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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups: World Programme of Action for Youth

Policies and programmes involving youth

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

In response to Commission for Social Development resolution 61/1 on policies and programmes concerning youth (see [E/2023/26-E/CN.5/2023/9](#)), the Secretary-General explores in the present report the connections between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the World Programme of Action for Youth, with a particular focus on how local youth actions can accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In so doing, he underscores the importance of policy coordination and cohesion at the local and national levels to foster trust and dialogue between youth and public authorities. Drawing on input from Member States, United Nations entities and youth organizations, the report further highlights existing mechanisms and partnerships designed to strengthen policy coordination between local and national authorities in three cross-cutting areas critical for youth development: (a) investing in youth through enhanced social protection for poverty alleviation, food security and health; (b) building resilient livelihoods; and (c) fostering sustainable communities and climate action. In the report, the need to support youth engagement in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in these areas is stressed. The report concludes with recommendations for the Commission's consideration focused on improving youth engagement in policymaking; improved coherence and cross-fertilization among levels of decision-making and across stakeholder groups; and better identification of and action within the nexus points of policies and programmes that have an impact on poverty reduction, education, labour market policies and climate action.

* [E/CN.5/2025/1](#).

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 61/1, the Commission for Social Development requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission at its sixty-third session a report on the implementation of the resolution, to be prepared in consultation with Member States and relevant United Nations entities, as well as with youth organizations. The present report illustrates how local youth actions contribute to global progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, which is currently affected by multiple crises, including economic instability, conflicts and declining trust in public institutions. In addition, the report underlines the need to improve youth engagement in policymaking and better align local and national development policies, and to build trust between youth and public authorities.

2. Section II provides an overview of the current global context and the state of youth in relation to the theme of the present report.¹ It highlights the connections between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the World Programme of Action for Youth, focusing on how local youth actions can accelerate the achievement of the Goals.

3. Section III focuses on three thematic areas critical to youth development: (a) investing in youth: enhancing social protection for poverty alleviation, food security and health; (b) building resilient livelihoods: promoting quality education and decent work; and (c) youth as drivers of change: fostering sustainable communities and climate action. For each area, the report highlights policies and programmes advancing local youth actions for acceleration towards the Goals, based on input from Member States,²

¹ The present report drew information from the following sources: International Labour Organization (ILO), *World Social Protection Report 2024-26: Universal Social Protection for Climate Action and a Just Transition* (Geneva, 2024); United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, International Youth Day 2023, International Youth Day 2024 and *World Youth Report: Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (United Nations publication, 2018); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), “Fast facts: youth as partners for the implementation of the SDGs”, 2017; “Local 2030: Localizing the SDGs”, available at www.local2030.org; Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and UNDP, “Roadmap for localizing the SDGs: implementation and monitoring at subnational level”, 2016; UN-Habitat, “Multi-level governance for SDG localization”, 2022, and *Guidelines for Voluntary Local Reviews, Volume 1: A Comparative Analysis of Existing VLRs* (2020) and *Volume 2: Towards a New Generation of VLRs: Exploring the Local-National Link* (2021); United Nations Economist Network, “Thematic brief: social protection”, 2020; *World Public Sector Report 2018: Working Together – Integration, Institutions and the Sustainable Development Goals* (United Nations publication, 2018); World Youth Report: Youth Civic Engagement – A Conceptual Framework (United Nations publication, 2016); United Nations, summary of “VNR Lab 2023”: “Multi-level governance for SDG implementation: the role of VNRs and VLRs”, 2023; report of the Secretary-General entitled “Our Common Agenda” (A/75/982); UNDP, Regional Bureau for Africa, “Issue brief: exploring the role of social protection in enhancing food security in Africa”, July 2011; UNDP, presentation on the theme “Localizing the SDGs to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: lessons on SDG integration and multilevel governance from Kenya”, 2023; Fondation Botnar and UN-Habitat, *Models and Programs for Youth’s Governance and Participation in Planning: More Inclusive and Sustainable Cities* (2024); and United Nations Environment Programme, *Emissions Gap Report 2023: Broken Record – Temperatures Hit New High, Yet the World Fails to Cut Emissions (Again)* (Nairobi, 2023).

² Azerbaijan, Belarus, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cyprus, Czechia, El Salvador, Finland, Guatemala, Hungary, Ireland, Malta, the Philippines, Qatar, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovenia, Türkiye, Ukraine and Uruguay.

United Nations entities³ and youth-led organization members of the children and youth major group.

4. Section IV provides an update on additional activities of the United Nations relating to youth development. The report concludes with recommendations in section V.

II. Overview

A. Local youth actions to accelerate delivery of the 2030 Agenda

5. With only five years remaining until 2030, the world is not on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Multiple interlinked challenges – including escalating climate crises, economic instability, emerging conflicts and an erosion of trust in institutions – have exacerbated inequalities, disrupting progress on numerous Goals and causing regression in others. In this complex global landscape, achieving the Goals by 2030 urgently requires innovative and inclusive strategies to mobilize communities and leverage the strengths of diverse stakeholders.

6. There is a growing recognition that the achievement of the Goals hinges on local action. Indeed, many of the Goals directly address issues that local communities experience, such as access to healthcare, education, clean water and sustainable economic opportunities. Local governments and communities are often best positioned to understand and respond to challenges, as they are closest to the people and aware of their specific needs, priorities and contexts. This understanding has driven a push for Sustainable Development Goal localization, defined as “the process of adapting and customizing the SDGs and translating them into local development plans and strategies – ones that fit the needs, contexts and priorities of a particular region or locality, in coherence with national frameworks”.⁴ By investing in inclusion, multi-stakeholder partnerships and multilevel governance, Sustainable Development Goal localization ensures that efforts are more responsive, inclusive and effective. It also fosters greater community engagement, trust and ownership of the development process.

