued in a coordinated, coherent and holistic manner.

The implementation and realisation of this strategy is intrinsically tied to the realisation of the 2030 Agenda and the decade of action. In addition to being beneficiaries of the agenda, young people are also a critical means of implementation, without their participation the desired level and pace of progress will not be achieved.

Age limits and age-based discrimination persists to impose structural barriers against young people, while their participation in decision making is too often a tokenistic exercise rather than a genuine intergenerational effort based on principles of meaningful youth engagement.


UN75 Issue Areas

Impact of digital technologies and rapid technological change

In June 2019, the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation convened by the UN Secretary-General provided recommendations on how the international community could work together to optimize the use of digital technologies and mitigate the risks. While digitalization may help overcome certain inequalities and social and economic divides, it can also exacerbate them. As rapid changes continue, it is key all stakeholders become cognizant of the tradeoffs and prepare for a transition towards a more inclusive digital society. Policies and practices that uphold technology justice as an inherent part of sustainable development ensure no one is left behind and promote proactive mitigation of negative impacts of new technologies. This is vital if we wish to use these digital shifts as an opportunity to increase equity, sustainability and prosperity for all.

For digitalization to be truly transformative, inclusivity must be there from the outset. There must be a people- and planet-centered approach taken, with human rights at its core, which mobilizes different constituencies and enhances the positive impacts of technological advances. Citizens, young people in particular, should only be seen as users of digital technologies but also are at the forefront of its innovation. Promoting an intergenerational approach to building inclusive digital societies is vital to steer technology change to best serve the needs of the SDGs.

Emerging and frontier technologies (e.g. Artificial Intelligence (AI) , 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. Furthermore, there is often a delay between technologies being developed in



the R&D space and those used in practice. Additionally, the public and private perceptions of technologies can differ, with the latter often based on financial speculation of technology's future value, not necessarily the proven impact or benefit it can bring to society today. This sort of behavior leads to an obsession with delivering new innovations, maintaining ever-increasing speculation in financial markets.

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.

An emerging issue to consider is the growing demand for computing power (and associated cooling centers) that have led to a sharp rise in energy demand, raising concerns over the growing ecological footprint of these systems (forecasted to account for ~12% of the world's energy consumption by 2020).

For an inclusive digital society to be achieved, closing digital divides is an imperative. This includes making broadband more widely available, addressing structural and non-structural issues preventing access to the internet, as well transforming education systems. Opportunities for lifelong learning are needed to equip people with the essential technical and core skills required to thrive in this changing world. It is useful to consider the role of both formal and non-formal education in reaching all groups of young people and how to ensure young people can benefit from lifelong learning and training opportunities to learn and practice skills in a work environment. The role of open access to science, as well as both hardware and software, in reducing barriers to skills that promote decent jobs and sustainable livelihoods should be further explored.

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

The new era of conflict and violence is increasingly unpredictable, interconnected and omnipresent. It reflects the securitisation and militarisation of many facets of society. Young people are at the forefront building peace, tackling deep rooted forms of violence, and are building more resilient societies. Due to the current crisis, violence is being reignited and peace processes are being threatened. Several governments are exploiting the crisis to further restrict civil society space and increase authoritarian measures.

In addition, Not only are we faced with the conventional threats of traditional military weapons, but of several other factors like: increasing state brutality towards dissent of any kind of dissent, increased fragility and risk due to environmental degradation, and its spiraling effects like increase in disasters, increase in frequency of vector based diseases, resource conflict and forced migration and displacement. Additional, virtual threats and the resulting surveillance regimes are only getting worse.

Our response to tackle these trends and other emerging issues to building and sustaining peace requires a fit for purpose and comprehensive approach.

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The primary precondition for any such endeavour involves the engagement and protection of young peacebuilders and to support the inclusive and meaningful participation of youth in peace building and conflict prevention, management, and resolution, as well as post-conflict relief and recovery efforts to realise the 2030 Agenda and security council resolution 2250 and 2419.

In addition, 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.

