

## Youth on the review of the Sustainable Development Goals

The adoption of the 2030 agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals was a monumental achievement. The steps that must now be taken, and will be addressed in this forum, involve the implementation and review of these goals. As young people, the implementation of the sustainable development goals impacts our present, as well as our future well-being and prosperity. This forum, therefore, is a vital step in our development and the creation of our future. No work should be done for youth without the participation of young people.

For this reason, we call on the UN ECE Regional Forum to consider and address the following points so that we together will ensure meaningful youth participation in the regional review of the sustainable development goals.

- The 2030 agenda and the SDGs are complex structures. Add on to this the complexity of the structures of implementation and review mechanisms at both national, regional and global levels and the complexity is overwhelming. Without support, financial investment and accessible channels of participation, there is a risk of systematic exclusion of adolescents and young people within these processes.
- Young people are underrepresented in politics and often excluded from decision-making processes. Our realities and experiences are therefore not reflected, which causes a lack of efficiency and inclusive development, making policies irrelevant and inappropriate. To ensure that the human rights of all young people are respected, protected and fulfilled, a commitment to meaningful youth participation is crucial. This commitment needs to be manifested not only in words but also in action. The barriers to meaningful youth participation need to be acknowledged and addressed so as to not risk tokenistic youth participation.
- Adolescents and youth experience age-specific discrimination and barriers to participation. In addition, adolescents and young people are often treated as a uniform group, facing the same issues and having the same needs; thereby failing to acknowledge the rich diversity of youth and the different realities that young people experience in different contexts around the world. Not taking these issues into consideration risks excluding the most vulnerable groups of adolescents and young people and potentially adolescents and youth all together.
- Adolescents and youth can be strengthened by recognising and supporting the participation of youth organisations. Youth organisations are rarely seen as natural partners or key stakeholders, despite the fact that youth has been recognised as a key group for sustainable development since The Earth Summit in 1992. Youth organisations often have limited financial and human resources to engage in complex policy processes, relying in many cases on the active engagement and leadership of volunteers. To ensure the full and meaningful participation of youth organisations, additional outreach, capacity building, adequate time to ensure consultation with constituencies and financial support might be necessary. Democratic, youth-led organisations are a means through which young people can participate in society and are often the only way in which young people can act and speak as a legitimate, representative voice of youth. The unique dynamic of youth organisations needs to be accounted for and adequately supported when considering how to include youth in policy processes.

