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Social development: social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, persons with disabilities and the family

Policies and programmes involving youth

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [76/137](#). It provides an overview of progress achieved in implementing the resolution, with a focus on intergenerational solidarity and partnerships, food security and sustainable consumption, and inclusive development through sport, culture and recreation, in the context of building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Input for the report was requested from Member States, United Nations entities and youth organizations. It concludes with key recommendations for consideration by the Assembly.

* [A/78/150](#).



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 76/137 on policies and programmes involving youth, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report at the seventy-eighth session on the implementation of the resolution, in consultation with Member States, relevant specialized agencies, funds, programmes and regional commissions, taking into account the work done by the United Nations system. Further to that request, the Secretariat consulted relevant entities and youth partners, receiving responses from 24 Member States¹ and 25 United Nations entities² that are members of the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development.

2. The present report is particularly important in light of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which, as noted in the resolution, has disproportionately affected young people around the world in many ways. Although the pandemic has presented challenges for youth, it has also highlighted their innovation, creativity and resilience in responding to the crisis and working towards the achievement of shared goals for a sustainable and inclusive recovery.

3. Section II provides an overview of the current global context and the state of youth within it, especially with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations system and the theme of the present report, including in relation to linkages between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

4. Sections III, IV and V cover three focus areas drawn from the priority areas of the World Programme of Action for Youth, namely, intergenerational solidarity and partnerships, food security and sustainable consumption, and inclusive development through sport, culture and recreation. For each area, an overview of the current situation at the global level is provided, followed by a summary of efforts by Member States and United Nations entities to address the issue.

5. Section VI provides an update on additional activities of United Nations entities at the national, regional and international levels relating to youth development, including in partnership with youth-led and youth-focused organizations.

6. Section VII contains recommendations.

¹ Argentina, Austria, Bahrain, Belarus, Brazil, Bulgaria, China, Colombia, Cyprus, El Salvador, France, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Mexico, Mongolia, the Niger, Poland, Qatar, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovenia, Türkiye, Uruguay.

² Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Fund for Agricultural Development, International Labour Organization, International Organization for Migration, International Trade Centre, International Telecommunication Union, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Office of the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, United Nations Population Fund, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Children's Fund, Office of Counter-Terrorism, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

II. Context and setting the stage³

A. The Sustainable Development Goals in a time of crisis

7. The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a drastic toll on people's lives and livelihoods, while exposing and amplifying the inequalities within and between countries. The socioeconomic impact of the pandemic continues to be felt globally, especially by the poorest and most vulnerable, and continues to pose a significant challenge to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1) and its central, transformative promise that no one will be left behind.

8. While progress on the Sustainable Development Goals was already off track before the pandemic, national and subnational data show that years of development progress have been halted or reversed owing to its impact. Moreover, rising inflation and the broader impacts of the war in Ukraine could derail progress further. Based on current trends, 575 million people, or 7 per cent of the population, could still be living in extreme poverty in 2030, a reduction of less than 30 per cent over 2015.

9. The far-reaching impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and other cascading crises, requires urgent action to renew social contracts both between Governments and their citizens and within societies. Young people must be full participants in that process and must also share in its benefits and costs.

B. Opportunities and challenges for young persons

10. Young people (persons aged between 15 and 24 years) are particularly vulnerable to the disruptions associated with the pandemic, with many now at risk of being left behind during a crucial stage of their life development. Even before the pandemic, young people were more likely than older working-age adults to be unemployed or in precarious working arrangements, without access to adequate social protection. COVID-19 exacerbated the numerous challenges already faced by young people in the labour market.

11. By 2022, there were still 6 million more unemployed young people than prior to the pandemic, despite some improvement in 2021. The proportion of youth not in employment or education also remained above pre-pandemic levels at 23.5 per cent, despite a slight decrease from the pandemic peak of 24.9 per cent in 2020. Those young people face the risk of scarring effects entailing deterioration of their labour market opportunities and outcomes over the long term.

12. At the same time, pandemic restrictions that decreased access to leisure-time activities and safe convening spaces raised social barriers affecting many young people. The situation has been especially acute for young women, young people in vulnerable groups or situations and those facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

13. The incredible resilience and capacity of young people to respond to such challenges in inclusive, intersectional and environmentally conscious ways is

³ The information presented herein has been drawn from the following sources: *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023*, special ed. (United Nations publication, 2023); International Labour Organization, *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022: Investing in Transforming Futures for Young People* (Geneva, 2022); United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "The impact of COVID-19 on sport, physical activity and well-being and its effects on social development", Policy Brief, No. 73, May 2020; and United Nations, Inter-Agency Network on Youth and Development, "Statement on COVID-19 and youth", 2020.

inspiring. Their innovation, volunteering and activism have actively contributed to mitigating the impact of the pandemic, both in the immediate and the long term. Partnering with young people is key to achieving a sustainable recovery and meeting the Sustainable Development Goals more broadly.

C. Advancing youth development with and for youth

14. Far from being mere beneficiaries of the 2030 Agenda, young people have been active architects of its development and continue to be engaged in frameworks that support its implementation, including the World Programme of Action for Youth, adopted by the General Assembly in 1995 (resolution [50/81](#)). The World Programme of Action for Youth covers 15 priority areas with corresponding proposals for action, emphasizing the meaningful engagement of youth at all levels of society and decision-making.

15. The call to listen to and work with youth is echoed in the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Our Common Agenda” ([A/75/982](#)), which is aligned with previous commitments by Member States to take concrete actions to empower and engage the largest generation of young people that the world has ever known. In “Our Common Agenda”, those commitments are also extended to future generations.

