

Concept Note

Intergenerational dialogue on leveraging skills and investment to achieve the SDGs

2023 United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

19 July 2023, 2.30 pm – 4.30 pm, UN Conference room 3

At a time of compounding crises, young people fear an uncertain future. The economic lives of working-age youth are in dire straits due to the cost-of-living crisis, inflation, and their un- and underemployment. At the same time, climate change and digital transformation are both bringing new opportunities and transforming the world of work.

Reports and youth declarations, including from the 2022 G20 Youth Summit (Y20) and the United Nations Foundation's *Our Future Agenda*, underscore the grave realities that young workers face in the labor market and entrepreneurial ventures.^{1 2} Likewise, in its 2022 report "*Global Employment Trends for Youth*,"³ the International Labour Organization (ILO) highlights stark realities: (1) more than 1 in 5 young people are Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET), (2) 77 per cent of young people are informally employed, and (3) young people have low purchasing power.

Moreover, the United Nations Commission for Social Development further emphasized the large, negative economic costs youth unemployment imposes on societies globally, but particularly for and in low-income (LICs) and middle-income countries (MICs).⁴ This situation is exacerbated by the global cost-of-living crisis, which at its current pace could push up to 71 million people into poverty, with clear hotspots in the Caspian Basin, the Balkans, and Sub-Saharan Africa (particularly in the Sahel).⁵

¹ Next Generation Fellows, *Our Future Agenda*, 2021. <https://ourfutureagenda.org/report>

² Y20 Indonesia, *Youth Communiqué*, 2022.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XF5i_m1Tw44QfYxU7WSxnyBYn0zaUlmz/view?usp=sharing

³ ILO's *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022*, [Report: Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022: Investing in transforming futures for young people \(ilo.org\)](https://www.ilo.org/publications/report/global-employment-trends-for-youth-2022)

⁴ UN Commission for Social Development, *Youth Employment: Impact, Challenges and Opportunities for Social Development*. <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/csocd45emergingissues.pdf>

⁵ *Addressing the cost-of-living crisis in developing countries: Poverty and vulnerability projections and policy responses*, p. 6, (<https://www.undp.org/publications/addressing-cost-living-crisis-developing-countries-poverty-and-vulnerability-projections-and-policy-responses>)

Despite the plethora of knowledge on this topic and international calls for action from grassroots organizations to multilateral youth forums to the larger UN system itself, young people of working age continue to be marginalized and forced into precarious financial situations. It is therefore crucial to foster dialogue for a renewed intergenerational social contract aimed at empowering all young people economically and ensuring quality employment and entrepreneurship opportunities as strong foundations to peaceful societies and to contribute to the SDGs.⁶

Youth engagement is a hallmark of the follow-up and review framework of the 2030 Agenda, as manifested within the Agenda's paragraph 74. The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), consistent with its universal intergovernmental character, provides political leadership, guidance and recommendations for sustainable development. The last time that the HLPF discussed in depth SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth was at its 2021 session. After two years of trying to rebuild and recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, exacerbated by current global crises, it is time to refocus the international community's attention and enhance meaningful intergenerational dialogue on youth economic empowerment and to bring this issue at the center of the SDG Summit discussions.

A. Objectives

The proposed event aims to:

1. *Enable* a meaningful intergenerational dialogue between youth representatives and decision makers at the HLPF through an interactive exchange on skills and investment needs to foster youth economic empowerment and SDG progress, building upon discussions from the 2023 ECOSOC Youth Forum in April and reflections from the SDG Summit Political Declaration as well as be informed by the discussions during the HLPF.
2. *Contribute* to an inclusive and evidence-based review of implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, particularly SDG 1, SDG 8, and SDG 10 and their interlinkages with the SDGs being reviewed at the 2023 HLPF.
3. *Open discussions* on the issues highlighted within the United Nations Foundation's *Our Future Agenda*. Through enhanced youth participation and open dialogue with policymakers, the event will ensure presenting diverse, unique and well-timed perspectives to contribute to the 2023 SDG Summit in September.

⁶ UN DESA World Youth Report, Chapter 3: Youth Employment (p. 35)
(<https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/world-youth-report/wyr2018.html/>)

C. Main sessions

The event is co-organized by the European Union and UNDESA. It will be comprised of a **quick-takes** and a **sunlit conversation sessions**. The former aims to be short, speedy statements made by speakers as prompts for dialogue at the event. The latter will serve as a closing discussion focusing on solutions and encouraging outlooks taken from the exchange, opportunities for implementation and further action, as well as hopeful takeaways. These will be moderated discussions by a young leader who would encourage ambition and dynamism in the discussions.

D. Participation

Youth-led and youth-focused organizations, UN system as well as other partners will be asked to identify a selected group of representatives, aimed to have representation from the global youth from each continent, to serve as in-person speakers and/or participants during this event. Youth speakers should come from diverse geographic and socio-economic backgrounds, to ensure inclusive participation and the amplification of marginalized voices within the youth community. High-level participation from policymakers attending the HLPF should be ensured.

Online platforms will be available to establish an equitable opportunity for interested youth who will not be able to participate in-person and to encourage viewership from the general public. Further details on accessibility to the meeting will be provided shortly.

E. Event Outputs

The event would aim to provide contributions to future intergovernmental processes, including the SDG Summit 2023 and the 78th session of the General Assembly.

A summary of the discussions, actions and recommendations will be made available to Member States and other stakeholders for their kind consideration in their discussions at the SDG Summit 2023.

F. Programme

Time	Intergenerational Sessions
	<p><u>Master of Ceremony</u></p> <p>Ms. Francesca Spatolisano, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)</p>
14.30 – 14.33	Opening remarks by H.E. Ambassador Lachezara Stoeva , President of ECOSOC
14.33 – 14.38	Introduction and Welcome by H.E. Ms. Jutta Urpilainen , EU Commissioner for International Partnerships
Moderated sessions	
14.38 – 15.45	<p>Quick-Takes Conversation Session (approx. 65 minutes)</p> <p><i>Moderator-</i> Saru Duckworth, United Nations Foundation Next Generation Fellow, BRAC Program Associate for Ultra-Poor Graduation Initiative</p> <p><i>Panelists</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jessica Polfjärd, Member of the European Parliament 2. Cynthia Samuel-Olonjuwon, Special Representative of the ILO to the United Nations and Director of the ILO Office for the United Nations <p><i>Youth Panelists</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Jevanic Henry, United Nations Foundation Next Generation Fellow 4. Ana Aguirre, Global Youth President of the International Cooperative Alliance 5. Sameh Kamel, Organizing Partner of MGCY 6. Gibson Kawago, Founder and Chief Technical Officer of WAGA
15.45 – 16.28	<p>Sunlit Conversation Session (approx. 45 minutes)</p> <p><i>Moderator-</i> Jayathma Wickramanayake, United Nations Secretary General’s Envoy on Youth</p>

	<p><i>Panelists</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. H.E. Ms. Maritza Chan, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations 2. Cillian Lohan, EESC member, Vice-president of the Section for Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment (NAT) <p><i>Youth Panelists</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Hanyuan (Karen) Wang, Climind CEO and founder 4. Daniele Taurino, European Union Youth Forum 5. Luísa Franco Machado, Co-Founder Jeunes OpenGov 6. Ronelli Requena, Founder and Designer of Zayvha
16.28 – 16.30	Closing by Jayathma Wickramanayake , United Nations Secretary General’s Envoy on Youth