7. Young people are central to this equation for several reasons, including their demographic influence, their unique capacity to act as connectors and mobilizers of other groups and generations, their focus on accountability and transparency, and their drive for innovation and concrete actions. Despite this, many youth continue to face systemic barriers in employment, health, housing, civic and political spaces.

B. Strengthening coordination and alignment between levels of governance

8. Effectively localizing the Goals requires strong coherence and cooperation across all levels of government. Vertical integration ensures that local initiatives are

³ ILO, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Trade Centre (ITC), the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), UNDP, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Regional Collaboration Centre for Asia and the Pacific, the Internet Governance Forum, the Peacebuilding Fund, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

⁴ *Inter-agency Policy Briefs on Accelerating Progress on the 2030 Agenda from Local to Global Levels: the Critical Importance of SDG Localization* (United Nations publication, 2024).

supported and amplified by regional and national frameworks, while horizontal integration promotes collaboration across different silos of government. Partnerships with non-State stakeholders, including young people, are essential for developing holistic solutions and adaptive strategies that effectively address today's interconnected challenges.

9. Youth-led organizations, which bring together diverse youth, often work across various sectors to address challenges holistically. Moreover, by pushing for representation, youth ensure that policies are inclusive and address the barriers that marginalized groups face. Their advocacy promotes “whole-of-society” approaches by highlighting diverse voices and needs.

10. Member States are increasingly establishing mechanisms to enhance policy coherence around the Goals. One approach is through the creation of national Sustainable Development Goal coordination councils or bodies. In some cases, such mechanisms or groups also include non-governmental stakeholders to ensure broader participation and input. When young people are absent from these groups or mechanisms, their capacity for innovation cannot be leveraged. In addition, young people's push for intergenerational equity and policies that address both present and future needs would be useful in these efforts to develop balanced approaches that align immediate goals with sustainable, long-term outcomes. Finally, youth participation in these mechanisms or groups can help to ensure that policies are not only coherent and aligned, but also forward-looking and adapted to emerging needs.

11. Voluntary reporting at both the national and subnational levels has also emerged as a powerful vehicle for advancing multilevel coordination and integrated planning. National Governments are increasingly utilizing voluntary national reviews to highlight national-level advances and challenges in the implementation of the Goals and to capture the efforts of local and regional stakeholders, including youth, in support of their implementation.

12. The voluntary local review movement has also continued to grow globally. Since the first voluntary local reviews were presented in 2018, over 300 of them have been conducted by local and regional governments. While voluntary local reviews do not have the same official status as voluntary national reviews, they play a crucial role in bringing local stakeholders, such as youth and youth-led organizations, closer to decision-making processes and strengthening multilevel governance by collecting timely, accurate and disaggregated data.

13. These mechanisms provide a valuable opportunity to strengthen youth mainstreaming across all sectors and levels of government. Many countries are establishing youth councils and caucuses at the national and subnational levels to ensure that young voices are heard in these processes. Youth engagement is reflected in the growing number of youth contributing to voluntary national reviews and voluntary local reviews in recent years.

C. Rebuilding trust and dialogue between youth and public authorities

14. Trust between public institutions and the people they serve is crucial for sustainable development, yet concerns over transparency, accountability and the capacity of these institutions to address critical issues have led to widespread feelings of exclusion, social unrest and misinformation. Youth, especially those most marginalized, face multidimensional challenges and exhibit lower levels of trust, often due to their experiences with systemic barriers and a perceived lack of responsiveness. There is a need to rebuild trust through inclusion, protection and participation.

15. In this context, local youth actions can accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals and serve as a powerful catalyst for rebuilding trust and dialogue with public authorities. When youth actively lead and participate in localizing the Goals, through either direct community action or participation in governance structures, they showcase their unique perspectives and innovative solutions.

16. Local youth actions can also open channels for dialogue and engagement with local authorities and other stakeholders, strengthening intergenerational solidarity, mutual respect and understanding. In opening such channels, youth gain a platform for voicing their concerns and priorities. When public authorities meaningfully engage with youth – recognizing and integrating their contributions – it strengthens trust and deepens their commitment to civic engagement.

17. Local governance, in turn, is strengthened by incorporating diverse perspectives, leading to more inclusive, responsive and effective approaches.

III. Thematic areas

A. Investing in youth: enhancing social protection for poverty alleviation, food security and health

1. Overview

18. Around 3.8 billion people,⁵ or 47.6 per cent of the global population, lack any form of social protection, leaving them vulnerable to economic, health and environmental shocks. Moreover, social protection coverage is highly uneven, with low-income countries having the least access. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic exacerbated these disparities, underscoring the urgent need for robust social protection systems. Beyond immediate relief, these systems are foundational for achieving longer-term development goals by providing a social protection floor and ensuring that no one is left behind.

19. Social protection measures can promote food security and health by reducing poverty and increasing household income. For example, conditional cash transfers in rural areas that encourage sustainable agricultural practices not only support income stability but also boost food security for entire communities. More direct measures can help to ensure access to affordable healthcare. Together, such measures help families and individuals to maintain good health, reduce the burden of disease and break the cycle of poverty, driving progress across multiple Sustainable Development Goals.

