

Without young people, Global Goals will not be achieved, UN forum told

30 January 2018 – Young people today are more connected, dynamic and engaged than ever and the Global Goals can't happen without them, speakers told an annual United Nations forum, where young leaders called on the Organization keep its promise to "leave no one behind" on the road to creating a prosperous life for everyone on a clean planet.

The first day of the 2018 [Youth Forum](#), convened by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), got off to a rollicking start with young people from every corner of the world leading discussions with ministers and high-level government officials, UN agencies and other international organizations.

One of the highlights of today's events was the dialogue between Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and Jayathma Wickramanayake, the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth.

The conversation revolved around the Forum theme, 'the role of youth in building sustainable and resilient urban and rural communities' and how youth can engage in the implementation of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, adopted by UN Member States in 2015. Ms. Mohammed said that the Agenda 2030 was "shaped with youth" and young people were "the loudest voice" in the ground-breaking [My World survey](#), in which almost 10 million made their voices heard during the UN system-wide discussions on the landmark 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

She encouraged youth to "make noise" for their voices to be heard.

Stressing that the importance of youth engagement by Member States in their national plans to implement the [SDGs](#), Ms. Wickramanayake said: "We talk about leaving no one behind but if we don't keep up with that phase, young people will leave the UN behind."

In a keynote address, Salina Abraham, President of the International Forestry Students' Association, said: "Sustainable development is not having to leave your home, family and culture behind to provide your children with an adequate life. It's not having to conceal your language or culture in an attempt to conform, only to never truly be accepted.

Participants at opening of the 2018 Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

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"Sustainable development is having the security, access, resources and tools to create new opportunities wherever you choose to call home," she said.

For her part, ECOSOC President Marie Chatardová said that young people imbue urban and rural communities with energy, creativity, and innovation.

“Your drive for innovation and consumption choices are crucial to our goals of increasing the eco-efficiency, minimizing waste and pollution, and of promoting access to and the sustainable use of all resources,” she said.

“You are a key partner in efforts to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, and resilient, and to build a global coalition to reverse land degradation and protect biodiversity,” she added.

“We are here to listen to your voices. Our landmark frameworks – including the 2030 Agenda, the [Paris Agreement](#) and the [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) – already recognize you as the key partners in efforts to build a better future,” she stressed.

Also addressing the Forum was General Assembly President Miroslav Lajčák, who stressed that “if we neglect young people, we will not achieve a single SDG.”

He highlighted the role of youth in innovations that help reverse the trends that are harming the planet as well as in preventing conflict and building peace.

“I want to conclude with a blunt truth: our international system simply was not set up for young people. If you look at photographs of the signing of the UN Charter, you will not see any young men or young women. That is why, for years, young people were not seen – and were not heard – in the conference rooms, like this one,” he said.

“Young people can no longer be dismissed as the rebel fighters; the terrorists; the disenfranchised. They are the innovators, the solution-finders; the social and environmental entrepreneurs,” he added.