Finally, we believe that 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

First and foremost, young people find the discussion on trade-offs to be unacceptable, an excuse covering up the last five years of failure to deliver. Agenda 2030 offers an ambitious promise of sustainable development for all; there is no room for growth-centric models which require compromises between inequalities and environmental degradation.

As the Doughnut model suggests, we must become growth agnostic; while we need degrowth on a global scale, developing countries and poor communities need ecological space to grow. This also implies that the overconsuming in rich countries and communities must stop immediately. In accordance with SDG 10 and the FfD Agenda, we need to address inequality within and between countries, and look at internal and external equitable wealth redistribution mechanisms.

Given the lack of evidence on the possibility of absolute decoupling, addressing the fundamental contradictions in the SDGs remain critical -- for instance, sustainable consumption and production, but growth? SDG Target 17.19 is also explicitly about GDP and beyond, so the metrics issue is critical.

Community-based approach to policy-making is essential for sustainable development, and that cannot be achieved without open spaces for civil society.

Due to underfunding, the UN system is increasingly relying on partnerships with the private sector, to hugely problematic ends. Public-private partnerships and blended finance are not silver bullets, and require additional transparency and accountability standards to ensure that access to the UN isn't given only to those who can pay. Similarly, a safeguard to protect the participation of all sectors in a just manner is through implementing mandatory clauses of intersectoral cooperation as a requirement for UN partnerships with the private sector. Cost-sharing between governments, private sector and civil society is a viable option only when all stakeholders are equitably engaged.



Climate crisis, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation

For young people, climate change and environment preservation is a matter of justice and intergenerational equity. Those who are most responsible for it rarely feel the worst impacts. It is those who are already vulnerable to extreme weather events, rising sea levels, pollution, biodiversity loss; and those who are socially marginalized that bear the brunt.

The *Global Sustainable Development Report* identifies the global environmental commons as a critical entry point to guide systems transformation towards sustainable development. This implies synergistic action and contribution across the local, national and international levels and that we cannot see environmental problems in isolation. Climate change and environment degradation are exacerbating existing inequality, particularly for those youth in LDCs, SIDS and in vulnerable positions. Competition over scarce natural resources continues to increase the likelihood of conflict and violence, leading to destabilization of societies and governments.

2020 was marked to be Super Year for Nature - where the post-2020 Biodiversity Framework was to be agreed upon, new market rules for Article 6 of the Paris Agreement to be implemented, paving a way for UNEA-5 to move into the “Decade of Action”. Young people were on streets demanding a habitable future - and spreading the message of science: our window to act is closing.

As we #BuildBackBetter from COVID-19 pandemic, we call upon Member States to urgently-

- Step up their contributions to financial mechanisms, most importantly the Green Climate Fund, Adaptation Fund, among others
- Agree upon an ambitious post-2020 Biodiversity framework that reflects priorities of the grassroot conservationists
- Lead an inclusive way forward to Stockholm+50 where gaps in the environmental governance are addressed, a system which is more inclusive by design is built and we move beyond from silo-ed approaches in tackling planetary crisis
- Enhance their NDCs and Long Term Strategies such that it limits us to 1.5 degrees of warming
- Utilise the opportunity presented by the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030) to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of our ecosystems
- Build a clear strategy to implement ‘Transitioning of Current Food Systems’ in the light of climate crisis for making our food systems and agriculture resilient, through “UN Food Systems Summit 2021”
- Protect the rights of environmental defenders and communities who are in front line of protecting the planet
- Prioritize and mainstream meaningful engagement of youth, designate spaces for their political participation and support their small-scale initiatives via inclusive financial schemes

Preventing and reducing pollution, including marine and plastic pollution, reversing forest loss, ensuring water security, halting and preventing the loss of biodiversity, restoring ecosystems, reaching land degradation neutrality, fighting poverty, ending hunger are all necessary to combat the environmental crisis and restore the earth systems necessary to support socio-economic systems and reduce disaster risk.



