



## United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

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### Fourteenth session

Nairobi

17–22 July 2016

## Youth Forum

### Summary prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat

1. The Youth Forum, under the theme of “Shaping the world we want”, convened 250 students and young professionals of 18–30 years of age from over 70 countries. Further to the global United Nations survey on “My world” carried out in 2015, Forum participants – at breakout sessions held on 19 and 20 July – discussed topics they considered of concern, namely, education, more and better job opportunities and State accountability. On 21 July, during a high-level event open to all participants at the fourteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the Forum presented the outcome of its discussions in the form of a Youth Forum Declaration.
2. The high-level event was moderated by the Director of Investments for the Governance and Citizen Engagement Initiative in Africa of the Omidyar Network, who introduced the young participants and their work during the Youth Forum and then invited their representatives to present the Youth Forum Declaration. The panellists were the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Netherlands, the Cabinet Secretary for the Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs of Kenya, the Chief Executive Officer of Safaricom and the Envoy on Youth of the United Nations Secretary-General.
3. The main points of the Declaration addressed the following:
  - There was a need for education that built livelihoods while empowering people, creating quality and conserving the planet, and there was also a need to enhance the mandate of UNCTAD to engage in capacity-building related to increasing access to skills and knowledge that enabled more robust implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
  - Deliberate efforts needed to be made to change the process of measuring youth unemployment – as the formal measurement only took into account youth of 15–24 years of age and, at 24, many young people had not yet completed their education,

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thus leaving behind a sizeable population, especially the most vulnerable – and such corrections should be incorporated into the statistical capacity work of UNCTAD;

- State accountability and better governance was one of the most important topics that had emerged during the post-2015 process (the overarching elements of State accountability included, but were not limited to, the rule of law, increased transparency, tackling of corruption and robust institutional engagement) and, in the context of the work and mandate of UNCTAD, capacity-building on clear conversion guidelines between relevant international frameworks and domestic policy and the creative use of information and communications technologies as tools of increased transparency needed to be included;
- UNCTAD needed to build technical capacity among States to better implement and interlink the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with other sustainable development processes at all levels, as related to trade and development (including those related to disaster risk reduction, financing for development, small island developing States and sustainable consumption and production, as well as those of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development and the World Humanitarian Summit) and to achieve an enhanced science–policy interface, as well as improved coherence and synergy between the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and other technology structures, such as the newly adopted Technology Facilitation Mechanism.

4. Addressing the event, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD noted that UNCTAD was at the front of the curve in youth inclusion, and that youth needed an opportunity to become champions of multilateralism. UNCTAD, institutionally, aimed to walk the talk of inclusivity, as the decision-makers of today would not be the ones held accountable in 2030. There was therefore a need to engage those who would be at the centre of the world in 2030, whose problems were universal. By hosting the Youth Forum, UNCTAD aimed to help further prepare youth for upcoming challenges. Finally, there was a need to enhance the mandate of UNCTAD to put forward and respond to the challenges of multilateralism. The youth of today needed an opportunity to see the value of international solidarity.

5. The Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Netherlands recognized the leadership of UNCTAD in not talking merely about youth but with them, and referred to the challenges they faced, such as youth unemployment, and to the critical role education played in what youth learned and links to the knowledge and skills expected when they entered the job market. With regard to illicit financial flows, the panellist noted that the Netherlands was the only country that offered to renegotiate all existing tax treaties with developing countries and provide capacity-building to their national tax authorities.

6. The Cabinet Secretary for the Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs of Kenya highlighted the universality of challenges that youth faced. Under the framework of the African Union, 2017 had been earmarked as the year of youth. Youth should make their needs known and their space should be increased through the creation of monitoring frameworks of best practices in which they could actively participate. As market access went beyond borders, the United Nations was the correct forum through which to channel youth-related conversations. The panellist commended UNCTAD on its initiative of hosting a youth forum during the Conference.

7. The Chief Executive Officer of Safaricom discussed debt and the need for youth to hold Governments and private businesses to account, with the aim of not overburdening youth with debt in the future. The current trend on debt was not good. In addition, the panellist emphasized the importance of inclusiveness and highlighted that youth living in rural areas should not be left behind, giving as an example the Kenyan youth who could not access the Youth Forum.

8. The Envoy on Youth of the United Nations Secretary-General shifted the conversation from creating more jobs, to creating decent jobs and unlocking the potential of young people, and referred to the stagnation of wages and investment that did not generate jobs. He stated that UNCTAD was unique, as almost all other processes focused on challenges, while UNCTAD processes centred on seizing opportunities.

9. The panel discussion concluded with an emphasis on the idea that youth should be at the centre of the conversation.

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