



**ECOSOC**  
YOUTH FORUM

**YOUTH** 2030



**Summit of  
the Future**  
Our Common Agenda

# **"Youth shaping sustainable and innovative solutions: Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of crises"**

*Engaging Youth and Member States Representatives*

16 April 2024

## **Opening Statement of the President of ECOSOC, H.E. Ambassador Paula Narváez**

Your Excellency Mr. Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations

Mrs. Sarah Baharaki, Global Youth Ambassador, Theirworld, and Representative of the Major Group on Children and Youth Excellencies,

Distinguished authorities,  
Delegates,

Young leaders,

Friends,

I am honored to welcome you all to the 2024 ECOSOC Youth Forum. Today, youth from around the world have coordinated, organized, and gathered to collectively address a common

concern: strengthening the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises. We have become accustomed to viewing crises as condemnations.

Today, I want to begin with an invitation: Let us hear the word crisis with a different tone. In this forum, the global youth challenge us to transform our discourse: we will speak of the multiple crises as a question, a problem, but above all, a call to hope. In 1948, the Chilean Nobel laureate Gabriela Mistral said, from Mexico, to the youth of the world, "you arrive bringing the impetus that we lacked, the urgency that failed us." This force is renewed today with your presence. We recognize the urgency demanded by our times, the urgency you demand of us, and as the ECOSOC, we express our commitment to you, and our faith IN you, the global youth, that we will not delay any longer in realizing your dreams of a better and more inclusive future for all.

For centuries, being young has been synonymous with change, progress, and future; you, the new generations, have shown us that being young, in our present, is also being responsible. The voice of youth has once again adjusted our ethical compass. Because, let's admit it, our justified anxiety has led us to a pessimistic moment that is no longer justifiable. The youth of the world remind us that we are responsible for the peace of the world and the ecological balance of the planet. Your enthusiasm and determination are crucial to the success of initiatives aimed at addressing global challenges and building a fairer and more sustainable world. The chorus of your ideals, youth of the world, is the music of a humanity that refuses to give up on the possibility of better times ahead.

For decades, young people have accompanied the United Nations; they have enriched us with the boundless imagination of those who look at the world with wonder, of those who can imagine, yes, the joys, but also the pains of others. Sixty years

ago, the "Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect, and Understanding between Peoples" acknowledged that after wars, young people were the ones who suffered the most and had the highest number of victims. The same declaration proclaimed that "the education of youth, as well as ideas in a spirit of peace, mutual respect, and understanding among peoples, can contribute to improving international relations and strengthening peace and security." Here is the paradox, those who suffered the greatest violence are the ones who bring the promise of overcoming it. Your presence here, at this Youth Forum, is evidence that this promise is being fulfilled. With the shadow of the global resurgence of armed conflicts, the opportunity for peace, the spirit of cooperation, and multilateralism once again rests with you.

Our Youth Forum – and I say "our" responsibly – is based on the belief that in the young people of the world lies another opportunity for equality.

Over the next three days, the agenda is ambitious. Our roadmap will be to discuss the impact of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), 13 (Climate Action), 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), and 17 (Partnerships to Achieve the Goals), all of which will be reviewed at the High-Level Political Forum in July. Once again, youth lead the way in the rhythms of history.

These goals are fundamental in our fight against the deepening poverty. Currently, only 1/3 of countries are on track to halve their national poverty levels by 2030. 7% of the world's population, 575 million people, are suffering from extreme poverty.

And, once again, among those who suffer the most are young people, who constitute a significant portion of the world's population affected by poverty. Where we should find opportunities, we encounter barriers to accessing education and

decent employment, as well as economic opportunities. 566 million out of 1.1 billion poor people worldwide are under 18 years old, and they struggle with inadequate infrastructure to break the intergenerational cycle of inequality. We know that poverty severely limits the development prospects of young people, perpetuating this cycle.

We must do more for our young people. Part of the answer is to include them in public decision-making. Changes in legislation do not adequately reflect youth-directed and youth-centered concerns, mainly due to the limited representation of young people in national decision-making bodies and processes. This Forum is an international effort to give voice to this necessary representation.

When youth is discussed, alongside the political challenge, there is always the educational challenge. It is necessary for the young people of the world to develop and be educated to face challenges that humanity has never experienced before. We spent decades preparing for an interconnected world, linked to the dreams of technology. Today, as stated by the OECD Learning Compass 2030, we must prepare youth to face an interdependent world that includes global citizenship education in its formation. And it is in this sense that your experience, youth of the world, is essential, as you are the ones who best understand the unprecedented demands of creating value, taking responsibility, and reconciling tensions and dilemmas demanded by both politics and the new dynamics of the world of work.

You have taken technology and humanized it once again. I can attest to your ambition, innovation, passion, and commitment to using the digital world to project your voices, build networks, and generate tangible impacts that allow us to imagine a better world.

Colleagues, friends,

We often talk about the leaders of tomorrow. But you are the leaders of the present. From the ECOSOC Youth Forum, you can actively engage with Member States, UN entities, and other visionary youth to chart the course and take concrete actions to guide us towards sustainable development. Here, your ideas and contributions are not only heard but are the driving force of transformation that our world needs.

I want to emphasize, in this regard, that the third day of the Forum will focus on the Summit of the Future, an important intergovernmental agreement that seeks to strengthen international cooperation, solidarity, and effectiveness in responding to new threats and opportunities, as well as accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Your contributions and creative perspectives, enthusiasm, and boldness are crucial in this process.

On this day of multiple hopes, ECOSOC invites you to claim the voice you deserve. Share and test your ideas. Inspire each other because in doing so, you also inspire the world. I look forward to your sincere and participatory conversations over the next three days. This space is yours.

Thank you very much.