Shifting demographics: Young people on the Move

Young people on the move face specific vulnerabilities due to their migratory status and situation. Their social and economic integration, as well as the fulfillment of their human rights, is crucial to ensure that no one is left behind in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Drawing from the outcomes of the Youth Forum at the Global Forum on Migration and Development, extensive consultations in all regions, and an online webinar replacing the thematic breakout session of the ECOSOC Youth Forum, the following priorities can be highlighted:

- Governments need to ensure people on the move can, regardless of migratory status, access basic services including health, labour insurance and regularisation, sexual and reproductive health;
- All stakeholders need to work together to protect migrants throughout the journey, in particular the most vulnerable ones like children, including through the creation of relevant regular pathways and by eliminating child detention;
- Ensure all children and youth can attend school, regardless of migratory status, by guaranteeing flexibility during the enrollment process (for instance relaxing the bureaucratic requirements) and by providing targeted support through scholarships and language classes, and, in the current time of crisis, subsidise internet costs in order to attend online classes;
- Governments need to create flexible and attainable ways of validating degrees and certifications transnationally, relaxing bureaucracy to adapt to the situation of the home country;
- All actors have to include young people on the move in councils and decision-making processes at the local, national, regional, and global levels, to ensure policies are built and implemented reflecting the real needs of all stakeholders including young migrants;
- Leverage technology and innovation to overcome challenges and reach migrants with support in a creative and effective way;
- Support young migrants with skills trainings, language classes, legal support, and capacity buildings to help them insert themselves in the local job market;
- All actors need to work together to build and share constructive narratives on migrants and migration that reflect the reality of their important contributions to society - as made evident during COVID with the role of young migrants in the health sector and as “essential workers”.

Ensuring young people on the move 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.


Support refugee and displaced youth to take an active and responsible role in responding to and coping with the multi-faceted economic, social, protection and health impacts of Covid-19 pandemic by:

- Supporting them to take leadership roles within their communities to assess and respond to different aspects of the Covid-19 crisis
- Facilitating capacity building amongst young refugees by encouraging peer-to-peer sharing and learning of practical skills, information, and tips that enable young people take an active

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and responsible role in responding to and coping with the multi-faceted economic, social, protection and health impacts of Covid-19 pandemic

- Establish collaborative partnerships with refugee- and youth-led local organizations through a supported mini-grant application, and project implementation process.

Gender Equality

2020 was promised to be a banner year for gender equality, with feminist mechanisms such as the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Conference both turning 25 the year before. 2020 was supposed to be the year we saw the fulfillment of the gender equality agenda.

While we have made some much-needed progress in some key areas, there are many which remain ignored and untouched. Even in the areas we have advanced, young women, girls and non-binary people continue to be relegated to the sidelines. While pregnancy and childbirth remain one of the primary killers of girls aged 10-19, yet access to contraceptives and sexual and reproductive health services are a distant dream.


For survivors of gender-based violence these services could mean life or death. 35% of women worldwide have experienced some form of violence. At least 200 million women and girls aged 15-49 have undergone female genital mutilation in the 30 countries with representative data on prevalence. Approximately 15 million adolescent girls (aged 15 to 19) worldwide have experienced forced sex (forced sexual intercourse or other sexual acts) at some point in their life. Even though the global rate of child marriage has declined, it is estimated that there are 650 million women and girls in the world today who were married before age 18. The trauma of these survivors is compounded by inaccessible healthcare services.

In 2015, 12.8 million adolescent girls have an unmet need for family planning. This number will increase to at least 15 million by 2030 if current trends continue. Of the 12.8 million adolescent girls, about half live in Asia and the Pacific and more than 30 percent live in West and Central Africa and East and Southern Africa. The COVID-19 pandemic threatens to increase the current gender gap and exacerbate many of the gender inequalities faced by girls and women, especially in developing countries.

At least 500 million women and girls globally lack adequate facilities for menstrual hygiene management (MHM). There remains inadequate facilities for women to wash and take care of themselves during menstruation especially in public places such as schools, workplaces, and healthcare centers. This poses an additional obstacle to women and girls in the global sphere.

