



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



Ministry of
the Interior and Safety



Incheon
Metropolitan City

7th Youth Forum on SDG Implementation

“Enabling Youth as Agents of Change for Digital Transformation and Inclusive Climate Action”

Concept Note
8 September 2023

“Our world needs you more than ever. From climate change to conflicts. To poverty and inequalities. To the fact that the Sustainable Development Goals are slipping out of reach. Developing solutions to these challenges – side by side with young people – is the driving force.”¹

António Guterres, United Nations Secretary General

Introduction

The United Nations Project Office on Governance (UNPOG) of the Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG) of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), in collaboration with the Ministry of the Interior and Safety (MOIS) and Incheon Metropolitan City of the Republic of Korea, will organise the **7th Youth Forum on SDG Implementation** on 8 September 2023, under the theme ***Enabling Youth as Agents of Change for Digital Transformation and Inclusive Climate Action***. Young people from Asia and the Pacific, East Africa and beyond will be engaged and presented the opportunity to share their ideas ahead of the Regional Symposium in October 2023.

The world today has the knowledge and resources required to deliver on the promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development². However, transformative changes will not be possible without the buy-in and contributions of a wide range of actors, especially with the 1.2 billion young people alive today. Youth are key to identifying new solutions that will secure the breakthroughs that our world urgently needs. As future custodians of the planet, young people also stand to lose the most of societies become more insecure and unequal, and if the triple planetary crisis remains unabated.

In recent years, young people are becoming the driving force for societal changes through social mobilisation – pushing for climate action, seeking to address racial injustice, promoting gender equality, and demanding dignity for all. There have been countless examples of how people drive innovative change in a host of arenas such as in business, technology, and science.

Against this backdrop, the 7th Youth Forum will serve as a platform for young people to share their vision and elaborate substantive contributions in pursuing sustainable development through effective digital transformation and inclusive climate action. It will also provide a space to enable the youth to raise their voices and exchange ideas on how to accelerate SDG implementation with a focus on the significant role of public governance.

¹ <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2023-04-25/secretary-generals-video-message-the-2023-ecosoc-youth-forum>

² [Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 3: Meaningful Youth Engagement in Policy and Decision-making Processes](#)



Objectives

The 7th Youth Forum on SDG Implementation will aim to bring together the youth from Asia and the Pacific, East Africa, and beyond to:

- Engage in meaningful youth discussion that encourages young people to play an active role in digital transformation and climate action.
- Present ideas and solutions – and showcase innovative initiatives and individual and collective action by youth and others – to advance the SDGs.
- Help develop youth consciousness, creativity, and ability to take responsibility for their actions to promote and achieve the SDGs.
- Provide a platform for young people to be heard and bring innovative ideas and solutions to issues that matter to them.
- Share knowledge, skills, and lessons learned in achieving the rights and well-being of youth by promoting the accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and ensuring meaningful participation and engagement of young people in policy making and implementation.

Substantive Scope

Meaningful discussions and engagement with young people are essential to achieve collective action and accelerate the implementation of the SDGs. Recognising young individuals as catalysts for change, the event will centre on exploring ways to harness their potential in the era of digital transformation and will emphasise their vital role in addressing the challenges of climate change.

Harnessing the Potential of Youth in the Age of Digital Transformation

Digital transformation is well recognised as a key element for sustainable development, and digital innovation is the engine to drive this transformation to the future. Digital technologies have become integral to the lives among youth around the world³. More than ever, young people play a crucial role in accelerating the implementation of the SDGs through digital transformation, as they are the most active and influential users of new technology⁴ and are considered as the driving force behind digitisation and innovation⁵.

The 2030 Agenda acknowledges that technology is crucial to the achievement of sustainable development. However, despite the youth's ability to naturally adopt technology, many young people have raised their concern on the lack of inclusion in digital development⁶. In addition, nearly a third of the population who are not connected to the internet are young people, and existing digital technology, facilities and services remain to exclude young people's ideas⁷.

Young people nowadays have grown up under the ubiquitous influence of the internet and of digital technology, and they have the potential to become architects, designers, and innovators of collective digital future⁸. They play an important stake in ensuring access to digital infrastructure, and their active engagement can ensure that a greater number of young people are not excluded from the modern digital world. In addition, as early adopters of trending

³ <https://gdc.unicef.org/resource/growing-digital-world-benefits-and-risks>

⁴ <https://www.unicef.org/eap/what-we-do/digital-transformation>

⁵ [Promoting Youth Participation in Decision-Making and Public Service Delivery through Harnessing Digital Technologies](#)

⁶ <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/tech-and-innovation/>

⁷ [Youth Engagement in Promoting Digital Innovation to Accelerate the UN SDG4](#)

⁸ <https://www.unicef.org/innovation/stories/youth-architects-digital-future>



technologies, youth have the potential to make significant contribution to addressing societal needs and challenges in all countries through digital transformation.

