



SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

2013 ECOSOC Youth Forum

“Shaping tomorrow’s innovators: Leveraging science, technology, innovation and culture for today’s youth”

27 March 2013

10:00 am – 5:30 pm

United Nations Headquarters, New York

BACKGROUND

In July 2013, Member States, policy-makers, civil society organizations, representatives of academia and the private sector will meet in Geneva during the high-level segment of the substantive session of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to address the theme of the Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) on “Science, technology and innovation, and the potential of culture, for promoting sustainable development and achieving the MDGs”.

To bring the voice of youth into the discussion, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), and with the support of “New York Tech Meet Up” organized an ECOSOC Youth Forum on “Shaping tomorrow’s innovators: Leveraging science, technology, innovation and culture for today’s youth” The Forum built on youth participation initiatives of UN system partners.

Following is a list of key policy recommendations derived from the dynamic and substantial discussions held at the 2013 ECOSOC Youth Forum.

The role of STI in promoting gender equality

There is an important role of girls and young women in scientific research and decision-making. Although there are encouraging signs, women are still under-represented in science whether in basic scientific research or at higher decision-making levels. Through

a greater focus on the benefits of promoting women to be leaders, STI can be used as a tool promote and facilitate gender equity.

- Fight gender stereotypes at all levels. Make efforts to use gender neutral language in science, including in textbooks.
- Increase visibility of women scientists by providing more female contacts in media and more space for women to showcase their work as scientists.
- Help women and girls to build a stronger STEM identity. Build and promote environments where curiosity and innovation are encouraged. Engage young girls to find their voice and participate in STEM related projects. Encouragements from peers, teachers, and family help young girls believe in their own abilities.
- Feature more prominently women scientific role models and mentors of women scientists. Promote and support platforms for exchange of experiences and opportunities. Ensure women scientists are given speaking roles at major conferences, are featured in science policy initiatives and videos, specialized scientific career fair organized by young women for organized by young, with successful women scientists as role models.
- Promote gender blind hiring practices. Studies show both women and men are biased when reading job applications and female candidates are generally judged at higher standards than their male counterparts. Gender blind hiring would remove this bias as was shown with the significant increase in employed female musicians when the field shifted to gender neutral hiring practices.
- Provide equitable parental leave. Children are born to both parents. Ensure that if a father or mother asks for leave it is viewed equally and not discriminatory to only women. Men should be encouraged to take parental leave so that both parents can share the weight more of child rearing more equally.
- Provide mentors for young women when they start their careers. The mentor should be different from bosses or supervisors and should have institutional support. The mentor should be invested in the success of the women scientist and should be compensated for their time.

Enhancing the participation of youth in STI through inclusive frameworks

The creative economy is not only one of the most rapidly growing sectors of the world economy but also a highly transformative one in terms of income generation, job creation and export earnings. Engaging and supporting youth in the creative economy presents greater opportunities for more inclusive and sustainable development.

- Advocate for the participation of youth in the design and implementation of cultural policies and action plans in cultural and creative industries.
- Promote the participation of youth in cultural and creative industries through skills development and entrepreneurial training for job creation.
- Fostering opportunities and access of young creators and cultural practitioners to local and global markets through tax incentives and low-interest loans.
- Ensure the access to information and exchange of ideas through new technologies, open source, social media and collaborative mechanisms as enablers for democracy and sustainable development.
- Support social innovators, particularly those in the South. South-South cooperation can be useful here, overcoming larger collective action problems affecting a greater number of people.

Using social media to promote an enabling environment for youth development

Social media tools can be used in productive, action-oriented ways by youth to communicate, mobilize and promote innovative ideas and achieving specific goals for global and sustainable development. Online social networks hold a wealth of potential for innovating, mobilizing and engaging youth around the globe, opening up new forms of communication and dissemination. These applications can enable individuals and organizations to conduct far-reaching education and advocacy campaigns, mobilize constituents, empower those in need and spread business ideas.

- Social media has captured the attention of young people in ways that previous social movements have not. Increasing access to social media should be explored in order to engage young people in the development process.
- Invest in youth. In many developing countries, a large percentage of the population is young, underpinning how powerful a development tool social media can be.
- Energy and Information and Communication technology (ICT) are important prerequisites for utilizing social media. In places where such prerequisites are financially unfeasible, public access to these technologies can help social media be a more inclusive tool
- Governments need to support social media use with appropriate policies. Not only do peoples IP rights need to be protected, but their identities need to be protected as well.
- Utilize social media as a comparative tool, but by itself cannot drive change. Energy infrastructure and internet access are needed for people to make use of this tool. Show people how governments can work effectively, creating a demand for good governance in that area (policy and institutional change must be “grass-roots”, cannot be imposed from the outside in a sustainable fashion).

Addressing resource gaps

Greater investments and partnerships are necessary to adequately promote and support STI. Since STI has many cross-sector applications, innovative methods for supporting STI and bridging the interests of stakeholders should be actively pursued to reduce resource burdens and share ownership.

- Foster team building to support research activities and acquiring funding for research projects. Scientist is a collaborative endeavor and is becoming more interdisciplinary to solve major challenges related to global health, the environment and food scarcity.
- Narrow the digital divide. Accessibility and affordability remain an issue; they need to be addressed. Break monopolies around wireless and the internet providers. Create cross-cutting initiatives and public-private partnerships (PPPs) to bring social media to new areas.