Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY)
Sectoral Position Paper to the High-level Political Forum on sustainable development (HLPF) 2021:
Policy Recommendations from the ECOSOC Youth Forum 2021
Policy Recommendations

Youth participants of the ECOSOC Youth Forum 2021 wish to underline the great importance of unity and meaningful participation in building back better from COVID-19. To better engage youth in the monitoring, review and acceleration of the implementation of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda, we call upon the UN system and the Member States to:

01. Make youth equal partners in the implementation of the SDGs.

02. Directly involve young people in the design and implementation of policy. This includes, for example, involvement in elections, the design and implementation of a national Youth Strategy, and additional efforts for youth to inform the policy-making process.

03. Organize legitimate spaces for youth voices to be heard by creating officially recognized spaces where youth can become a part of the decision-making process. These spaces will remove bureaucratic and financial obstacles so that effective participation, not only by those who are the typically active participants, but by the marginalized and hitherto excluded groups for whom participation is difficult.

04. Refrain from treating youth as a homogenous group. Different youth groups should be recognized for the varying ideas that they can bring forth.

05. Eliminate tokenism. UN leadership and government representatives should not only hear young people, but understand, respect, involve and empower them. This can be achieved through viewing policy responses and formulation with a ‘youth’ lens. Of a similar token, marginalized youth must be brought to the decision making-table, especially disabled youth.

06. Inquire and understand why certain barriers to achieving the 2030 Agenda exist through desegregated data collection. Further, commit to collectively overcoming these barriers in order for youth to move forward with the implementation of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda in an effective way.

07. Invest in pro-youth solutions across key sectors influencing youth development such as education and employment. This can be achieved by fostering meaningful dialogue and partnerships between young people and other stakeholders. Additionally, increasing young people’s role in SDG achievement is possible via cascaded initiatives at the community level. Increased initiatives, such as UN Youth Champions for Disarmament, that enable youth to raise their voices and have a presence in global issues that are vital to achieving the SDGs.
Draft a ‘New Deal’ to rejuvenate and redesign the parameters of youth and employment, based on sound economic solutions, creative entrepreneurship, and inclusive prosperity. Young people ask that they be the custodians of this agenda.

Prioritize long-term human wellbeing by investing in economic stability. As major fiscal stimulus and rescue packages are being introduced to manage the recession brought on by COVID-19, governments must avoid repeating past mistakes made in the 2009 Global Financial Crisis.

Continue to support the promotion and creation of innovative solutions, especially for young entrepreneurs. Governments, with the support of the private sector, should support and encourage youth-led businesses and initiatives with financial and other resources, such as incubators and startup competitions in the Arab States Region and elsewhere.

Invest in education for promoting skills for the next digital transformation and for access to the labor market. Moreover, there should be a greater roll-out of local initiatives through the financial support of organizations and institutional support at the government level to increase the scope and reach of existing and new programs.

Provide Africa with infrastructure that will reduce the cost of doing business for young people, for example, through the creation of a market for the products that young people are creating.

Reduce the competition that exists between limited resources (i.e. opportunities for a few, though thousands of people competing for them) particularly in lower-income countries.

SDG 1 - No Poverty & SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth

We, the youth participants of the ECOSOC Youth Forum 2021, call upon the UN system and the Member States to:
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01. **Prioritize youth mental health** and access to mental health services.

02. **Support countries in the design and implementation of effective mental health support services** for young people to address the psychological impact of COVID-19. This entails increased and more affordable mental health services, as well as more resilient systems in general. Public health services should absorb these costs.

03. **Co-design youth mental health strategies** such that they truly respond to the needs of all youth.

04. **Include youth mental health** in the context of supporting youth who are mobilizing at local and national levels.

05. **Ensure access to quality health services** to children, adolescents and youths, ensure access to sexual and reproductive health as essential, and consider youth during the vaccination process.

06. **Follow the recommendations made by the WHO** through their different constituencies.

07. **Educate young people on sexual health** and commit to breaking the stigma of sexualizing women’s bodies. Youth believe that the international community can do better and do more, to continue fighting until women have full rights and security, and autonomy over their life and body.

08. **Eliminate malnutrition** in Latin America and the rest of the world.
01. **Not forget about climate change.** The global recovery from the pandemic serves as the pinnacle opportunity to reorient our system into one that prioritizes environmental protection. The long-term and irreversible damages caused by human behaviour on the environment must be a priority of the international community as we continue to fight COVID-19. This includes building systems that are resilient for the future.

02. **Immediately stop all new investments in coal, oil and gas.**

03. **Ramped up the transition to clean-energy** through a focus on climate finance adaptation.

04. **Scale up their NDCs.** There is a need for long-term approaches to deliver climate policies that are in line with the Paris Agreement. This includes reducing greenhouse gas emissions in line with the Paris Agreement and with national and regional plans of action.

