

World must ensure youth engagement at all levels, including in design of national plans, UN Forum hears

2 February 2017 – Opening amid backlash against globalization and a marked shift towards marginalization in some parts of the world, a United Nations forum heard an outpouring of optimism and strong belief in collective action by youths and UN Member States for people, planet, peace and shared prosperity.

“Young people are stepping up to engage with the 2030 Agenda [for Sustainable Development], support its implementation, advocate for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and hold their Governments accountable,” said a Statement issued by the President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Frederick Musiiwa Makamure Shava, wrapping up the 2017 Youth Forum.

The Statement noted that the 6th annual Forum, held on 30 and 31 January at UN Headquarters in New York, had opened against the backdrop of a backlash against globalization, increasing inequality and a marked shift towards nationalism and isolation in many parts of the world. Nevertheless, the event witnessed an outpouring of optimism and strong belief in collective action by young people and UN Member States.

One of the key messages that came out of the event was the need to ensure youth inclusion and engagement at all levels and in all processes that affect them, including in the design of national plans.

“Young people’s participation should be institutionalized through national Youth Advisory Councils and other mechanisms,” the Presidential Statement said.

The Forum also spotlighted the importance of prioritizing the creation of decent jobs for youth in a changing labour market, including “green” jobs and opportunities in agriculture and industrial development, with special attention to youth in the rural economy and fragile situations.

At the closing of the Forum on Tuesday, Mr. ECOSOC President Shava told youth participants that “you emphasized investment in your education, skills development, including on entrepreneurship, stressing that this should be of high quality and linked to the job market opportunities.”

He called on all countries that will participate in the upcoming high-level political forum to use these messages in their national presentations.