16. 2025 will mark the thirtieth anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth. While it remains highly relevant, its implementation lags behind the commitments made. The anniversary presents a valuable opportunity to acknowledge achievements as well as key challenges still faced by youth, while strengthening political commitment to policies and programmes that support youth.

III. Focus area: intergenerational solidarity and partnerships⁴

A. Overview

17. In 2007, the General Assembly adopted a supplement to the World Programme of Action for Youth (resolution [62/126](#)), adding intergenerational issues as a priority area and underscoring the importance of intergenerational solidarity. Subsequently, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, in multiple resolutions, have encouraged Member States to strengthen intergenerational solidarity to support the 2030 Agenda.

18. Widely defined as social cohesion between generations, the concept of intergenerational solidarity is rooted in relationships of dependency between members of different age groups over the life course. The exact nature of that cohesion varies depending on cultural, institutional, economic and social factors, and, in particular, on issues such as equity, fairness, reciprocity and positive perceptions of different generations.

19. Intergenerational relations are present in all social contexts of everyday life: among family members living together or separately; within social networks of friends, acquaintances, neighbours and colleagues; and in society as a whole. In the context of sustainable development, they include not only relations between living generations but relations with those who have yet to be born, reflecting the core

⁴ The information presented herein has been drawn from the following sources: World Health Organization (WHO), *Global Report on Ageism* (Geneva, 2021); WHO, “Campaigning to tackle ageism: current practices and suggestions for moving forward”, 2020; [A/68/322](#); and [A/75/982](#).

understanding of sustainable development as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

20. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted deep and persistent inequalities and raised awareness of the structures that perpetuate them across generations. Calls for vaccine equity, sustainable consumption, the renewable energy transition and solutions for the growing sovereign debt burden are a few recent examples that underscore the need to recommit to intergenerational solidarity and address questions of equity across generational divides. The call to reimagine intergenerational responsibility is reflected in “Our Common Agenda”. Still, many barriers to intergenerational cooperation remain.

B. Addressing and combating ageism

21. Ageism presents a significant challenge to fostering meaningful and effective cooperation across generations. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines ageism as stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination towards others or oneself based on age; it has bearings on both old and young populations. Ageism regularly intersects with other forms of bias, such as racism and sexism, preventing people from reaching their full potential and comprehensively contributing to society.

22. As highlighted in the *Global Report on Ageism*, published by WHO in March 2021, youth face age-related barriers in various spheres of their lives, including employment, health, housing and politics, where younger people’s voices are often denied or dismissed. The report also identifies intergenerational activities as one of three key strategies to address ageism and create a greater sense of social connectedness.

C. Equitable and effective intergenerational cooperation

23. A variety of factors can strengthen intergenerational solidarity and should be prioritized in policies and programmes for youth. They include multigenerational dialogue, collaboration with organizations representing older persons, joint volunteering, educational campaigns, and policies that ensure social protection and equal opportunities for self-determination. Emphasis should be placed on promoting a holistic approach to ageing, fostering mutual understanding and encouraging contributions from all generations.

24. Intergenerational knowledge transfer is beneficial to societies, both through the knowledge that is shared and the process of sharing knowledge. For instance, knowledge-sharing between older and younger workers can contribute to a more dynamic labour market. Beyond the workplace, such transfers can occur through educational and cultural activities, enhancing the well-being and community involvement of both older and younger individuals.

25. For the COVID-19 recovery to be truly inclusive and sustainable, it is essential to identify and address the root causes of ageism, foster intergenerational solidarity and enhance intergenerational cooperation. Governments, the private sector and civil society, together with young people, should seek opportunities for constructive partnerships across generations to advance the Sustainable Development Goals and create a better world for all ages.

D. Initiatives by Member States

26. Over the past two years, Governments have undertaken various efforts to bridge the generational divide and foster intergenerational solidarity, equity and partnerships.

27. Bahrain continued to promote intergenerational partnership and solidarity through its Arab Youth Programme, which serves as a platform for Bahraini youth to actively participate in policymaking and exchange ideas, enabling them to make meaningful contributions to decision-making.
28. Belarus has undertaken efforts to enhance intergenerational solidarity through collaborative activities that encompass preserving historical memory, exchanging knowledge and experiences, providing mutual assistance and collectively addressing critical challenges.
29. In January 2023, Brazil established a social participation council that includes representation from student entities to enhance youth engagement in national decision-making processes, thereby strengthening intergenerational partnerships and promoting a more inclusive governance framework.
30. Bulgaria has adopted a national youth strategy for the period 2021–2030, the aim of which is to foster intergenerational solidarity by promoting the active engagement and empowerment of young individuals at the national level, as well as by cultivating connectivity, tolerance and a sense of European belonging.
31. El Salvador, through its national rural youth round table, continues to facilitate dialogue between government entities, local actors and rural youth. The round table serves as a platform for different stakeholders to collaboratively discuss and take steps to respond to the needs of rural youth.
32. In 2021, as Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Hungary hosted a youth conference in Budapest focusing on the theme of solidarity. At the conference, participants from both Governments and youth organizations explored ways to engage young people in post-pandemic activities and processes.
33. In December 2021, Mexico launched a national youth programme for the period 2021–2024, which was developed in consultation with over 70,000 young people. The programme incorporates a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by Mexican youth, while promoting intergenerational equity and equal opportunities for young people to exercise their rights.
34. The Niger continued to implement its national youth policy, which is focused on fostering intergenerational dialogue, promoting solidarity, encouraging cultural citizenship, facilitating access to knowledge and protecting the rights of young people. The ministry responsible for youth has also held intergenerational dialogues with partners on the theme of leadership.
35. In 2022, Poland established intergenerational education centres to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experience between younger and older generations. The centres are also aimed at fostering mutual understanding, building social bonds and cooperation and enhancing the roles of youth and older individuals in their families and communities.
36. Serbia adopted a national youth strategy for the period 2023–2030 in January 2023. The strategy emphasizes intergenerational solidarity and serves to strengthen policies to ensure equal opportunities for youth to unlock their full potential.