20. For young individuals, social protection provides a crucial safety net, helping to mitigate the risks of unemployment or underemployment, which are common challenges at the start of their careers or during the transition from education to work. Social protection not only ensures that they have short-term income security to address immediate needs, but also provides the resources required to pursue education and training opportunities which are essential for their long-term economic independence. Through targeted measures, such as school-based meal programmes or youth-specific health insurance plans, young people gain access to nutritious food and healthcare, providing them with adequate security to develop. Globally, coverage of social protection for youth between 15 and 24 years of age is low, particularly in developing countries. According to ILO, only 18.6 per cent of unemployed youth receive unemployment benefits. The vast majority of youth from developing countries

⁵ ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2020-22: Social Protection at a Crossroads – In Pursuit of a Better Future* (Geneva, 2021).

are engaged in informal employment, which often lacks social protection coverage. Ultimately, investing in comprehensive social protection during young people's formative years lays the foundation for them to thrive.

21. Localizing target 1.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which focuses on implementing social protection systems for all, involves empowering local governments to deliver tailored services that meet the specific needs of their communities. Decentralizing social protection measures empowers local authorities to better address the unique challenges faced by vulnerable populations. This approach makes social protection more responsive and inclusive as it improves the delivery of services and strengthens local governance and community engagement.

22. Young people can play a crucial role in localizing target 1.3 of the Goals by actively participating in the design and implementation of social protection initiatives. By contributing innovative ideas and solutions, engaging in advocacy and serving as community mobilizers, they can help to ensure that social protection measures are effective and equitable, reaching the most vulnerable populations, including youth.

23. Ultimately, investing in comprehensive social protection during young people's formative years lays the foundation for them to thrive and fully participate in society.

2. Actions by Member States

24. To achieve poverty reduction, food security and increased health, various countries have committed to integrating social protection systems for youth welfare into their national policies.

25. Brazil created its Unified Social Assistance System to support individuals facing social vulnerabilities, including poverty, food insecurity and limited access to public services, at both the national and local levels and to prevent social risks through programmes such as Bolsa Família. Moreover, the National Youth Council of Brazil collaborates with local organizations to ensure that youth policies are in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

26. In Burkina Faso, the Listening and Dialogue Centres for Young People aim to improve youth socioeconomic security through extracurricular activities and socioeconomic integration, and support youth in various circumstances.

27. In the Philippines, as part of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Programme (4Ps), the Youth Development Session is a school-based activity that, based on local needs, cultivates essential life skills and supports youth in making better life choices, leading to improved employability and development.

28. The Ministry of Tourism and Youth of Serbia signed a statement of intention to engage youth in policy development for the protection of mental health, with a focus on youth in 10 local communities through youth centres and spaces, health counselling and psychosocial support.

29. The National Youth Institute of Uruguay created the Ni Silencio Ni Tabú programme to promote youth mental health and psychosocial well-being throughout the country, together with UNICEF and the Ministry of Public Health, civil society partners and regional and local authorities.

30. In Czechia, the Youth Panel, established by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, is an independent body designed to support the national youth strategy and youth involvement in the decision-making process, including marginalized and vulnerable groups.

31. Similarly, the SDG Youth Champions initiative of Malta selected five individuals in 2024 to advocate for one of the country's national strategic goals, which include poverty alleviation, food security and health.

3. Actions by United Nations entities

32. IOM and ITC are leading efforts to address social protection. IOM collaborated with Dominica to improve access to protection-oriented services, focusing on youth and vulnerable populations.

33. Similarly, in partnership with the Gambia, ITC developed mechanisms that align local initiatives with national frameworks, ensuring that youth-focused projects are well-coordinated and effective and bridge local actions with national development plans and that young people in need of social protection benefit from comprehensive support systems. ITC, in collaboration with the European Union and the Peacebuilding Fund of the United Nations, implemented agricultural training programmes that teach young farmers sustainable farming techniques in the Gambia.

34. UNFPA, in collaboration with local governments, has rolled out a comprehensive sexual education programme in Timor-Leste, addressing critical health challenges such as teenage pregnancy and adolescent maternal mortality. This programme, which targets out-of-school youth, equips young people with essential health knowledge to make informed decisions.

35. UN-Habitat actively promotes localization of the Sustainable Development Goals by and for youth through a number of global programmes. The Youth 2030 Cities initiative – which operates in 10 countries in the global South – seeks to empower youth and youth-led organizations by enhancing their capacity to influence urban planning and participate in local governance. One of the most successful Youth 2030 Cities programmes has been the prioritized engagement of Indigenous youth in Otavalo, Ecuador, to protect and revive their language and cultural heritage.

36. The UN-Habitat Young Gamechangers initiative improved the health and well-being of young people in cities in Colombia, India and Senegal by actively involving them in urban governance, designing inclusive public spaces and encouraging their participation through digital platforms such as Minecraft. This approach led to the increased participation of young people in designing their own city and improving the health and well-being of its citizens.

37. UN-Women has implemented programmes that focus on food security, such as initiatives in the Pacific that emphasize gender-responsive agricultural practices. By integrating youth and women in community-based food production, UN-Women contributes to the sustainability and resilience of food systems at the local level.

38. The UN-Women Menstrual Hygiene Management initiative, in partnership with the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council, focuses on improving health outcomes for young women in the Niger by raising public awareness of menstrual health and integrating menstrual hygiene management into national health policies to help young people to stay healthy, overcome social taboos confidently and be engaged in their communities.

4. Actions by youth

39. Children and youth major group member organizations have implemented diverse agriculture-based projects to boost food production and household income, tackling poverty and food security issues.

