

International Youth Day 2015

Secretary-General's Message

Emerging threats, violent extremism, shifting political conditions, economic turmoil and social transformations are combining to heighten the challenges facing the world's young people. No one knows better than them the issues at stake or the best way to respond. That is why I am calling on young people to speak out – and I am urging leaders to listen.

As the world changes with unprecedented speed, young people are proving to be invaluable partners who can advance meaningful solutions. Youth movements and student groups are challenging traditional power structures and advocating a new social contract between States and societies. Young leaders have contributed fresh ideas, taken proactive measures, and mobilized through social media as never before.

I applaud the millions of young people who are protesting for rights and participation, addressing staggering levels of youth unemployment, raising their voices against injustice, and advocating global action for people and the planet.

In this landmark year, as leaders prepare to adopt a bold new vision for sustainable development, the engagement of youth is more valuable than ever. At this critical moment in history, I call on young people to demand and foster the dramatic progress

so urgently needed in our world.

Volunteerism is an ideal way to improve society – and it is open to virtually everyone. Youth can also join forces with the United Nations as we move from forging the new sustainable development goals to implementing them. That spirit of action is embodied in the theme of this International Day: “Youth and Civic Engagement.”

I stand with the world's young people in calling for measures to secure human rights, economic progress, environmental stewardship and social inclusion.

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the United Nations Charter and the 20th anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth. In support of their aims, my Youth Envoy is helping to mobilize this largest generation of young people in history. As he says, youth engagement can help turn the world we want into the world we deserve.

Let us all support young people in creating a future where our planet is protected and all people live in dignity.

Ban Ki-moon

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International Youth Day is an opportunity to celebrate the creative force and the innovative impetus that young people bring to every society. This year's theme – "Youth Civic Engagement" – emphasizes the role played by the involvement and inclusion of young people in building social cohesion and collective well-being.

" Young people must be considered the drivers of change, and not only beneficiaries or targets. "

Irina Bokova

UNESCO Director-General

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From social entrepreneurs to journalists, from voluntary workers to members of community organizations, young people contribute to shaping society to lead it towards political, cultural and economic renewal.

We must support their civic engagement at every level, beginning with recognizing that young people form a separate social group with specific characteristics and expectations. Civic engagement is a way to exploit this potential to enrich society, further human rights and enable improved living conditions for all.

These goals are at the core of UNESCO's projects, to offer young people the space and skills they need to develop, which reflects on all societies.



That is the spirit of UNESCO's project to strengthen youth networks in the Mediterranean. Young people must be considered the drivers of change, and not only beneficiaries or targets. That involves reinforcing exchanges and cooperation between generations to ensure that young people are actually involved in developing the policies intended for them. The ninth UNESCO Youth Forum, held in October, will provide a unique platform to convey this message, and I invite young people from all over the world to attend and make their voices heard, to shape the action of world leaders. These voices carry the hope of half of the planet, for a sustainable future for all.

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