While many countries have included girls education as a priority, less than 5 out of 130 countries have gender parity at all levels of education. With 49.8% of young women in sub-Saharan Africa receiving limited or no education, ensuring gender-equal access to education needs states to go beyond mere rhetoric.

On the one side, the transition from education to employment has also not been an easy one for a majority of the world's young women. In 2016, the female youth unemployment rate was 13.6 percent in 2014 compared to 12.6 percent for young men. On the other side, women continue to be excluded from educational and/or development opportunities, leaving them the more susceptible to



unemployment. This gap in economic participation will continue to increase unless we see more commitment towards its eradication.

The aggressive spread of COVID-19 has seen gains made in creating access to health, education, and economic activity is lost. The strict lockdown regulations imposed by many nations have seen about 81% of the global workforce being directly impacted by COVID-19 which has led to mass retrenchments with the majority of them being young people.

Governments need to leverage youth and vulnerable group focused organisations in informing and executing these interventions to guarantee that young women and children continue to be supported in line with the SDG goals. We recommend that UN agencies and mechanisms strongly urge states to review gender equality policies and programs in line with lockdown regulations and the long term presence of COVID-19. This includes executing lockdown regulations which do not impede interventions which aim to tackle gender-based violence and accessibility to healthcare.

Political participation for young women and non-binary individuals has been similarly stagnating. Even in policy discourses which directly affect these groups, it is uncommon to see them actually consulted. Policy implementation will continue to run into roadblocks if those they seek to benefit are not involved in their construction. As we hurdle toward another unachieved milestone, it is important for states to learn from our previous mistakes. Governments cannot continue to pat themselves for merely talking about gender equality in isolated rooms. Until young women, girls and non-binary individuals are kept out of those rooms, the agenda for a gender-equal world will remain a dream.

Circular and Creative Economy

SDG 12 guides the formulation and implementation of policies, mechanisms and partnerships to ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns (SCP). It recognizes that SCP is not an end in itself, but rather a critical element of strategies to achieve the entire 2030 Agenda in an integrated manner. In an effort to build back more sustainable and resilient systems, there should be a progressive and just transitions away from linear, carbon-intensive processes to ones that are more circular, carbon-neutral (at minimum) in nature.

In 2019, Earth Overshoot Day was on July 29. This means that in less than 7 months, we consumed more ecological resources and services than the planet is able to regenerate in a year. This is an environmental catastrophe and the anthropocene is impeding sustainable development. Our excessive consumer culture, paired with business models of planned obsolescence, blind us from systematically recognizing the consequences of overconsumption and leads to prioritizing profit over people and planet.

Transformative pathways towards sustainable development can only be attained through paradigm shifts. We urge member states to:

- First: 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.

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- Second: 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.
- Fourth: 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.
- Lastly: 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.

Regional Perspectives

Africa

The below recommendations are derived from a day-long session organized at the Africa Regional Sustainable Development Forum, titled *African Youth Powering the Global Goals: Intergenerational Learning Festival on Achieving Accelerated Action & Accountability towards Agendas 2030 and 2063* as well as from *The Victoria Falls Declaration* by Africa Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism, on the occasion of the Sixth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development.

- The Africa Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism was institutionalized and launched, with the aim of enhancing spaces to self-organize and coordinate efforts of Major Groups and Other stakeholders in the implementation, follow-up and review of Sustainable Development and related global agreements in Africa and globally.
- We recognize the importance of partnerships with governments and other key players in our respective countries of activity and on the continent as a whole in achieving the goals of Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063 to build the Africa we want.
- We reaffirm our commitment to working together as civil society organisations on the continent and with those across other continents, towards common goals.
- We reaffirm our meaningful participation in decision-making processes and the provision of accurate, evidence-based, disaggregated, qualitative and quantitative data, which are required for monitoring progress and identifying gaps with a stronger focus on domestic financing sources.
- We recognize the existence of systemic gender and other forms of inequality, and will work with national governments to advance a rights-based approach to sustainable development.
- We will apply culturally adapted and friendly scientific methods and utilize appropriate technology to advance development on the continent and speed up the achievement of sustainable development.
- Member states must integrate major groups, civil society, and other stakeholders in national multi-stakeholders coordination mechanisms, committees and commissions for agenda 2030 and agenda 2063 implementation, follow-up and monitoring.