40. In Nigeria and Ghana, Girls Power Green Economy and Climate Change Education implemented smart agriculture training programmes and invested in young

entrepreneurs' agribusinesses. Skynok and the Hephzibah Beulah Initiative in Nigeria leveraged new technology to boost yields and cut costs for young farmers, engaging local leaders to tailor solutions to specific agricultural challenges. In Ghana, the University for Development Studies engaged over 9,000 students in practical agricultural challenges through its field practical training programme.

41. In Egypt, the National Youth Council collaborated with the Egyptian Food Bank to organize food security conferences. The International Organization for the Oneness of the Arab Peoples and Youth 4 Global Goals (Youth4GG) amplified youth voices by conducting workshops in Somalia. Youth Building the Future Global in Mexico and the Agape Earth Coalition in Botswana organized conferences and encouraged dialogue between different stakeholders.

42. YESI Rwanda partnered with the World Health Organization on substance abuse reduction, while Girl Power implemented a social health insurance fund. In India, Huesofthemind Mental Wellbeing Foundation hosted mental health workshops and advocated for policy changes supporting underrepresented youth in the global South.

43. In Burundi, the Initiative de promotion de l'éducation des Batwa pour le développement durable supported youth-led poverty alleviation and food security projects within the Batwa community. Plant for the Planet Côte d'Ivoire employed 15,000 youth in urban clean-up. The Mathare Roots Initiative in Kenya works on the development and maintenance of Mathare Community Park, a community library and skills training programmes.

B. Building resilient livelihoods: promoting quality education and decent work

1. Overview

44. The need to build resilient livelihoods⁶ is heightened by interconnected crises, including economic inequality, climate change and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

45. Resilient livelihoods are critical to advancing the Sustainable Development Goals, especially for youth, who are often disproportionately affected by these crises and lack the resources to recover, deepening cycles of poverty and inequality. Youth face higher unemployment rates: they are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults (13 per cent v. 3.7 per cent). Working poverty also disproportionately affects youth: they are twice as likely as adults to be in working poverty. Lastly, the global not in employment, education or training rate among young people was 21.7 per cent in 2023, going back to the 2015 rate, and a notable decrease from 23.8 per cent in 2020. At the local level, strengthening resilient livelihoods is key to reducing vulnerability, promoting economic stability and achieving sustainable communities.

46. Young people play a crucial role in shaping resilient livelihoods, yet they often face significant barriers to achieving stability and security in their own lives. Youth unemployment rates remain high around the world, while many young people are trapped in precarious or informal work that lacks social protection and rights. This situation is particularly pronounced in developing regions, where opportunities for quality education and decent work are often limited. Young people from marginalized communities often face additional barriers due to discrimination. Addressing these

⁶ ILO defines resilient livelihoods as livelihoods that can withstand shocks and stresses and adapt to changes, while providing individuals and communities with sustainable well-being, economic security and social protection.

challenges is essential to both harness the potential of youth as agents of change and to ensure that no one is left behind.

47. Quality education and decent work are foundational building blocks for resilient livelihoods, especially for youth. They must provide all youth, including young women, youth with disabilities and youth in rural settings, with robust digital skills, as these play a critical role in sustainable development. Among other things, digitalization helps local governments to innovate and become more efficient in service delivery. With a profound impact across economic, social and environmental dimensions, digital technologies and data contribute to at least 70 per cent of the 169 targets of the Sustainable Development Goals while potentially reducing the cost of achieving them by up to \$55 trillion. Thus, a population with digital skills can effectively accelerate local sustainable development.

48. Young people are leading the way in digital adoption and innovation, with 75 per cent of those between 15 and 24 years of age using the Internet in 2022, a higher percentage than any other age group. However, significant disparities persist, especially in low-income countries and communities and among youth with disabilities, as well as young women, who often face greater barriers to accessing the Internet and developing digital skills compared with their male counterparts. Despite these obstacles, youth are widely regarded as “digital natives”, using technology to drive change and create solutions to challenges faced by their communities. Their role in fostering digital innovation is vital for addressing global challenges in ways that are adapted to local contexts.

49. Quality education must also support the shift towards an environmentally sustainable and climate-friendly world. A successful transition towards a greener world depends on the development of green skills: the knowledge, abilities, values and attitudes needed to live in, develop and support a resource-efficient society. Ensuring that youth in their local communities have the skills to navigate and leverage the green transition and build resilience from the ground up will significantly contribute to sustainability. For that to happen, green skills, essential to the green economy, must be at the core of young people’s education, employment and everyday lives. A green transition will result in the creation of 8.4 million jobs for young people by 2030. However, if current trends persist, by 2030 more than 60 per cent of young people may lack the skills required to thrive in the green economy.⁷ A lack of alignment of skills and education policies with environmental and green economy policies poses roadblocks for young people seeking to prosper within the green economy.

50. Decent work – including fair wages, safe working conditions and social protection – provides the economic stability needed to build resilience against shocks. Access to quality education enhances employability and opens doors to better job opportunities. Conversely, decent work allows individuals to invest in their education and lifelong learning. Together, these pillars both strengthen youth development and empower young people to contribute to the achievement of the Goals.

2. Actions by Member States

51. With regard to education, El Salvador conducted a comprehensive reform and implemented specialized programmes to promote access to education. The reform guarantees access to free education at all levels and access to digital tools through the public education system. In addition, the country’s *Sigue Estudiando* programme provides students with access to secondary or higher studies by offering loans both domestically and internationally.