E. United Nations activities

37. United Nations entities are fostering intergenerational solidarity and partnerships to advance the Sustainable Development Goals, with a focus on leveraging the innovation, creativity and resilience of youth.

38. Led by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the “Futuring Peace in North-East Asia” initiative continued to bring together young leaders and policymakers from North-East Asia to explore pathways to regional peace and security.
39. In April 2023, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean was one of the organizers of the fifth Forum of Children and Youth of Latin America and the Caribbean 2030, for which intergenerational solidarity was a core focus.
40. During the 2023 Economic and Social Council youth forum, the International Labour Organization (ILO) organized four side events featuring intergenerational dialogues and a ministerial session on “Youth-led innovations for decent jobs for youth”. Under the partnership for improving prospects for forcibly displaced persons and host communities (PROSPECTS), ILO delivered training and capacity-building activities for young people, taking an intergenerational approach. Among those activities, it organized a Youth Leadership Academy for members of the Youth Network Committee in Ethiopia.
41. The International Trade Centre (ITC) developed the Iraq National Youth Entrepreneurship Barometer, presenting its findings and recommendations at an intergenerational workshop in Baghdad in 2022.
42. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) organized a side event at the 2023 Economic and Social Council youth forum, which featured an interactive dialogue on how technology can foster connection between generations.
43. In 2022, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) conducted a study on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people and included intergenerational cooperation among its recommendations. In December 2022, at the Global Forum on Human Rights Education in Uzbekistan, of which OHCHR was one of the organizers, an action plan highlighting the importance of intergenerational learning for advancing human rights was produced.
44. The Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to establish intergenerational partnerships through the Youth for Biosecurity Initiative, #StepUp4Disarmament Youth Campaign and #Leaders4Tomorrow workshop series.
45. The Office of the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth has promoted intergenerational cooperation through initiatives such as the Young Leaders for the Sustainable Development Goals programme, the “Be seen, be heard” campaign and the Youth2030 Disability Task Team.
46. The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children has held interactive dialogues with children and adolescents to inform its annual reports.
47. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS has provided intergenerational technical support for the #UPROOT Scorecard, a youth-led monitoring tool that evaluates national HIV responses for young people.
48. The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations has convened intergenerational dialogues between youth and key stakeholders at the local, regional and international levels, including “The future they want” at the ninth Alliance of Civilizations Forum.
49. Through the Sendai Stakeholder Engagement Mechanism, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction has engaged youth in co-designing the *Report for Consultations: Stakeholder Perspectives on the Midterm Review of the Sendai Framework*.
50. In Brazil, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) partnered with the National Youth Council and municipal governments to organize several “cinema-debates” on the theme of intergenerational solidarity.

51. In 2022, Generation Unlimited, embedded in the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), co-authored the brief entitled "Intergenerational Partnerships for Transformative Change", which outlines principles of meaningful youth engagement. It includes case studies, best practices and a call to action.
52. The Youth Engagement and Empowerment Programme of the Office of Counter-Terrorism has organized regional policy dialogues, bringing together young leaders and representatives from the United Nations, civil society and Member States.
53. During the 2023 Economic and Social Council youth forum, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the children and youth major group and the United Nations Foundation organized a plenary session on "Strengthening the trust of youth in multilateralism: exploring intergenerational and peer-to-peer dialogue".
54. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has promoted intergenerational cooperation through data-sharing, workshops, grant-making and its family skills initiative. The youth statement delivered at the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs also emphasized the importance of intergenerational collaboration.
55. The Commission on the Status of Women included a youth interactive dialogue for the first time at its sixty-seventh session. At the national level, UN-Women and its partners tackled gender-based violence and discrimination through intergenerational activities, including in Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Guatemala and Mexico.
56. In May 2023, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination endorsed the United Nations System Common Principles on Future Generations, which serves as a basis for a shared understanding of future generations and intergenerational equity.

IV. Focus area: food security and sustainable consumption⁵

A. Overview

57. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the world was not on track to meet Sustainable Development Goal 2, which seeks sustainable solutions to achieve food security and end hunger in all its forms by 2030. Major drivers of food insecurity, including conflict, climate change and economic downturns, have in recent years increased in both frequency and intensity. The pandemic amplified those stressors, adding to pressure on food systems and deepening inequalities.
58. While data from the pandemic is incomplete, an estimated 828 million people were affected by hunger in 2021 – 46 million more than in 2020 and 150 million more

⁵ The information presented herein has been drawn from the following sources: *World Population Prospects 2022: Summary of Results* (United Nations publication, 2022); Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), "Sustainable food systems: concept and framework", 2018; FAO and others, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022* (Rome, FAO, 2022); Cheikh Mbow and others, "Food security", in *Climate Change and Land: An IPCC Special Report on Climate Change, Desertification, Land Degradation, Sustainable Land Management, Food Security, and Greenhouse Gas Fluxes in Terrestrial Ecosystems*, Valérie Masson-Delmotte and others, eds. (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2021); United Nations, "Policy brief: the impact of COVID-19 on food security and nutrition", June 2020; and Secretary-General's Chair summary and statement of action on the United Nations Food Systems Summit, 23 September 2021.

than in 2019. Approximately 2.3 billion people were moderately or severely food insecure in 2021 – 350 million more than before the outbreak of the pandemic. Meanwhile, soaring food prices, driven in particular by the war in Ukraine, put healthy diets out of reach for billions. Already hard hit by the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, young people face particular vulnerability to food price shocks. The link between hunger and poverty is acknowledged in the World Programme of Action for Youth as a priority area.