- Member states must strengthen already existing national development coordination platforms and mainstream the sustainable agenda into those already existing platforms.

Asia and the Pacific

The following recommendations are derived from a statement delivered by the Youth, Children and Adolescent Constituency of Asia-Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism during the 2020 Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, which took place online. Specifically, the theme of the session was *Review of regional progress on SDGs five years into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda: Accelerating action and delivery of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific*.

- The annual Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019 lights up the fact that no country is on track to achieve all the SDGs, some key SDGs are even regressing. These are worsening inequality and loss of forest and biodiversity and the effects of climate related crises and disasters are experienced by everyone, including the young people. Furthermore, the region has been experiencing religious extremism and fundamentalism, right-wing conservatism and populism, conflict and natural disasters, and aggressive trade policies. The region also continues to have a poor record on gender equality, which is rooted in systemic and structural inequalities, unequal power relations, and the control of sexuality impacting young women and girls disproportionately.
- Lack of inclusivity across all genders, sexual orientation, age groups, and marginalized communities remains as one of the most important challenges in accelerating transformations in this region.
- The structural dimensions of marginalisation, faced by young people has resulted in wider inequalities in relation to healthcare access, education, and employment, leaving young people at the margins. Young people specially from indigenous communities residing in rural areas continue to face inequalities of opportunities. Majority of the migrants in the region are of younger working age, and 13 percent of all migrants in the region are younger than 20.
- Environment and climate issues are less prioritized by government and stakeholders and young people are not involved in decision making spaces. Many cities in the region are highly polluted and impact the health and wellbeing of young persons. Lack of political will remains a key challenge.
- Now is the high time to start implementing new people-and-planet-centred, people-led accountability mechanisms - to fulfil the promise of ambitious and transformative change overcoming drawbacks of implementing SDGs observed through the past five years. In doing so, leaders should be giving a voice to people marginalized from development processes and strengthening government's own monitoring efforts, especially when addressing systemic barriers and historic exclusion.
- The Youth should be given a leading role in implementing the 2030 Agenda and its ambitious goals. As a people centred endeavour, the SDGs will be measured by their successes in advancing the well-being of all and ensuring that no one is left behind. As the core of SDGs dreams, Youth will be crucial in translating this vision into reality. Children and young women and men are critical agents of change and should find the global Goals as a platform to channel their infinite capacities for activism into the creation of a better world.


The following recommendations are derived from a regional dialogue at the nexus of human rights, women, LGBTIQ, and health in the COVID-19 humanitarian response.

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- Governments should provide timely and reliable information to ensure that their citizens are well aware of the present situation. Governments should also bear in mind that the cooperation of their citizens requires understanding. In order to do so, clear and consistent messaging on health measures should be practiced.
- Systematically gather outbreak-related data to examine and report on the gender-specific health effects of CoVid-19. Similarly, systematically gather data on gender-specific human rights impacts of CoVid-19. Disaggregated data should take into consideration sex, age, disability, gender, ethnic origin, among others to inform multi-sectoral humanitarian interventions, while ensuring proper data management and protection.
- Ensure that marginalized and vulnerable groups—especially sexual and gender minorities, including women, LGBTIQ, and PLHIV—are provided access to health services, including SRH information and services, without any form of stigma, discrimination and violence. Ensure access to treatment without discrimination, continued and safe access to support services including legal assistance for cases of domestic abuse, violence, and harassment, and expansion of social protection systems that recognize women and LGBTIQ as heads of households when being provided financial and social benefits.
- Integrate the prevention of violence against sexual and gender minorities in CoVid-19 response plans facilitated by governments. Put in place functional helplines and connect people who need essential SRH services. Key SRH services should be provided in relief packages and made accessible.
- Life-saving measures like travel bans, community quarantines, and lockdowns must be carried out in strict adherence to human rights standards and proportionate to a legitimate health goal.
- For marginalized groups who live in inadequate, informal, and temporary housing, and for those who are homeless, emergency housing can include free and appropriate accommodation. We also need to prevent additional people from being homeless when loss of income prevents households from paying rent by moratoriums or deferrals in mortgage payments.
- It is important to have coordinated efforts among all the civil society networks and community organizations in the region because LGBTIQ communities are significantly affected.
- Emergency funding grants / support led by non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, and other agencies must be accessible to individuals and organizations most in need. The “do no harm” policy must be applied in the current responses that civil society is doing in the region.
- Recognize the role of youth-led non-governmental organizations in providing support to their communities. This means that the support being provided by such civil society actors should not be delayed nor prevented and in fact be part of decision-making bodies managing CoVid-19-related responses.
- Economic recovery of developing countries must be based on the national economy and aim not only for temporary fiscal and monetary response but for the financing for development.
- Responses to CoVid-19 must stem from scientific research and advice provided by health experts and epidemiologists to ensure that the responses are evidence-based and complementary to scientific data. Responses to the pandemic must therefore be geared towards alleviating the situation of marginalized communities rather than influenced by political gains.