⁷ ILO, “Ramboll joins forces with UN-led Green Jobs for Youth Pact to build skills urgently needed for the low carbon economy”, 23 September 2024.

52. Guatemala is addressing access to education by ensuring quality education in rural and urban areas, including improving infrastructure and access to education in more remote areas, especially in rural areas, to cultivate opportunities for youth. Similarly, in Senegal, the Programme d'amélioration de la qualité, de l'équité et de la transparence focused on the inclusion of vulnerable youth, including youth with disabilities, in schools, including in rural and underprivileged areas.

53. Senegal has also taken steps to improve the digitalization of education, including supplying schools with equipment (e.g. computers) and providing updated training to teachers.

54. Member States such as Senegal, Qatar and Ukraine have focused their efforts on youth entrepreneurship. Senegal has created incubators and accelerators to support youth start-ups and other innovative projects focused on the Sustainable Development Goals, providing financial support and mentoring to young entrepreneurs. In Ukraine, the Youth Worker programme cultivates opportunities for youth in aspects of creative personal development, self-improvement, leadership skills, career counselling and youth entrepreneurship. The Ministry of Social Development and Family of Qatar similarly supports youth entrepreneurship by providing services such as training programmes in technical and craft skills, exhibitions for small businesses, and marketing services through social media.

55. In Belarus, the State Programme for the Labour Market and Promotion of the Population's Employment 2021–2025 aims to advance youth employment by, for example, reserving employment opportunities for youth under 21 years of age and providing subsidies to unemployed youth for their self-owned businesses. In Singapore, to reconcile the difficult school-to-work transition, the Mentoring SG initiative supports youth by guiding them through major life decisions and career pathways. In Uruguay, the National Youth Institute coordinates policy development and legislative drafting with other local bodies. A recent legislative modification was focused on active youth employment policies.

3. Actions by United Nations entities

56. Youth engagement in policy development is crucial to ensuring that young people have a voice in shaping their futures and contributing to decision-making processes. ECLAC, in collaboration with UNICEF and the non-governmental organization América Solidaria, facilitates youth participation in policy discussions on education, employment and social protection through platforms such as the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development. Such discussions enable young people to present their priorities directly to policymakers, ensuring that their needs are considered in national and regional discussions.

57. UN-Women and ILO, through the Women's Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection (LEAP) project in Uganda, offer vocational training in non-traditional fields such as metal fabrication, targeting young women and refugees.

58. The UNESCO Global Skills Academy, in partnership with 25 organizations, supported 170 technical and vocational education and training institutions across 63 countries, providing 860,000 young people with vocational and digital skills to enhance their employability.

59. ECLAC has provided technical assistance to Argentina on secondary education, supported Honduras with a supply and demand plan for secondary education, and worked with Chile, Mexico and Peru on social mobility issues, addressing critical challenges influencing youth employment.

60. ESCWA and the Internet Governance Forum have collaborated to create Schools on Internet Governance, which focus on digital capacity-building and governance skills for youth.

61. WIPO has launched initiatives aimed at training youth on intellectual property rights, equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed to protect their creations and leverage intellectual property tools for entrepreneurship and competitiveness.

62. Gender equality is crucial to quality education and decent work. The UN-Women Menstrual Hygiene Management initiative has improved access to health services for young women, enabling them to stay in school and pursue careers.

63. Similarly, UN-Women partnered with the Community Volunteers Foundation to implement the Strong Civic Space for Gender Equality project in Türkiye, where training on gender equality and non-violent communication is offered to break down barriers to education and employment for young women.

64. UN-Women, through its Data Visualization and Advocacy for Gender Equality Hackathon in Türkiye, encouraged youth to engage in data-driven advocacy efforts related to gender equality and employment policies to ensure that youth are positioned at the core of global social and economic progress.

65. The UNFPA project entitled “Gender transformative psychosocial support for peace and community resilience” in Hela Province, Papua New Guinea, builds youth capacity through training and cultural exchanges, helping youth to transition from education to employment, promoting gender equality and strengthening community cohesion.

66. The one-stop youth resource centres, located in eight cities across East Africa, Asia and Latin America, are a partnership between UN-Habitat, youth-led organizations and local governments that provide safe spaces for youth to access skills training, employment opportunities and resources in areas such as entrepreneurship, health, arts, sports and information and communications technology. The most recently established centres were in the Indigenous community of Otavalo, Ecuador, and in Mogadishu.

4. Actions by youth

67. Children and youth major group member organizations are supporting Sustainable Development Goals 4 (quality education) and 8 (decent work) through innovative and varied approaches.

68. In Nigeria, Giddy2School focuses on grass-roots education through book clubs and digital literacy programmes, addressing local educational gaps; the Earth Foundation offers vocational training through its Youth Skills Development Programme; and GritinAI works to improve education and job readiness by partnering with businesses and the Government to provide practical skills development and entrepreneurial support. In addition, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network supports youth leadership development through its Own-A-School project, aligning education with career pathways to ensure that youth are prepared for employment.

69. In the Philippines, the Office of the Youth in Maritime hosts webinars and symposiums to help young seafarers to access job opportunities in the maritime industry.

70. In Chad, the Better Life Youth Association established a youth advisory council to engage youth in policy decisions, providing them with a platform to contribute to national discussions.

C. Youth as drivers of change: fostering sustainable communities and advancing climate action

1. Overview

71. The triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss is one of the defining challenges of today. As of 2023, carbon dioxide levels have reached record highs, with the last decade being the hottest ever recorded. Extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and severe, deepening inequalities, damaging ecosystems and displacing communities.

72. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warns that without decisive action, global temperatures could rise to catastrophic levels, further accelerating disruptions to food and water supplies. A recent United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report highlights that global greenhouse gas emissions increased by 1.2 per cent from 2021 to 2022, reaching a new record of 57.4 gigatons of carbon dioxide equivalent. The report emphasizes that without drastic increases in mitigation efforts, the world is on track for warming beyond the agreed-upon target of 1.5°C or even 2°C.

73. Young people are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. They face not only its immediate effects but also long-term consequences of environmental degradation, including health risks, economic instability and resource depletion. As climate change deepens existing inequalities, it disproportionately affects vulnerable communities, including youth, who already often lack adequate access to education, healthcare and economic opportunities. In many regions, young people are at increased risk of displacement due to climate-related disasters, while their livelihoods are threatened by shifting environmental conditions.

74. Young people are astutely aware of the catastrophic impacts of climate-induced disasters on their socioeconomic well-being. This vulnerability is compounded by young people's limited access to decision-making spaces, which makes it difficult for them to influence policies that shape their future.

75. Amid these challenges, young people are drivers of climate action. Around the world, youth-led movements and initiatives are at the forefront of advocacy for ambitious climate policies, sustainable practices and environmental justice. From organizing global climate strikes to engaging in community-based sustainability projects, young people demonstrate a deep commitment to protecting the planet and fostering sustainable communities.

76. At the local level, young people bring innovative solutions and fresh perspectives to environmental issues, leveraging digital platforms and social media to raise awareness and mobilize action in their communities. By setting a strong example and demanding accountability from their leaders, starting at the local level, young people drive progress from the bottom up and shape a more sustainable future.

77. This approach supports multiple Sustainable Development Goals at the local level by fostering resilience, social cohesion and political accountability, reducing environmental degradation and promoting sustainable resource use.

2. Actions by Member States

78. The Azerbaijan Youth Climate Envoys programme aligned national climate action efforts with the global Sustainable Development Goals framework. As a part of this programme, two youth delegate envoys participated in the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. At a more local level, the Baku Decides forum offered youth a

central role by providing a platform to engage in climate action negotiations and work towards developing solutions.

79. The focus of Slovenia on youth for climate action is evident through several youth-led initiatives, such as Youth for Climate Justice to raise awareness and advocate for climate action. Furthermore, the country's Eco-School programme, a school-based initiative, promotes environmental awareness and practices sustainable actions in schools, such as recycling, energy conservation and sustainable gardening, in collaboration with local municipalities.

80. In Cyprus, climate action has also been integrated within the education system, with the aim of empowering its youth through education and skills to advance sustainability. Cyprus established mechanisms to strengthen the coordination of local and national frameworks for the implementation of climate-oriented action. The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, through its Unit of Education for the Environment and Sustainable Development, monitors and reviews the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, including the integration of climate-centred education in both the formal and informal education sectors.

81. As part of its national priorities, Finland has introduced the National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme for the period 2024–2027, which aims to strengthen youth engagement in national discussions and efforts to mitigate climate change and enhance ecological protection, as well as other aspects of the 2030 Agenda.

82. The Green Competence Programme for Youth of Türkiye, developed in collaboration with UNICEF, empowers students by training them in green skills and offering activities in four areas: (a) capacity-building of teachers and students' engagement; (b) the development of green skills laboratories; (c) dissemination and visibility; and (d) updating curricula in alignment with a green transformation.

83. Through its Programme d'appui aux initiatives des jeunes pour l'environnement, Senegal is supporting innovative youth projects focused on sustainable agriculture, renewable energy and natural resources management. This support includes financing, mentoring and networking.

3. Actions by United Nations entities

84. The Secretary-General's Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change offers practical advice, diverse youth perspectives and recommendations to advance his climate action agenda. Established a few years ago, the Group enables direct youth engagement in accelerating climate action and advancing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The current cohort, appointed in March 2023, comprises members nominated by global youth and climate-focused organizations.

85. ECA and ESCAP both emphasize the importance of engaging youth in promoting climate resilience. ECA is working to create platforms where young people can engage in entrepreneurship, showcase climate solutions and form partnerships with investors. Similarly, ESCAP has focused on empowering youth to take leadership roles in environmental protection, particularly in efforts to combat ecosystem degradation.

86. ITC and UNDP have implemented strategies that focus on reinforcing youth capacity to contribute to climate resilience. ITC works closely with local communities to promote environmentally sustainable practices, while UNDP, through partnerships with organizations such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Regional Collaboration Centre for Asia and the Pacific and UNICEF, focuses on training young leaders to engage in policy and climate initiatives. These efforts, driven by the shared goal of building climate resilience, demonstrate how young people can lead impactful local actions that align with national climate strategies.

87. In addition to capacity-building, both the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and UNDP prioritize involving young people in decision-making processes. By providing platforms for dialogue between youth and policymakers, these organizations are ensuring that young voices contribute to climate policies and actions. The Alliance of Civilizations, through its Intercultural Innovation Hub, supports grass-roots organizations, particularly youth-led and women-led initiatives, by providing them with the necessary resources and mentorship to effectively participate in these dialogues, strengthening youth participation and fostering collaboration between generations.

88. UN-Habitat and UNEP have established the Climate Changemakers programme, which trains young climate changemakers in the global South. The curriculum focuses on increasing the capacity and leadership abilities of young people to undertake climate-related community development projects.

