

Youth leaders ready to ‘roll up their sleeves’ and get to work at annual UN forum

29 January 2018 – Not content to follow old-school rules to tackle problems like climate change, poverty and inequality, today’s youth – media savvy ‘Millennials’ and the ‘Born in the 90s’ cohort that can’t remember life without the Internet – are using disruptive, new-school innovations to drive change; and they’re heading to the United Nations to talk about building a better world for all.

At UN Headquarters in New York on 30 and 31 January, youth leaders from every corner of the world will lead discussions with government officials, civil society and other stakeholders on policy frameworks and innovative initiatives to advance the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) – a 15-year plan to create a prosperous world for everyone on a clean planet.

Marie Chatardová, the President of the UN Economic and Social Council, the UN body that convenes the annual [Youth Forum](#), has said that it is vital to empower young people to break cycles of poverty allow them to fulfil their potential to the fullest.

“If young people have the right support, education, and means, they can go on to build better societies. They have energy, creativity, and innovation to power entrepreneurship and create jobs for themselves and others,” she wrote in an opinion piece, published in the *Miami Herald* on Friday.

Citing examples of the youth taking action on pressing global concerns, such as on impacts of climate change or growing pollution, Mr. Chatardová said that young people do not wait idly for others to transform their ideas into reality.

“They are leaders who roll up their sleeves and work hard to transform their societies,” she added.



Marie Chatardová, President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).
UN Photo/Manuel Elias

Around the world, the population of young people is now almost [1.8 billion](#) – the largest ever. And it offers both immense potential as well as considerable challenges ranging from 71 million unemployed youth and an additional 161 million in situations of moderate or extreme poverty despite having a job.

In this situation, building on the work of young people to address the problems of the young people is critical, highlighted Jayathma

Wickramanayake, the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth.

“We will be discussing the issues [the youth] care about like sustainable energy for all, safe and inclusive cities, access to clean water and sanitation, protecting bio-diversity and forests and partnerships to achieve the [SDGs],” said Ms. Wickramanayake.

As a subset of the partnerships agenda, she explained, is the involvement of the youth in the implementation of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development and the [SDGs](#).

[Started in 2012](#), the Youth Forum is the only gathering of its kind to bring together young people and senior Government officials in-charge of youth matters in their countries, such as youth ministries. This year’s overarching theme is *the role of youth in building sustainable and resilient urban and rural communities*.

In addition to discussing youth action for specific SDGs, the agenda also includes regional perspectives and a roundtable on means of implementation, including finance, technology, capacity building and trade.

The outcomes from the Youth Forum will flow into this year High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), the global UN forum to which discusses and reviews the status of implementation of sustainable development.