B. A comprehensive understanding of food security

59. Since the 1974 World Food Conference, the concept of food security has evolved, shifting from a narrow focus on aggregate food supply to food access by individuals. The 1996 World Food Summit acknowledged the importance of stability (consistency of access) and utilization (nutritional value). Today, the concept of food security has expanded further to emphasize sustainability and resilience, recognizing the impact of climate change on global food systems.

60. The world population is projected to have grown by roughly 2 billion by 2050, and increasing food production alone will not end hunger. A holistic approach is needed, taking into account the interrelationships between food security, population, nutrition and sustainable development. Youth play a key role in advocating for such an approach. For example, at the 2021 Economic and Social Council youth forum, youth participants stressed the importance of equitable food systems, as well as healthy and sustainable dietary choices, and formulated recommendations for enhancing the resilience of food systems, in particular in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

C. The sustainability factor

61. Food systems both contribute to and are affected by climate change. Globally, food production is responsible for an estimated 26 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions, while food loss and waste – roughly 25–30 per cent of total food production – account for 8–10 per cent of such emissions. Unsustainable practices in food systems contribute to climate change, leading to biodiversity loss, ocean depletion and the emergence of zoonotic diseases. At the same time, climate change is exacerbating food security risks, particularly for the most vulnerable regions and populations.

62. Investments in sustainable agriculture, resilient livelihoods and climate change adaptation are therefore crucial, as are policy responses that prioritize water allocation, land use and fair trade. Raising awareness and incentivizing shifts to healthier and less resource-intensive diets is also essential. There is no one-size-fits-all solution; context-specific barriers to food security and sustainable consumption must be addressed. At the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit, emphasis was placed on the need to engage all stakeholders, including women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, businesses and producers, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

D. The role of youth in transforming food systems

63. Youth are on the front line when it comes to building the food systems of the future, while bearing significant risks from climate change, socioeconomic inequities and political marginalization. They must be included in the conversation not only as beneficiaries but also as powerful agents of change.

64. Food systems provide a wide range of opportunities for the engagement and employment of young people across diverse global contexts. However, such jobs do not always provide decent and meaningful work or adequate livelihoods. Targeted policies and initiatives, centred on rights, equity and agency, must protect and strengthen youth presence in those sectors. The redistribution of resources, knowledge and opportunities to promote green skills can also have a positive impact on youth employment, while supporting the transition to sustainable food systems.

E. Efforts by Member States

65. Member States have undertaken important initiatives to transform food systems, with and for youth.

66. Argentina launched a programme to help smallholder farmers transition to more resilient production systems while strengthening their capacity to provide employment opportunities to young people. Additional efforts have focused on the socioeconomic inclusion of rural populations, especially rural youth, smallholder farmers and Indigenous Peoples.

67. During the reporting period, Austria undertook various initiatives to promote a healthy and sustainable diet for children and young people. The Government gives priority to food security and sustainable consumption as crucial factors for both ensuring individual well-being and addressing climate change.

68. Bahrain, as part of its sustainability-driven vision framework for 2023, collaborated with youth in areas such as food production and agriculture, as well as human capacity and infrastructure development. The Government also implemented initiatives to diversify food resources and promote sustainable consumption while engaging youth to drive innovation.

69. Brazil continued to administer its national school feeding programme, which supplies nutritious meals to public school students, and to combat food insecurity through “Bolsa Família”, a conditional cash transfer programme that supports vulnerable families, with a focus on young people.

70. China implemented policies to enhance food management mechanisms and raise awareness among young people about sustainable consumption. For example, the All-China Youth Federation relaunched its “Clear Plate” campaign, which mobilizes young individuals to reduce food waste and learn more about the topic.

71. Colombia empowered rural women and youth through programmes that support income generation, surplus production, financial and technological investments and public-private partnerships. The Government also facilitated international youth exchanges to strengthen agroecological practices and climate change adaptation.

72. El Salvador continued to implement its “+Verde” programme to promote environmental education and green entrepreneurship among youth, empowering hundreds of young individuals to play active roles in promoting food security and sustainability within their communities, schools and organizations.

73. France promoted healthy and sustainable consumption behaviour among children and youth through its national nutrition and health programme. Young individuals participated in national consultations, engaging in discussions about sustainable agriculture, climate change adaptation strategies and environmentally friendly agroecological practices.

74. Kyrgyzstan continued to implement its food security and nutrition programme for the period 2019–2023 to improve the nutritional well-being of its population. The

programme aims to increase food accessibility and ensure food safety, ultimately contributing to sustainable national food systems.

75. Mongolia, in collaboration with the Mongolia country office of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), organized activities to celebrate International Youth Day 2021 under the theme “Transforming food systems: youth innovation for human and planetary health”. In addition, the Government collaborated with provinces to promote agricultural education in high schools and vocational training institutes.

