



**ECOSOC  
YOUTH FORUM**

**YOUTH2030**

## **Economic and Social Council Youth Forum**

# **"Accelerating the COVID-19 recovery and full implementation of the 2030 Agenda with and for youth"**

## **SIDE EVENT AT THE 2023 ECOSOC YOUTH FORUM**

### **"Choking in plastic: Addressing water pollution to ensure the right to a healthy environment and the achievement of SDG 6 for youth"**

**Wednesday 26 April 2023, 1:30 - 2:45 p.m. EST**

#### **1. Background**

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in partnership with the UN Department of Global Communications, will hold a virtual youth-led side event to discuss how plastic pollution in water impacts the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment (right to a healthy environment) and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Plastic pollution negatively impacts human health and the environment and compromises our ability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 6, SDG 7, and SDG 3, and to enjoy our human rights. In recent decades several studies have brought to light the risks of plastic pollution to human health through water and food systems. In 2021, UNEP published a global assessment report titled ["From Pollution to Solution"](#) which found that about 80% of total marine litter constitutes plastics which is ingested by marine life, and ends up inside the human body through consuming them. UNEP also published a [technical report](#) in 2020 which looks at potential solutions to address the contamination of drinking water by microplastics.

The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) has considered the topics of the threat of plastic pollution to aquatic ecosystems and access to clean water for almost a decade. These efforts included identifying knowledge gaps, strengthening coordination, and assessing the effectiveness of global and regional governance on the topic. In 2022,

a process towards the development of a legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, was initiated by UNEA.

Plastic pollution not only intoxicates the environment but also creates an impact on human physical well-being through contaminating drinking water and damaging sustainable food systems. The plastics cycle has become a major threat to all human rights, including the rights to a healthy environment, life, health, food, water and sanitation, equality and non-discrimination, and housing.

All people everywhere have the right to a healthy environment as recently recognized by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 48/13 and the General Assembly in its resolution 76/300. The realization of the human right to a healthy environment, which is interlinked with the right to water, is a pathway to addressing plastic pollution and the achievement of the SDGs, including SDG 6. In this context, the panel will consider the opportunities, as well as challenges, presented through advancing implementation of the right to a healthy environment, expectations for the negotiations of the new legally binding instrument on plastics, and the various actions being taken by youth actors to support the achievement of the SDGs, with a focus on SDG 6.

## **2. Objectives of the side event, including relation with the SDGs identified in the Guidelines**

The objectives of the side event are to have an interactive dialogue and to showcase youth-led actions and policy recommendations on how to address plastic pollution in water that ensure the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment and advance the achievement of SDG 6. The side event will bring together youth representatives from different sectors, media personalities, entrepreneurs, and civil society.

## **3. Agenda, format and name of presenters**

1:30 - 1:34 p.m.	Curtain Raiser Video on plastic pollution
1:34 - 1:40 p.m.	Opening by Moderator and introducing the panelists
1:40 - 2:25 p.m.	Panel Conversation
2:25 - 2:40 p.m.	Q & A (The floor opens for participants to react and pose questions to the panelists)
2:40 - 2:45 p.m.	Wrap-up from moderator with social moments Moderator will highlight comments and questions from participants online

### Moderator:

Cairo Eubanks, Co-chair, DCG Civil Society Youth Representatives Steering Committee

### Panelists

- Violet Adhiambo, Champion of Tide Turners Plastic Challenge Badge
- Euphemia Uwandu, Fellow at the Wikimedia Foundation
- Shurabe Mercado, Student at Tecnológico de Monterrey; Certified and trained social and climate activist
- H.E. Ms. Maritza Chan, Permanent Mission of Costa Rica to the United Nations

- David Boyd, Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment

#### **4. Guiding Questions for presentations and discussion**

Panelists will discuss the following questions:

1. How can ensuring the right to a healthy environment contribute to addressing plastic pollution in water?
2. How can young people be involved in addressing plastic pollution in different waterways?
3. Do young people around the world have relevant skills and awareness to address plastic pollution in the ocean, rivers, and freshwater bodies?
4. How can young people influence and change the lifestyle that can lead to plastic pollution-free waterways?
5. How can we improve the ways in which decisions are taken at the intergovernmental level on matters related to addressing plastic pollution and upholding the right to a healthy environment?

#### **6. Platform to be used for virtual side events and Registration link**

The event will take place on Zoom platform. It will also feature social media moments. Join the conversation on #GenerationRestoration and voice your ideas and commitments!

Please find the registration link:

[https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJwuf-6orjloHtBpbDt2t\\_ekZiu7Zs-syX01](https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJwuf-6orjloHtBpbDt2t_ekZiu7Zs-syX01)