**“Youth and Sustainability in COVID Era”**

A Webinar of RCEs of Asia-Pacific Region to mark

**The International Youth Day (IYD) 2020**

Theme- “Youth Engagement for Global Action”

Wednesday, 12th August 2020

14:00-16:30 hrs Australian Eastern Standard Time

**Some Background Reading Material**

12th August was designated ‘International Youth Day’ (IYD) by the United Nations General Assembly in 1999 by UN Resolution No. 54/120. International Youth Day is an awareness raising day to draw attention to a given set of cultural and legal issues surrounding youth. The first IYD was observed on 12 August, 2000. It is an annual celebration of the role of young women and men as essential partners in promoting human rights and development. It is also an opportunity to raise awareness of the challenges and hardships facing the world’s youth.

There are 15 areas identified for the youth concern: Education, Employment, Poverty, Health, Environment, Drugs, HIV & AIDS, Young Girls and Women, Globalization, Youth Conflicts, Communication Technologies, Time Activities and Intergenerational Relations.

Young people are powerful agents of change and progress when they are educated and empowered to participate in decision-making. Yet around the world, too many youths are being left behind. They receive a substandard education or no education at all, and find few decent employment opportunities. They struggle to access basic sexual and reproductive health information and services. Without these tools, young people – young women, in particular – find themselves grappling with poverty, early pregnancy, diseases and other challenges.

Young people are a driving force for peace and development, their energy and creativity are keys in building a better future, and they are often the first to come up with innovative solutions to the world’s most pressing issues. Yet, millions of young women and men are affected by conflict, violence and deprivation, and are unable to fulfil their potential. The world’s youth need safe spaces where they can participate, express their views and exercise their rights. Today’s youth face many challenges; about 286 million young people live in poverty, more than 50 million are unable to read and write, and close to 60 million are unemployed. In 2019, over 258 million out-of-school adolescents lived in the areas affected by various (including armed) conflicts.

The Focal Point on Youth every year selects a theme for the IYD often with input from youth organizations and members of the UN Inter-Agency Network in Youth development. The theme allows participants to focus their events on a particular area of need among the world’s youth. The themes of previous IYDs were following:

* [IYD 2019 – Transforming Education](https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/iyd2019.html)
* [IYD 2018 – Safe Spaces for Youth](https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/international-youth-day-2018.html)
* [IYD 2017 – Youth Building Peace](https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/international-youth-day-2017.html)
* [IYD 2016 – Road to 2030: Eradicating Poverty and Achieving Sustainability](https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/uncategorized/2016/06/international-youth-day-2016/)
* [IYD 2015 – Youth Civic Engagement](http://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/international-youth-day-2015-2.html)
* [IYD 2014 – Mental Health Matters](http://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/united-nations-international-youth-day-2014.html)
* [IYD 2013 – Youth Migration: Moving Development Forward](http://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/international-youth-day-2013.html)
* [IYD 2012 – Building a Better World: Partnering with Youth](http://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/international-youth-day-2012-2.html)
* [I](http://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/celebrate-the-international-youth-day-on-12-august-2011.html)[YD 2011 – Change Our World](http://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/news/2011/08/celebrate-the-international-youth-day-on-12-august-2011/)
* [IYD 2010 – Dialogue and Mutual Understanding](http://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/international-year-2010.html)
* [IYD 2009 – Sustainability: Our Challenge. Our Future.](http://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/international-youth-day-2009.html)
* [IYD 2008 – Youth and Climate Change: Time for Action](http://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/international-youth-day-2008.html)
* [IYD 2007 – Be seen, Be heard: Youth participation for development](http://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/international-youth-day-2007.html)
* [IYD 2006 – Tackling Poverty Together](http://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/international-youth-day-2006.html)
* [IYD 2005 – WPAY+10: Making Commitments Matter](http://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/international-youth-day-2005.html)
* [IYD 2004 – Youth in an Intergenerational Society](http://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/international-youth-day-2004.html)
* [IYD 2003 – Finding decent and productive work for young people everywhere](http://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/international-youth-day-2003.html)
* [IYD 2002 – Now and for the Future: Youth Action for Sustainable Development](http://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/international-youth-day-2002.html)
* [IYD 2001 – Addressing Health and Unemployment](http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2001/sgsm7909.doc.htm)
* [First Observance of International Youth Day 2000](http://www.un.org/press/en/2000/20000808.note5621.doc.html)

The theme of IYD 2020 is **“Youth Engagement for Global Action”**. It seeks to highlight the ways in which the engagement of young people at the local, national and global levels is enriching national and multilateral institutions and processes, as well as draw lessons on how their representation and engagement in formal institutional politics can be significantly enhanced.

As the United Nations turns 75, and with only 10 years remaining to make the 2030 Agenda a reality for all, trust in public institutions is eroding. At the international level, against the backdrop of an increasingly polarized world, the international system of governance is currently undergoing a crisis of legitimacy and relevance. In particular, this crisis is rooted in the need to strengthen the capacity of the international system to act in concert and implement solutions to pressing challenges and threats (examples include some of the worst contemporary conflicts and humanitarian emergencies, such as Syria and Myanmar, as well as global challenges, such as the COVID-19 outbreak and climate change).

Enabling the engagement of youth in formal political mechanisms does increase the fairness of political processes by reducing democratic deficits, contributes to better and more sustainable policies, and also has symbolic importance that can further contribute to restore trust in public institutions, especially among youth. Moreover, the vast majority of challenges humanity currently faces, such as the COVID-19 outbreak and climate change require concerted global action and the meaningful engagement and participation of young people to be addressed effectively.

The aim of IYD 2020 is to shed light on the need to enable the engagement of youth by making local, national and global institutions more inclusive for the purpose of strengthening their capacity (and relevance) to achieve global action. This year’s IYD seeks to put the spotlight on youth engagement through the following three interconnected streams:

1. Engagement at the local/community level;
2. Engagement at the national level (formulation of laws, policies, and their implementation); and,
3. Engagement at the global level.

**The International Days and Why Do We Mark Them?**

International days are occasions to educate the public on issues of concern, to mobilize political will and resources to address global problems, and to celebrate and reinforce achievements of humanity. The existence of international days predates the establishment of the United Nations, but the UN has embraced them as a powerful advocacy tool.

Each international day offers many actors the opportunity to organize activities related to the theme of the day. Organizations and offices of the United Nations system, and most importantly, governments, civil society, the public and private sectors, schools, universities and, more generally, citizens, make an international day a springboard for awareness-raising actions.

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