76. The Niger continued to implement its “Nigeriens nourish Nigeriens” initiative, a cross-sectoral effort that is aimed at enhancing livestock, agricultural and forest productivity while building the resilience of farmers and herders to climate change and food insecurity. It prioritizes the active involvement of rural youth, placing them at the centre of implementation.

77. The Russian Federation undertook national efforts to promote healthy dietary behaviour and sustainable consumption, with an emphasis on young people. Through such actions, it strives to combat all forms of malnutrition, while enhancing the development of agricultural sectors and promoting sustainable growth.

78. In Slovenia, youth organizations empowered young individuals through workshops and projects to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills to adopt sustainable consumption practices, fostering a greater understanding of environmental responsibility.

79. In 2022, Uruguay partnered with the National Institute of Statistics to incorporate food security components into national household surveys. That collaborative effort, involving FAO and local academic institutions, led to the implementation of an updated survey to assess food security in the most vulnerable households, enabling targeted interventions.

F. United Nations efforts

80. Recognizing the crucial role that young people play in food security and sustainable consumption, United Nations entities are supporting a variety of programmes and policies to enhance youth empowerment, employment and engagement in transforming food systems.

81. FAO continued to promote decent jobs for youth in the agrifood system through its Integrated Country Approach and initiatives such as “Green jobs for rural youth employment”, which builds youth capacity across the green agriculture, green energy and green waste management sectors. In 2022, FAO supported the Committee on World Food Security in adopting policy recommendations on promoting youth engagement and employment in agriculture and food systems for food security and nutrition. FAO also hosts the annual World Food Forum and the Global Indigenous Youth Forum, which engage youth at the multilateral level.

82. FAO, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the African Union Commission, empowered over 1,300 youth through the Opportunities for Youth in Africa programme, which promotes the development of sustainable agribusinesses.

83. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) launched its agribusiness hub in nine African countries, delivering comprehensive support packages to improve food security, reduce rural poverty, help small-scale farmers adapt to climate change and improve youth employability in the labour market.

84. In May 2023, at an ILO meeting of experts, guidelines for promoting decent work in the agrifood sector, including for youth, were adopted. Through the Decent

Work for Equitable Food Systems Coalition, ILO and partners support the creation of better jobs for youth in food systems.

85. In 2022, UNICEF supported nutrition for youth in 68 countries through educational activities, public-private partnerships and supplementation. UNICEF also supported social and behaviour change campaigns to empower young people to make informed healthy dietary choices.

86. At the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), ILO and UNICEF launched the Green Jobs for Youth Pact, which is aimed at accelerating action for green jobs, especially for disadvantaged and climate-vulnerable youth.

87. In 2022, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) organized a session of the International Dialogue on Migration on the intersection of climate change, food insecurity, migration and displacement, with the participation of youth from diaspora and indigenous groups.

88. In 2022, ITC launched an e-learning platform under the Strengthening the Agriculture and Agrifood Value Chain and Improving Trade Policy in Iraq (SAAVI) project. The platform supports young Iraqi agri-entrepreneurs by offering mentoring, access to finance and training in agribusiness skills.

89. In 2023, three Generation Connect youth envoys, nominated by ITU, participated in the FAO selection committee for the World Food Forum Youth Policy Board, which guides the Forum's Youth Action track. ITU hosted a side event at the World Food Forum in 2022, highlighting innovative ways in which young leaders are using technology to address hunger and food production.

90. In 2021, the OHCHR country office in Guatemala, the World Food Programme (WFP), UNFPA, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and FAO organized a virtual event to mark International Youth Day, on "Transforming food systems: youth innovation for human and planetary health", which showcased young people's contributions to food security and sustainable development.

91. The Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EMPRETEC) programme of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) supported young agri-entrepreneurs through capacity-building and networking opportunities. At the policy level, UNCTAD promoted best practices in agriculture and sustainable production, while engaging youth through its Youth Network.

92. The Sustainable Lifestyles Action Academy of UNEP offered tools for youth engagement, including the "Anatomy of Action" toolkit, a learning module on sustainable lifestyles and the "My Sustainable Living Challenge" gamified platform.

93. At the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, UNESCO launched its global survey report entitled "Youth demands for climate change education" and mobilized stakeholders for its Greening Education Partnership. UNESCO also promotes school health and nutrition globally and published the report entitled "Ready to learn and thrive: School health and nutrition around the world" in 2022.

94. UNFPA and partners continued to establish safe spaces, deliver health workshops, distribute food assistance and promote healthy nutrition practices, contributing to the well-being and empowerment of women, girls and youth.

95. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) collaborated with UNICEF, WFP, WHO and FAO to support the development of the

Global Action Plan on Child Wasting, which includes priority actions for adolescents, with a focus on food systems.

96. UN-Women, together with FAO, IFAD and WFP, leads the Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women, addressing gender-specific constraints with regard to food security, nutrition and energy access.

97. The Office of the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth strengthened meaningful youth engagement in food systems, including by supporting youth participation at the United Nations Food System Summit in 2021 and the World Food Forum in 2021 and 2022.

98. The Office of the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth hosted the #YouthLead Innovation Festival in 2021, bringing together young innovators, policymakers and industry leaders to discuss youth-led solutions for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and COVID-19 recovery, touching on food security, climate action and biodiversity.