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- There must be a commitment among states to closely study and learn from each state's best practices and then develop shared solutions that could eliminate the further spread of CoVid-19. There must be a long-term commitment to build the “new normal” free from violation of human rights, online and offline.

Europe and North America

The statement below, prepared jointly with the European Youth Forum, was delivered at the 2020 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE region, specifically during a session titled ‘Accelerating action and delivery for sustainable development in the Economic Commission for Europe region’. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the session was held as a virtual meeting without physical presence of participants.

Slow progress and lack of commitment to sustainable development - even if by some - makes us all more vulnerable and reduces our ability to proactively detect, reduce, and respond to risks before emerging issues become emergencies.

This public health crisis is exposing our societal values’ crisis. Instead of extending health-care resources to all across borders and to those who cannot afford it, governments and public authorities have focused on “us first”, the closing of borders, segregation, isolation and centralised control. Large corporations are getting bailouts while people struggle to feed themselves, locked out of work.

We have a great deal to learn from the current crisis. It tells us that there is something deeply wrong with the way the world works and that we need to transform our economic system and our political system to address the deep-rooted values crisis in our societies.

The reason for these crises is evident: we care about value and not values, about money and not morals. Our society of savage individualism perpetuated by an economic system of winner-takes-all is hindering solidarity and cooperation.

We can build new systems that are based on human rights, open mindedness and cooperation.


We can build a more equal society that will stand together to tackle the next crisis. We can beat this crisis and we can beat the climate crisis, but we must do so with rationality and solidarity instead of panic, suspicion and mistrust. While self-isolation is recommended to drive out the virus, more than ever before governments need to work in solidarity and reaffirm practices of multilateralism to do so.

Latin America and Caribbean

These contributions were generated during the Latin American and Caribbean youth dialogues held on May 25th and 26th, in which over 100 young people from 29 countries in the region participated. The space was co organized by the UN MGCY LAC Regional Caucus, the UN Economic Commission for Latin American Caribbean - ECLAC and The Millennials Movement; a full report is also available⁸.