89. Through these collaborative efforts, United Nations entities are supporting youth as central actors in shaping sustainable, resilient communities, recognizing their potential to influence climate action locally and globally as drivers of sustainable climate action at all levels.

4. Actions by youth

90. Children and youth major group members promote sustainable communities and climate action through two main approaches: capacity-building and increased youth participation in climate-related discussions.

91. The Global Youth Leadership Development Council organized 50 climate change webinars through the United Nations Youth Leadership Development Programme, while South-North Scholars partnered with UNDP for the Solving for Humanity competition, engaging over 3,000 youth in drafting climate action strategies. In Australia, Young Women in Sustainable Development implemented workshops on policy writing and grass-roots project development. In the Congo, the Congolese Youth Biodiversity Network enhanced youth capacity in the Congo basin through international workshops on the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

92. Youth participation in decision-making processes is crucial for effective climate action. In Portugal, Generation Resonance ran programmes such as one for youth environmental stewardship, involving young people in project planning with local authorities. The Collective of Young Ambassadors in the Democratic Republic of the Congo advocated for strengthening youth councils' capacities.

93. The Congolese Youth Biodiversity Network's "Youth manifesto for the preservation of the Congo basin" demonstrates youth advocacy in conservation efforts. The Birthday Tree Initiative, launched by a Ugandan climate activist, encourages people to celebrate their birthdays by planting trees instead of hosting traditional parties.

IV. United Nations youth development-related efforts

A. United Nations Youth Strategy

94. The United Nations Youth Strategy, launched in 2018, aims to transform the Organization's work for and with youth. Six years later, the Strategy has achieved significant progress, with 58 United Nations entities and all 132 United Nations country teams involved in its implementation. Reporting on the Strategy's progress has been institutionalized across the United Nations system. Several knowledge products have been produced to support implementation, including a public-facing

dashboard to track progress. In addition, the first interim review of the Strategy was commissioned to assess progress and lessons learned, providing concrete recommendations to accelerate implementation.

95. The Strategy's high-level steering committee, the joint working group (the technical leadership group) and its time-bound task teams have continued to ensure that the Strategy's implementation remains on track. Following the establishment of the United Nations Youth Office by the General Assembly in its resolution [76/306](#), these governance and coordination structures for the Strategy have transitioned from the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth to the United Nations Youth Office.

B. Economic and Social Council youth forum

96. The Economic and Social Council youth forum is a unique and vital platform for young people to engage in a dialogue with Member States and other actors to voice their views and concerns and galvanize actions to transform the world into a fairer and more sustainable place. For the first time in April 2023, the youth forum was held over three days rather than the previous two days. The third day served to gather youth input toward the Sustainable Development Goals Summit held in September 2023.

97. The first two days included interactive discussions focused on addressing the theme of the 2023 high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, "Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at levels". They also allowed young people to discuss clean water and sanitation (Goal 6), affordable and clean energy (Goal 7), industry, innovation and infrastructure (Goal 9), sustainable cities and communities (Goals 11) and partnerships for the Goals (Goal 17).

98. The Economic and Social Council youth forum in 2024 also focused on preparing youth input to the Summit of the Future, held in September 2024. The 2024 discussions were guided by the overall theme of the 2024 high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the Council, "Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions". The discussions took place around the Goals under review at the 2024 high-level political forum: no poverty (Goal 1), zero hunger (Goal 2), climate action (Goal 13), peace, justice and strong institutions (Goal 16) and partnerships for the Goals (Goal 17). In both years, the youth forum convened several dozens of youth delegates representing their Member States as part of the youth delegate programme of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat.

99. For both the 2023 and 2024 youth forum, the President of the Economic and Social Council issued statements summarizing the youth recommendations generated during the discussions. Several recommendations touched on local youth actions, inclusive policies and meaningful partnerships.

100. The Economic and Social Council youth forum is convened by the President of the Economic and Social Council and co-organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Youth Office, in collaboration with the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development, the children and youth major group and the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organizations.

C. Summit of the Future

101. In his report on Our Common Agenda, the Secretary-General called for meaningful youth engagement in efforts to shape a sustainable and inclusive future. The Secretary-General's policy brief on future generations developed as a follow-up to Our Common Agenda ([A/77/CRP.1](#)) outlines a commitment to institutionalize mechanisms that amplify youth perspectives and protect the rights of future generations. Along the same lines, the Secretary-General's policy brief on meaningful youth engagement in policymaking and decision-making processes ([A/77/CRP.1/Add.2](#)) emphasizes that youth contributions are pivotal to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

102. The Summit of the Future was held at United Nations Headquarters on 22 and 23 September 2024. The Pact for the Future, adopted at the Summit, places strong emphasis on fostering intergenerational dialogues to build stronger partnerships between individuals of different age groups, including youth, and between Governments and youth. In addition, with its section on "Youth and future generations", the Pact for the Future includes concrete actions focused on investing in the social and economic development of youth so that they can reach their full potential, as well as on strengthening meaningful youth participation at all levels. The Declaration on Future Generations, also adopted at the Summit, highlights the importance of promoting intergenerational solidarity, dialogue and social cohesion, fostering understanding and collaboration between age groups and promoting shared values and mutual support, which are essential to long-term success and ensuring that no group is left behind.