V. Focus area: inclusive development through sport, recreation and culture⁶

A. Overview

99. The role of sport, recreation and culture in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals, with and for youth, is widely recognized. Leisure-time activities can serve as a tool to achieve cross-cutting objectives for the well-being of young people, such as health, education and social inclusion. They also offer critical convening spaces in which youth can build meaningful relationships and skills, contributing to increased solidarity and empathy within and between diverse groups of youth and their communities.

100. The World Programme of Action for Youth includes leisure-time activities as a priority area, noting that they are an integral part of youth policies and programmes and should be planned, designed and implemented together with youth organizations. The World Programme also calls for enhanced “places and facilities for cultural, recreational and sports activities to improve the living standards of young people in both rural and urban areas”.

101. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of access to leisure-time activities for the health and well-being of young people and prompted the development of innovative approaches to reimagine such activities so that their transformative potential can continue to be harnessed.

B. The transformative power of sport

102. The United Nations defines sport as “all forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction. These include play; recreation; organized, casual or competitive sport, and indigenous sports and games.”⁷ In the 2030 Agenda, sport is acknowledged as a key enabler of sustainable

⁶ The information presented herein has been drawn from the following sources: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “The impact of COVID-19 on sport, physical activity”; WHO, *Global Action Plan on Physical Activity 2018–2030* (Geneva, 2018); [A/74/286](#); and [A/77/161](#).

⁷ United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace, “Sport for development and peace: Towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals”, report, 2003.

development. In recent years, Member States, the United Nations system and stakeholders have established normative frameworks to guide collective efforts in utilizing sport to achieve broader development outcomes.

103. Young people, whether as participants or spectators, derive tremendous benefits from sport, encountering values such as teamwork, fair play and respect of rules, among others. Such skills are essential for personal and professional development and can foster social cohesion by addressing the structural conditions that are conducive to violent extremism, marginalization and discrimination. In addition, sport has important influences on the health and well-being of young people. Beside improving fitness, it can instil lifelong healthy behaviour and combat the risks of non-communicable diseases. Sport has also been shown to have numerous positive benefits for young people's cognitive development and mental health.

104. The professional sports sector also contributes to youth development, including by offering employment pathways, providing leadership and raising public awareness about the Sustainable Development Goals. Moreover, players can offer their skills and knowledge for the benefit of many joint programmes and initiatives around the world.

C. Culture and sustainable development

105. In the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, culture is defined as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group that encompasses not only art and literature but also lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs. The link between culture and sustainable development has been increasingly recognized in recent decades.

106. In 2005, the General Conference of UNESCO, in the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, emphasized the need to incorporate culture as a strategic element in national and development policies. The General Assembly, in its resolutions [65/166](#), [66/208](#) and [68/223](#), reinforced the role of culture as an important contributor to sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda also contains explicit references to aspects of culture and integrates culture across the various goals.

107. Cultural activities offer significant value for youth development. They provide a dynamic platform for young people to acquire new skills, build confidence and heal from trauma, while facilitating dialogue and preparing them to live in multicultural societies. In doing so, cultural activities enhance individual well-being and promote social cohesion. Such activities can also lead to a more sustainable future for heritage, art and cultural institutions, creating a virtuous cycle of reinforcement.

D. Other considerations

108. During the COVID-19 pandemic, online platforms, in such areas as electronic sports, and outdoor spaces became popular alternatives to ensure social distancing. While those solutions benefited many young people, they also revealed the existence of stark disparities in access to the Internet and to green space. Special care must be taken when designing programmes and policies to avoid exacerbating the digital and wellness divide.

109. Moreover, in many low-income countries, the concept of leisure time is often contextualized and prioritized differently, especially in the case of young people, who face the highest poverty rate of all age groups. For example, activities that are

considered recreational in affluent nations, such as fishing and handicrafts, may serve as sources of livelihood in low-income countries. In addition, countries with limited budgets often require donor funding to develop formal recreation and sports activities. Any activities introduced must therefore be adapted to the local context and co-created with the young people they are intended to engage.

E. Efforts by Member States

110. Member States are increasingly implementing policies and programmes that harness the power of sports, recreation and culture for inclusive development, with a focus on youth.

111. In Argentina, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports implemented a programme to enhance the infrastructure of community sports entities across 1,200 municipalities nationwide, with a view to making sports and recreational activities more accessible and inclusive.

112. Austria undertook various initiatives to promote cultural engagement and inclusivity, including by waiving admission fees to museums and cultural events for young people and individuals from lower-income households. The country also supported campaigns against discrimination in culture and education, emphasizing the importance of respecting diversity.

113. Bulgaria adopted a national youth strategy for the period 2021–2030 that outlines measures to foster youth engagement in sports activities, as well as to raise awareness about physical and mental health. The strategy also supports the facilitation of youth development through cultural activities.

114. China undertook diverse initiatives to promote youth development in sports and culture, including Project Hope, which is aimed at enhancing facilities in rural areas, providing training to physical education and art teachers in rural schools and organizing public sports and art festivals to engage and empower youth.

115. Cyprus continued to implement its “Sport for All” programme, which promotes physical activity for all individuals in the country, irrespective of their social, financial and citizenship status. In addition, the Cyprus Sport Organization undertook initiatives to improve public facilities for outdoor activities, making them more accessible and inclusive.

116. El Salvador established urban welfare and opportunities centres, which serve as dedicated spaces to foster youth development through reading, art, cultural activities and technology, with the aim of strengthening social connections, solidarity and community engagement through common spaces.