⁸ https://bit.ly/LACRegionalYouthDialogues_HLPF_COVID19

- The region is home for more than 168 million youth between the ages of 15 and 29 years old who have a central role to play in contributing innovative solutions to generate the ambitious transformation established in the 2030 Agenda and face the current global context. The COVID 19 pandemic and issues such as corruption have aggravated the pre - existing unstable regional context, increased the inequality gaps and has exposed the lack of governmental resources allocation on the health, currently unavailable for many rural and isolated communities such as the case in the Amazon, and educational systems as infrastructure needed to address our challenges as a region. Currently the governments in the region invest only 2.4% of GDP in health, in contrast with the 6% of their GDP recommended by the Panamerican Health Organization.
- Considering the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic, governments need to ensure that children, adolescents and youth have access to essential health services as well as access to sexual rights and the autonomy of their bodies, including indigenous women. In addition, access to reproductive healthcare and family planning methods need to be ensured by the governments who need to make the required efforts to provide legal pregnancy interruptions and massive health care campaigns in native languages. Governments in the region need to consider the provision of mental health services as one of the priority areas as a recovery agenda from COVID 19.
- Gender violence and violence against children and youth is a recurrent and systematic regional problem that needs to be addressed. The confinement orders, lockdowns and other pandemic contention measures have had an impact in the increasing amount violence incidents in the region perpetrated against children and young women. Governments need to develop specific programs to address these challenges effectively providing safe spaces and a protection logistical framework for children and youth in the region.
- Gender employment, health, education and income gaps need a solid response from governments in the region. Ensuring the reduction and further elimination of gender gaps help to guarantee the integral development processes of children and youth.
- Governments need to ensure the provision of inclusive for all, free quality education and the means to access it in the region, considering multicultural approaches as a key element for the construction of civic values. Our education systems need to be anti colonial and non discriminatory. Member States need to prioritize the provision of resources that children and youth need to successfully interact in their context, including the infrastructure and inclusive access for communication and information technologies, as well as food programs for students in urban and rural areas and training processes for teaching - learning in a comprehensive way, responding to issues such as gender inequality, school desertion and the current pandemic. It is also important for our regional decision makers to understand the need to plan a strategy to facilitate mobility within countries.
- The digital gap in the region needs to be addressed, member states need to invest more in technological infrastructure as well as technological development, to reach marginalized communities that have been systematically excluded from the development processes, ensuring processes and protocols for the use and safety of data. Financial and technological literacy for students and teachers need to be part of Members States' educational agendas.
- Climate change needs to be addressed in the different territories in the region with strong climate change responsive, conservation and restoration policies, with an ecosystemic approach. There is a need for investment in disaster risk prevention and reduction processes to address further vulnerabilities, as well climate change. The climate change



response needs to include training regarding climate change and sustainable living in educational curricula.

- The current pandemic has shown us different kinds of violence in our region. Member States need to provide a response to allocate resources and address conflict and systematic violence in our region, taking actions to eliminate armed conflict, gangs and their proliferation with a gender-mainstreamed approach. Peace initiatives and processes need to have a strong focus on the most vulnerable youth, including peace building, conflict resolution content and communication responsive strategies in the school curricula. Our regional Member States also need to understand that youth can be allies in the development of peace initiatives.
- There is a need to work in the visibilization of youth contributions and paradigms. It is important to improve the effective decentralized participation of youth in the decision making, political and accountability processes in the region with gender, territorial and youth approaches. Youth need to be seen as rights holders and be taken into consideration in formal processes of participation with wider consultative and strategies for participatory processes that include, in particular, indigenous, afrodescendant and rural communities to better understand the differentiated impacts of COVID 19 in the children and youth of the regional and effective responses to their challenges and the pandemic. Resolution 2250 needs to be considered by our decision makers facilitating a road to action for its implementation.
- Access to justice also needs to be ensured by Member States to protect our children and youth in the region facilitating the means and procedures that allow youth to denounce delictive activities.
- Social and economic development need to ensure a human rights and environmental approach as well as a response to climate change, leaving behind the extractivism that characterizes the economies in the region. LAC Member States need to take a regional response towards the access and use of renewable energies, recognizing the environment rights and ensuring a social and climate justice model based on open democracies and effective youth engagement, for which is essential ratification and implementation of the Escazu Agreement.
- Inclusive decent work policies need to be implemented in the region with a universal approach that include measures and paths for the inclusion of the most vulnerable youth such as youth with disabilities, indigenous youth, rural youth, young women, LGBTI+ youth, migrant youth, afrodescendants and others. The responses should be multisectoral and include funding allocation, training, vocational as well as educational experiences that allow youth to specialize in different fields developing different and territory-responsive skills for further employment, considering the cosmovision of indigenous youth; as well as the means to allow young people in the region to find decent job opportunities in their country and encouraging migrant youth to go back to their territories. On the other hand, receiving countries and territories need to implement a set of frameworks that allow the validation of migrant youth's educational credentials, facilitating their process of insertion in the societies through legal and academic paths.
- It is important to ensure the strengthening of the agricultural sector and production diversification in the region, strengthening local economies and providing technological tools in the different territories to ensure sustainable development. Actions need to be taken for youth to access income and successfully engage in entrepreneurial initiatives. Member States need to ensure youth have access to financial education.