05. **Increase taxes and marketing restrictions** on processed, nutrient-deficient, and environmentally-harmful foods, in order to level the commercial playing field for companies that produce and/or sell healthier, greener options.
01. **Enhance education specific to its regional and social context.** This is crucial to achieving more resilient, inclusive and fair communities.

   a. **In Africa**, the education system should strive to be on par with Western institutions in order to break the systemic cycle of inequitable access to information, and further, unequal opportunities in life.

   b. **In settler societies**, it is critical to implement proper education and information surrounding the truth of colonial history, and further addressing the existing structures of inequality brought forth by colonialism. Indigenous education is vital to this.

   c. **In Indigenous Communities**, implement practices of pre and prior informed consent in any initiative or activity that impacts indigenous lives - this is how indigenous youth understand and aspire to build back better.

02. **Integrate e-learning wherever possible.** Stakeholders in Asia Pacific are urged to support the development and adoption of technological innovation in education, and expand access to online learning platforms. Parallel to this is the recognition of the inaccessibility of e-learning. The differing situations of youth as they pertain to accessing technology must be considered.

03. **Institute a radical shift in the implementation of the global goals to get girls back to school** with necessary support systems. This includes: daycares for teenage mothers, psychological help for survivors of abuse, legal systems for justice and simple, precise and understandable proposal templates for Community Driven Organizations to apply for funds to support girls education.

04. **Re-evaluate funding matrixes towards girls’ education.** Likewise, we must break down the barriers that we have put up for young girls by first

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**SDG 10 - Reduced Inequalities & SDG 16 - Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions**

We, the youth participants of the ECOSOC Youth Forum 2021, call upon the UN system and the Member States to:
recognizing the pertinent role they play in girls education and creating a mechanism to work together with governments to ensure that truly, no girl is left behind.

05. **Engage in data collection processes.** Governments need to mobilize resources and political will to build data to understand the contexts and challenges for the diverse youths to engage them properly as key actors to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the recovery processes.

06. **Recognize the importance of segregated data.**

07. **Shift towards an intersectional approach to capturing disaggregated data** on the experiences of young people. However, they must ensure that the data collection process is inclusive and representative of all.

08. **Commit to upholding indigenous rights** and protect their common heritage.

09. **Improve efforts of consulting and including Indigenous youth,** and more sufficiently recognize the effective leadership role they can potentially play in helping to address a number of complex issues we all are facing. This is especially important considering that Indigenous communities are disproportionately affected by both climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic.

10. **Ensure meaningful queer youth participation** at all decision-making levels - not to be sidelined and left behind anymore but at the forefront of decision-making. Moreover, LGBTQI+ individuals seek data privacy and acknowledgment of their identity from all governments.

11. **Guarantee the inclusion of young people with disabilities in all policy making spaces,** with dedicated, accessible platforms within all the intergovernmental systems, the human rights council, all human rights monitoring mechanisms and within all UN agencies.

12. **Recognize the evolving capacity of disabled persons,** especially those living in the margins of society (youth with developmental, multiple, psychosocial disabilities).

13. **Prioritize women’s leadership and inclusion** should not be ignored. Women and girls must be in those rooms where decisions concerning our lives and our planet are made.

14. **Concrete institutional and financial support for local youth actors** involved in peace, security, and justice work within their region. This includes the provision of avenues and platforms for youth to share their voices.
SDG 17 - Partnerships for the Goals

We, the youth participants of the ECOSOC Youth Forum 2021, call upon the UN system and the Member States to:

01. Attack and redress the endemic inequalities in our national and international structures – economic, social, racial, gender inequalities; and collectively defeat the rising forces of racism, extremism and fascism.

02. Confer greater agency to farmers, young people, and community leaders in policy discussions, rather than viewing local stakeholders merely as beneficiaries of top-down policy decisions.

03. Commit to building long-term partnerships. It is important to invest in early childhood education around the SDGs. Youth programs should be informed by research examining the issues facing young people.

04. Attentively listen to young people in vulnerable and marginalized situations in order to better understand and respond to their needs. Parallel to this, all relevant stakeholders need to collectively invest in addressing the root causes contributing to youth vulnerabilities.

05. Immediately provide all individuals from all regions with basic and affordable access to the internet. This should be a global initiative to ensure that no one is left behind.

06. Allocate the necessary budget to address their youth’s regional challenges and ensure its destination reaches the people, having a tangible impact in their lives. Processes need to be transparent and budgets allocated should be publicly traceable by citizens.

07. Equitably distribute the COVID-19 vaccine. No one can be left behind and preferential treatment should not be given to wealthier countries, especially if/when countries and people of countries who cannot be inoculated are supporting the overall vaccination effort.