117. France promoted social inclusion in anticipation of the Olympic and Paralympic Games to be held in Paris in 2024. The “Pass’Sport” initiative offers financial assistance to young individuals facing barriers due to disability or financial constraints, allowing them to participate in sports activities. France has also promoted the participation of young migrants and refugees in sports as a means of fostering social integration.

118. Through its “cultural pass” programme, Lithuania supported the engagement of students in cultural and artistic activities, while fostering cultural understanding. It successfully adapted to challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic by incorporating digital content.

119. Qatar continued to raise awareness about the role of sport in inclusive development through the Qatar Sports for All Federation, which promotes physical

activity for all, including youth, women and people with disabilities, with the goal of building a healthy and inclusive society.

120. In Slovenia, the national programme for youth, in recognition of the vital role of culture in youth development, advocates for the systematic integration of culture across all school levels and educational processes. National cultural organizations, working in collaboration with youth, have also undertaken diverse initiatives, including efforts to enhance access to cultural facilities.

121. In December 2021, Türkiye introduced a national action plan on the rights of persons with disabilities, which promotes the social inclusion of young individuals with disabilities and serves to guide national initiatives to facilitate their participation in sporting, cultural and recreational activities, with the goal of fostering an inclusive and accessible society.

122. Uruguay implemented various initiatives to further youth development through sport, including the “Movete” and “National Sports Games” programmes. The Government also established a youth fund in 2022, which provides financial support for initiatives that promote youth development through sports and culture, with a special focus on rural youth.

F. United Nations efforts

123. United Nations entities and partners are harnessing the transformative power of sport, recreation and culture to implement policies and activities that prioritize inclusion, celebrate diversity, promote wellness and strengthen youth engagement.

124. In 2022, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs developed a toolkit to strengthen policy formulation on sport, peace and development to benefit diverse social groups, especially youth and individuals with disabilities. In 2023, the Department conducted a pilot training workshop in Ghana, at the request of the Government, to build capacity in that area.

125. The United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia supported sports- and arts-based programmes, including the “A Son de Paz” initiative, to promote interaction, reconciliation and youth participation in peace-related efforts.

126. The Peacebuilding Fund administered by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, together with UNICEF, UNDP, WFP, FAO and UN-Women, implemented youth-led projects at the Kyrgyz-Tajik border to foster understanding through cultural mediums, including a joint photography contest.

127. The Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide and partners developed a plan of action to counter hate speech through engagement with sports, which was launched by the Secretary-General in December 2022.

128. Since 2021, the ILO PROSPECTS initiative in Egypt has used football as a tool to provide employability skills training for forcibly displaced youth.

129. In Turkmenistan, IOM organized national Youth Leadership Camps which incorporated team-building activities and cultural events, while offering a safe space for young people to network and exchange experiences.

130. ITC, through its Youth and Trade Programme, developed a life-skills curriculum for youth using football to promote social inclusion, employability and entrepreneurship. In Iraq, 30 coaches trained over 600 young people.

131. For its 2021 Emerging Technology Week, ITU held a youth-led session featuring a musical performance. Through its Generation Connect initiative, ITU also

conducted a series of virtual global youth round tables, as well as capacity-building and recreational activities.

132. The Office for Disarmament Affairs engaged youth in promoting disarmament through various art, cultural and sport-based initiatives, including the “What if – Spesterra” Youth Video Challenge, the Pitching Peace Youth Music Challenge and the #StepUp4Disarmament Youth Campaign.

133. In June 2023, the OHCHR Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa organized a five-day march to raise awareness of the rights of young individuals with disabilities.

134. The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations supports the “Sport for One Humanity” initiative, which is aimed at promoting peace and inclusion through innovative sports projects and offers capacity-building and mentorship to organizations globally.

135. Since 2009, the PLURAL+ youth video festival has been organized annually by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and IOM with the aim of encouraging and empowering global youth to explore the issues of migration, diversity and social inclusion.

136. In 2022, UNEP and partners launched the Sports for Nature Framework, under which sports organizations engage to protect nature, inspire action, advance the Sustainable Development Goals and promote youth development.

137. UNESCO supported post-conflict recovery in Gaza through art, music and theatre workshops. It also facilitated cultural exchanges in Latin America and the Caribbean and collaborated on the Digital Games for Peace project, with and for youth.

138. In 2022, UNHCR launched its first-ever sport strategy, “More than a Game”, which is focused on improving the lives of displaced and stateless persons through sport, with inclusion as a guiding principle. Among other initiatives, in 2022, UNHCR and partners organized the first ever Unity Euro Cup, a football competition for European refugees. In addition, UNHCR global goodwill ambassadors include football stars who advocate for the rights of displaced people worldwide.

139. In 2022, UNICEF leveraged sport in the context of protection and skills-building programmes for children and adolescents, including in Albania, the Comoros, El Salvador, Kenya, Nicaragua, Sao Tome and Principe and South Africa.

140. The Office of Counter-Terrorism continued to lead the Global Programme on Security of Major Sporting Events and Promotion of Sport and Its Values as a Tool to Prevent Violent Extremism. In addition to implementing sports-based activities to prevent violent extremism, two policy guides were developed under the Programme in 2022 to integrate such activities into national strategies and major events.

141. In 2022, UNODC promoted youth engagement in its work through a variety of sport and cultural initiatives, such as the “Line Up, Live Up” sports-based life skills training programme, the “Sport against Crime: Outreach, Resilience, Empowerment – SC:ORE” programme and the African youth anti-corruption challenge (Coding4Integrity).

