

The 7th session of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development
Item 4 of the Provisional Agenda
Implementation of the mandate and programme of work – Focused thematic discussion
Conference Room 6 UN HQ NY

Youth Participation

Wednesday 5 April, 10:00 am to 11:30 am

Concept Note

Dialogue on a Right to Development Approach to Youth Participation and contribution to the process in the lead up to the SDG Summit

Presented by Liliana Valiña

Introduction

Young people are our future of today, yet they represent a critical portion of the population suffering from poverty, discrimination, marginalization, conflict and violence, as well as the adverse consequences of migration, demographic shifts, and climate change. Voices from around the world have highlighted the need to address the underrepresentation of youth in decision-making processes. Youth are particularly vocal around the critical issues of governance, voice, and accountability. Their awareness of these challenges, and their vision for solutions are opportunities to shape innovative responses that leverage new technologies, partnerships and revisited strategies for the future we want.

The United Nations (UN) has long recognized the importance of youth in the work of the organization. In 2009, the General Assembly proclaimed 2010 the International Year of Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding ([A/RES/64/134](#)). In 2018, the Secretary General (SG) launched [Youth2030](#), the first-ever UN system-wide strategy on youth and, in 2020, under his [Call to Action for Human Rights](#), he asked UN bodies and agencies to create space for young people to participate in shaping the decisions that will affect their future. In September 2022, the General Assembly adopted resolution [A/RES/76/306](#) to strengthen UN engagement with youth, among others.

In preparation for the 2024 Summit of the Future, the SG, planned for the issuance of 11 policy briefs, including on youth participation. This would build on General Assembly resolution A/RES/76/306 and its call for the establishment of a UN Youth Office and on the need to safeguard and protect young people, ensuring they have a strong voice in decision-making processes.

Youth engagement and participation are essential not only for addressing the many challenges they face, including barriers for their active participation, but also for safeguarding the planet and human dignity, creating inclusive societies, and achieving a more effective and sustainable development process. The challenges facing humanity today require concerted global action and the meaningful engagement and participation of youth, and it is imperative to act now. Their meaningful engagement in the development process is of paramount importance to accelerate the achievements of the 2030 Agenda, as well as to address the various challenges and crises of today affecting the future we want.

The 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals are informed by the Declaration on the Right to Development and seek to promote and implement a transformative vision of development for the full benefit of all, for the present and future generations, based of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of the benefits resulting therefrom. According to the Declaration, the right to development is an inalienable human right by

virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development.

Purpose

To engage relevant Member States and experts in examining how to ensure youth participation in decision-making processes from the right to development perspective, with a view to formulating EMRTD contribution to the process in the lead up to the 2023 SDG summit and the 2024 Summit of the Future.

Guiding questions

1. What policy frameworks and best practices have been adopted and implemented at national and global levels to ensure that young people have a strong voice in decision-making, including through intergenerational engagement?
2. How have international and bilateral donor agencies included the meaningful participation of young people, as an active target group in key project objectives and activities? Are there good practices with relevant impacts to be shared?
3. How can the right to development perspective help to strengthen meaningful youth participation and SDGs outcomes towards the future we want?
4. What needs to be done or changed to overcome current challenges and potential barriers to meaningful youth engagement and participation in development?
5. What recommendations can be made, based on the principles of the right to development, to ensure the meaningful youth participation in the development process at the national and multilateral levels?

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