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Creation of sustainable jobs at centre of UN youth forum



UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

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The creation of green jobs is essential to ensure a sustainable future, United Nations officials stressed today at a forum held at the Organization’s Headquarters in New York aimed at giving young people a platform to voice their concerns, experiences and ideas to tackle youth unemployment.

“Young people are the future of our societies. As such, they should also be part of solutions,” the Vice President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Luis Alfonso de Alba, told participants at the first Youth ECOSOC Forum. “Creating a sustainable future means empowering youth with better job opportunities – and it means giving young people a voice.”

The forum, whose theme is “Empowering Youth with Better Job Opportunities,” brought together young delegates and entrepreneurs, students and representatives of youth non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Participants took part in two interactive dialogues, the first one focusing on education and training, and the second on the creation of green jobs and the conditions needed to create them.

In her [address](#) to participants, Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro stressed that youth are mobilizing like never before and that their ideas can help countries achieve their sustainable development objectives.

“Young people can drive the global push for green growth. As entrepreneurs, consumers and leaders, they can adopt new lifestyles that respect our planet. They can promote trends that encourage sustainable development,” she said, adding that youth participation is particularly important in events such as the UN Conference on Sustainable Development ([Rio+20](#)) next month in Brazil.

Youth unemployment has soared in both affluent and poor countries since the global financial crisis began in 2008, with the largest annual increase on record reported in 2009. At one point, nearly 76 million people aged between 15 and 24 years of age were unemployed worldwide.

Currently, young people are three times as likely as adults to be unemployed. In Europe nearly one in four young people are out of a job, and in North Africa and the Middle East youth unemployment is almost 30 per cent, the highest worldwide.

Mr. de Alba highlighted that in addition to a high rate of unemployment, it is important to look at underemployment and vulnerable employment, as many young people are on precarious short-term contracts, or trapped in low-skill and poorly paid jobs.

“Labour policies and institutions may not create any incentives to hire young people, and, as many of you know, policies are not yet in place in many countries to equip young people with the skills demanded by today’s labour market,” he said.

The Secretary-General for Rio+20, Sha Zukang, underlined that job creation is a top priority for action for the conference, as ensuring employment for youth goes hand in hand with sustainable development.

“Unemployment affects both current well-being and future prospects, and these ramifications can trickle down to the next generation,” said Mr. Sha, who is also UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs.

“There is a growing convergence of views on the importance of creating green jobs. By training our youth in the skills needed to transition to a green economy, we can address both unemployment and sustainable development issues. This is the approach that will secure the future for the youth of today and generations to come,” he added.

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