142. UN-Women and partners worked to improve gender equality and prevent gender-based violence worldwide, including in Nigeria, North Macedonia and Pakistan, and in the Pacific region.

VI. United Nations efforts at the international, regional and national levels

A. United Nations Youth Strategy

143. The United Nations system continued to accelerate and expand the implementation of the United Nations Youth Strategy, providing key support to Governments on youth issues.

144. The global coordination structure includes a high-level steering committee, a joint working group and a secretariat in the Office of the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth.

145. In *Youth2030: Progress Report 2022*, insights are provided from 40 United Nations entities and 130 United Nations country teams, highlighting how the United Nations is advancing global commitments for and with youth and, in particular, the fact that:

(a) The United Nations system made progress in implementing the Youth Strategy; accelerated implementation is key to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals;

(b) Engagement in inter-agency coordination on youth was notably higher at the global and regional levels than at the country level;

(c) United Nations country teams made great strides in improving their reporting on results and resources for youth; however, there is still considerable room for improvement;

(d) United Nations entities implemented good practices on internships and young talent management, yet such practices are not yet reflected in the overall efforts of country teams;

(e) Significant improvements in working with youth have been reported, although sizable variations persist across countries and regions.

146. Key priorities to maintain the pace of acceleration include targeted support across the system, the facilitation of knowledge-sharing from the global and regional levels to the country level; strengthened inter-agency coordination at the country level; expansion of fair and quality internships and youth employment; tracking of results and resources for youth; and the strengthening of meaningful youth engagement.

B. Economic and Social Council youth forum

147. The Economic and Social Council youth forum is the largest gathering of young people at the United Nations. In 2022, over 20,000 participants attended the youth forum, which took place in a virtual format and addressed the theme of the 2022 high-level political forum on sustainable development on “Building back better from COVID-19 while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda”. Key messages included the necessity for all, including Member States, to partner with youth in designing and delivering recovery efforts. The 2023 youth forum was held in a hybrid format, bringing together around 22,000 participants to discuss the theme of the 2023 high-level political forum on sustainable development on “Accelerating the recovery from COVID-19 and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda at all levels”. Key messages from the 2023 youth forum were focused on the 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Summit. Among other things, participants called for

efforts to ensure the full inclusion of youth in the multilateral system so that they can meaningfully contribute to addressing global challenges for current and future generations.

C. International Youth Day

148. In 2021, the theme of International Youth Day was “Transforming food systems: youth innovation for human and planetary health”. To officially mark the Day, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, FAO and the children and youth major group organized a global webinar to promote innovation, knowledge exchange and youth engagement in the lead-up to the high-level United Nations Food Systems Summit. In 2022, the theme was “Intergenerational solidarity: creating a world for all ages”. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs partnered with the children and youth major group to organize a webinar that featured interactive discussions on intergenerational solidarity, future generations and ageism, as well as several case studies.

D. United Nations Youth Delegate Programme

149. The United Nations Youth Delegate Programme, coordinated globally by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, remains a critical channel for youth to participate in United Nations processes by joining their national delegations at intergovernmental meetings. The Department supplements the support that youth delegates receive from their delegations to maximize their impact, including by organizing informational briefings and providing other guidance. At the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly, there were 72 youth delegates from 36 Member States and 1 delegate from a permanent observer, while at the seventy-seventh session of the Assembly, there were 57 youth delegates from 31 Member States.

E. United Nations Youth Office

150. In its resolution [76/306](#), the General Assembly decided to establish the United Nations Youth Office as a dedicated office for youth affairs in the United Nations Secretariat, integrating the Office of the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth. The Youth Office would, inter alia, promote meaningful, inclusive and effective engagement of youth and youth-led and youth-focused organizations in the work of the United Nations; propose innovative approaches to advance multi-stakeholder initiatives on the engagement and empowerment of youth, for the consideration of Member States; and support efforts to enhance youth representation at the United Nations, including through increasing and improving the conditions of internships and employment opportunities for youth.

VII. Conclusion and recommendations

151. In the present report, emphasis has been laid on the progress made and challenges faced in implementing the World Programme of Action for Youth and the 2030 Agenda. Three issues at the heart of youth development and participation have in particular been addressed: intergenerational solidarity and partnerships, food security and sustainable consumption, and inclusive development through sport, recreation and culture.

152. It is recommended that Member States:

- (a) Recognize youth as key agents of change and draw on the framework provided by the World Programme of Action for Youth to ensure their involvement in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes that contribute to the realization of their full potential in the context of the recovery from COVID-19 and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda;**
- (b) Identify and address ageism, along with other barriers to intergenerational solidarity and cooperation, including by promoting opportunities and creating spaces for constructive interaction between younger and older generations and by developing inclusive policies based on a life-course approach;**
- (c) Invest in agrifood systems with a focus on strengthening youth employment, entrepreneurship, engagement and empowerment, including through the creation of green jobs, especially for rural and disadvantaged youth;**
- (d) Co-create pathways with and for youth to transform food systems at the national level, investing in scientific knowledge, prioritizing innovation, incentivizing behavioural changes and promoting sustainable lifestyles;**
- (e) Raise awareness of the benefits of sport, recreation and culture for youth development, in particular to ensure their strategic integration in the development of youth-centred policies and programmes at the national, regional and international levels;**
- (f) Leverage the high-level plenary meeting convened to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth to strengthen political commitment at all levels for effective investment in and inclusion of youth as a central component of building a sustainable and resilient future.**