High Level Political Forum 2020 | Sectoral Position Paper

UN Major Group for Children and Youth

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- The responses to unemployment and the economic crisis due to the COVID 19 pandemic need to include alliances with civil society in order to reach the most affected populations and integrate their needs in the governmental responses as well as promoting their participation in formal markets.
- There needs to be a regional response that allows legal mobilization across the region and migration policies to address the needs of migrant youth.
- Member States need to consider partnerships with other society actors to allow further action to address the complex context of the region; as well as a transparency mechanism open to the public to engage social actors in accountability processes.

Western Asia

- Respect all human rights including all economic, social and cultural rights recognizing this as a fundamental of the success of all public health responses
- Partnering safely with youth of region not only during but also after the pandemic in recognizing the potential and impact that young people can make within their local communities
- Understanding the effects that the pandemic has and will have on small and medium enterprises and calling on all governments to support those businesses while upholding the human rights of youth
- Encouraging the cooperation of youth-led organizations across borders to enhance the development of solutions to the secondary effects of the pandemic particularly in education and employment. As youth unemployment remains one of the highest globally in this region, it remains pivotal to ensure that the livelihoods of youth and their families are considered in post-covid response.
- Investing in the creation of an emergency training toolkit that aims to train and educate youth on safety guidelines, survival techniques and essential medical and rescue training in light of future natural or man-made disasters including pandemics, earthquakes and conflict. Youth have been key first line respondents and caretakers amidst the current crisis, and essential training must be provided to ensure adequate response in future disasters.
- Establishing a research cooperation targeting the identification, reporting and resource mobilization of multiple sectors, including the health, education and economic sectors, to prevent the rise of neglected tropical (NTDs) and zoonotic diseases that may be endemic to the region such as Polio among Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Fasciolosis in Egypt (NTD), MERS, Malaria and Tuberculosis, among others. The research will aim to establish epidemiological trends as well as feed into national and regional policy on prevention.
- Establishing a trans-national coalition of public and private sector organizations aiming to prevent the rise and spread of violent extremism in light of the post-covid economic recovery primarily through the establishment of small scale livelihood support, educational and economic opportunities, adequate and equitable resource allocation and the investment of microgrants to support youth-led businesses and entrepreneurship.
- Governments should ensure that CSOs have access to information about the 2030 SDGs agenda including data on how they're implementing the SDGs, pending money, progress, challenges, and outcomes.
- Governments need to Engage CSOs in particular youth-lead organizations in dialogue and decision-making on SDGs agenda implementation.



Multilateralism & 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.

Let us be honest: If we are going to tackle growing inequalities, we need to restructure economic models and transform governance mechanisms. We have zero time to waste. Young people are taking the lead on sounding the alarm on global crises. We are demonstrating that it is possible to unite under one cause irrespective of our differences. The only boundaries the rest of the world seem to transcend are those of the planets’ ecosystems.

We need to stop, rethink our systems, realign our values, and enact structural reforms.

Tackling this challenge requires unprecedented cooperation beyond our current paradigms of global governance and enact a global commons approach. We must stop operating in silos, and stop ignoring emerging issues before they become emergencies. Although often ignored, we as rights holders, social movements and civil society need to continue to demonstrate what the world can be. We are not naive about the lack of global political will. A lot rests on our shoulders and lies in our hands. Let’s continue to engage in dialogue, build from traditional and indigenous knowledge, apply the science policy interface, organise in community action, and build an alternative to the failing systems that surround us.

Young people are agents of change at the forefront of SDG implementation in their communities and are keeping governments accountable. Let’s work together, raise our ambitions, and fulfill our shared responsibility because our future - both people and planet - are at stake.