103. With a view to generating additional opportunities for partners to engage in this event, Action Days were held prior to the Summit of the Future, on 20 and 21 September. The Action Days started with a youth-led half-day, convened by the United Nations Youth Office in close collaboration with other United Nations entities, youth and relevant networks. Under the theme "Youth lead for the future: we believe in the promise of a better world for all", the Youth Action Day featured plenary meetings, including a high-level dialogue with the Secretary-General, and thematic segments (on gender, the digital future, governance, foresight and climate, intergenerational solidarity and humanitarian action). The recommendations stemming from the six thematic sessions were consolidated into an outcome document, featuring over 20 key proposals grounded in three core principles: inclusion, equity and trust. These recommendations are aimed at strengthening multi-stakeholder engagement, enhancing youth participation and mainstreaming human rights in alignment with the Pact for the Future and beyond.

D. International Youth Day

104. To mark the 2023 International Youth Day on 12 August, a global webinar was held to explore the theme "Green skills for youth: towards a sustainable world". The webinar featured discussions on green skills and presented insights from international organizations, governments and young experts. Knowledge products were also developed to support and inspire stakeholders in celebrating the Day and promoting green skills. The theme was selected as the world is undergoing a green transition to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, requiring the development of green skills, which are the knowledge, abilities, values and attitudes necessary for a sustainable and resource-efficient society. Green skills encompass technical expertise for using green technologies and cross-cutting skills for making environmentally sustainable decisions. These skills, also known as "skills for the future" or "skills for green jobs", are crucial for all age groups but are especially important for youth, who

can drive long-term progress in this area. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs partnered with the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth, ILO and Generation Unlimited.

105. The theme for the 2024 International Youth Day was “From clicks to progress: youth digital pathways for sustainable development”. This theme underscored the vital link between digitalization, youth actions and the acceleration of the Sustainable Development Goals. Digital transformation has a significant impact on the Goals, with technologies such as mobile devices, digital platforms and artificial intelligence driving progress. Despite challenges of the digital divide, youth are pivotal in adopting and innovating new technologies. They are the largest group of digital users and developers, shaping global digital trends and contributing to the Goals. The observance of International Youth Day included case study infographics, interactive online quizzes and a social media toolkit that helped to promote the transformative impact of digital technologies on sustainable development. For this International Youth Day, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs collaborated with the International Telecommunication Union, UN-Habitat and the UN Internet Governance Forum.

E. Youth delegate programme

106. The youth delegate programme of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has continued to support youth participating in intergovernmental processes as official members of their national delegations, enabling their effective engagement in global-level decision-making. At the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, in 2023, 66 youth delegates from 37 Member States and a regional group participated. At the seventy-ninth session, in 2024, 63 youth delegates from 36 Member States and the European Union took part.

107. Youth delegates, while operating under mandates defined by their respective Member States, play a crucial role in linking local efforts to broader Sustainable Development Goals-related initiatives. They actively engage in national consultations, gathering input from diverse groups across various local contexts. These consultations are instrumental in enhancing the understanding of local challenges, perspectives and priorities, which youth delegates bring forward in United Nations processes. Local stakeholders consulted typically include young individuals, youth-led or youth-focused organizations and municipal and local authorities. By incorporating these diverse insights, youth delegates ensure that the voices of local communities are represented in international policy discussions.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

108. In the present report, it is argued that young people are crucial to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals at the local level because they bring unique skills and perspectives in efforts to address the challenges faced by communities. It is stated in the report that meaningful youth engagement in decision-making contributes to solutions that are more inclusive and reflective of the needs and aspirations of young people and future generations. Greater support for local youth actions for the Goals is advocated, as well as improved coordination of Goal-related data to ensure inclusive, evidence-based development, while transparency and accountability in national, regional and local planning are also promoted. Ahead of the Second World Summit for Social Development, set to be held in 2025, the importance of policy coordination and cohesion at the local and national levels is highlighted in the report

as a clear and effective path to rebuilding trust and dialogue between youth and public authorities.

109. The Commission for Social Development may wish to consider the following recommendations:

- (a) Support youth engagement in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes that have an impact on youth, including those enhancing social protection, building resilient livelihoods and fostering sustainable communities;**
- (b) Ensure greater vertical and horizontal coordination and cooperation between Sustainable Development Goals-related data custodians so that planning of national, regional and local development is based on evidence and foresight and more efficient and includes development partners, including young people;**
- (c) Enhance transparency and accountability of the national, regional and local development planning and implementation processes so that shared ownership and commitment are increased and trust between authorities and the population, including young people, is strengthened;**
- (d) Encourage and support meaningful youth engagement in voluntary national reviews and voluntary local reviews to ensure that national and local governments include innovative youth-led initiatives with the potential to enhance the country's progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, leveraging young people's participation in the voluntary national review and voluntary local review processes can meaningfully inform policies and programming and, in turn, further advance trust between young people and national and local authorities;**
- (e) Integrate a youth perspective into poverty reduction strategies (community-based projects aimed at building youth resilience against poverty), and ensure that social protection programmes are inclusive of specific needs of young people, including those in vulnerable situations such as those in informal work, rural areas and marginalized communities. Developing or strengthening programmes focused on sustainable livelihoods for young people in rural areas, for example, sustainable agriculture, forestry and eco-friendly practices, would help to lift rural youth out of poverty while ensuring food security;**
- (f) Ensure alignment between education systems and labour market needs by incorporating technical and vocational education and training, apprenticeships and other skills development programmes that respond to evolving industries, particularly in the green and digital sectors, and contribute to accelerating local sustainable development;**
- (g) Integrate climate action and sustainable development education into formal school curricula so that young people are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to address climate change and accelerate sustainable development. Investing in technology and innovation that engages youth, such as smart city technologies, green buildings and clean energy projects, would offer opportunities for young people to contribute locally to advance the Sustainable Development Goals.**