Youth have “routinely proven to be innovators, solution-makers, and restless advocates for a better and safer digital future”⁹, and they must be equipped with proper knowledge; and be included and encouraged to develop and utilise their skills to create opportunities that would help in the advancement of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Elevating the Role of Young People as Key Players for Climate Action

The climate crisis requires ambition and inclusivity¹⁰. Youth are some of the most vulnerable to the lifelong environmental effects caused by the climate change. While there is increasing global momentum to acknowledge the positive role that youth can play in climate action and SDG implementation, this momentum risks being tokenistic. Rather, meaningful youth engagement in climate action is needed to prevent ‘youth’ being reduced to another buzzword or to tick off a box of participants.

Young people are becoming more aware that they will bear the brunt of the climate crisis. According to UNDP’s [Peoples’ Climate Vote](#), nearly 70 per cent of under 18 believe that climate change is a global emergency. As a result, youth have taken the role in leading, advocating, and demanding for a more responsible climate behaviour from governments and the private sector¹¹. In fact, many young people have already taken the initiative on climate change mitigation and adaptation through educational, awareness-raising, and behavioural change campaigns¹². In addition, there has also been a number of young people who have changed their personal habits and lifestyles and have proposed innovative solutions to tackle the crises at societal level¹³.

Young people have continuously influenced, advocated, and demanded for responsible climate behaviour from governments and other stakeholders. More than ever, meaningful engagement with the youth, recognising their efforts and celebrating their progress has become more necessary as they have become valuable contributors for climate action.

Empowering young people and working together with them opens a historic and transformational opportunity to lay the foundation of a peaceful and sustainable future¹⁴. By acknowledging young peoples’ actions and giving them a seat at the table in the battle against climate change, youth are more likely to be more inspired and continue to push and keep on with their efforts to accelerate climate action and achieve the 2030 Agenda.

Format

The 7th Youth Forum on SDG Implementation will be held virtually on 8 September 2023 using Zoom to accommodate the young individuals participating from all over the world. The Forum will be designed for 3 hours 30 minutes from 13:30 – 17:00 Seoul, GMT+9.

The Forum will invite youth experts, advisers and leaders to impart their knowledge towards the youth. This session will be followed by discussion and a question-and-answer session to allow the participants to exchange and share their ideas and lessons learned.

⁹ [Jayathma Wickramanayake, UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth](#)

¹⁰ [Aiming Higher: Elevating Meaningful Youth Engagement for Climate Action](#)

¹¹ <https://www.undp.org/blog/tapping-power-young-people-climate-action>

¹² <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-climatechange.pdf>

¹³ [Generation Climate: Young People at the Forefront of Change](#)

¹⁴ Ibid 11



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



Ministry of
the Interior and Safety



Incheon
Metropolitan City

The Ideas for Change Contest will also be held during the Forum whereby five (5) shortlisted teams will be invited to present their ideas among peers and agencies. Top three (3) winners will be selected and announced by the end of the Forum.

Note: Please read the Contest Guideline to join the contest.

Participation

Formal representation of youth and student voices is essential to achieve the implementation of the SDGs. The 7th Youth Forum on SDG Implementation will bring together young people from wide and diverse backgrounds and countries from all over the world, representing formal and informal youth entities, organisations, and groups from across regions. Young individuals between 15 through 30 are strongly encouraged to join the Forum.

To register for the Youth Forum, click [here](#).

Expected Outcome

The 7th Youth Forum on SDG Implementation will bring together young individuals, youth organisations, UN entities, and private sectors to build multi-stakeholder partnership for accelerating the SDG implementation. An informal summary capturing the key messages and findings during the two sessions and the presentations will also be prepared to further include youth ideas into the work of UNPOG.

The 7th Youth Forum also expects the participants to view the event as a journey that helps them realise their capability to drive change on the ground within their communities and across the world.

The highlights and key takeaways of the Forum will also be reflected in the work of UNPOG and during the Youth Session of the 7th Regional Symposium.

Contact Information

Mr. Kyu Chang Ko

Head, United Nations Project Office on Governance (UNPOG)
DPIDG/UN DESA

Ms. Carolit Salvacion

Associate Networking and Outreach Expert
UNPOG/DPIDG/UN DESA
carolit.salvacion@un.org