



The generation that can change the world – if we let them

In a world where climate change wreaks havoc on our economies, societies and environment, where unemployment and inequalities are rampant and where trust in international cooperation is falling, what can keep us from losing faith that the world 2030 will be a better place for everyone? UN DESA's World Youth Report offers one good reason for optimism: the next generation is different.

"We have come here to let [world leaders] know that change is coming whether they like it or not," was probably the most quoted sentence coming from the recent COP 24 climate conference. It was not uttered by the UN Secretary-General nor by any of the Heads of State and Government, but by a 15-year-old from Sweden, Greta Thunberg, who had sparked a powerful global movement of school strikes for climate action.

Her words are representative of the attitudes of today's young generation. A recent study, conducted in 15 countries worldwide, found that globally, young people are more optimistic about the future than older generations. Despite facing much higher unemployment rates, more instability and lower wages than their predecessors, today's youth are entering adulthood confident that they can build a better future for themselves and for those that follow.

Case studies from all corners of the world, gathered by the World Youth Report, seem to justify young people's optimism. From a youth movement driving climate action across the Arab region to an organization expanding digital literacy among young people in rural Philippines, to a global youth network for sexual and reproductive rights, young people everywhere are indeed stepping in where previous generations have failed.

“The latest UN DESA’s World Youth Report is clear: Young people have the potential to save the world. All we have to do is let them do just that,” said Assistant Secretary-General at UN DESA and UN Chief Economist Elliott Harris. “And that means giving them a fair shot at quality education and decent jobs.”

Sadly, today’s young generation continues to be left behind when it comes to education and employment. According to the World Youth Report, one in four people of secondary-school age are not enrolled in a school and less than half of all young people are participating in the labour market. And even among those that do have a job, one in six live in extreme poverty.

These numbers are more than mere statistics – they stand for squandered potential of millions of people whose capabilities and enthusiasm could have greatly accelerated our progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

Ensuring access to inclusive, quality education is essential for young people’s chances of finding decent work. Quality primary and secondary education are not enough. They should be complemented by affordable technical, vocational and tertiary education that provides youth with relevant skills for employment and entrepreneurship.

If we do want a better future in the year 2030, we have to urgently invest in those who will create it.

For more information: [World Youth Report](#)

HIGHLIGHTS



60 is the new 50: Rethinking ageing in the SDGs era

Blowing out the birthday candles, a newly minted sexagenarian will often think: “But I don’t feel 60.” And demographers back that sentiment with data that documents the remarkable revolution in longevity, which is redefining the meaning of turning 60. In a very real, demographic sense, 60 is the new 50.

According to statistics from UN DESA’s World Population Prospects, new 60-year-olds in high-income countries can expect to live at least another 25 years. As recently as in the 1950s, this was true of 50-year-olds.

All societies in the world are in the midst of this longevity revolution – some are at its earlier stages and some are more advanced. But all will pass through this extraordinary transition, in which survival to age 60 changes from a flip-of-the-coin, 50-50 chance – as was the case in Sweden in the 1880s – to a near certainty at present. What is more, the proportion of adult life spent beyond age 60 increases from less than a quarter to a third or more in most developed countries.

These changes for individuals are mirrored in societal changes. Older persons become the largest demographic group in society – accounting for more than a quarter of the

population. Today, that is true for 15 countries, but UN DESA's Population Division expects that number to grow to 145 countries by the end of the century covering most of the world's population.

Traditionally, the United Nations and most researchers have used measures and indicators on ageing that are mostly or entirely based on people's chronological age, defining older persons as those 60 years and older. This has so far provided a simple, clear and easily replicable way to measure and track various indicators of ageing.

However, there has been increasing recognition that the mortality risks, health status, type and level of activity, productivity, and other socio-economic characteristics of older persons have changed significantly in many parts of the world over the last century, and even more so, over the last several decades. This has led to the development of alternative concepts and measures of ageing to provide different outlooks on the levels and trends of ageing, and to offer a more nuanced appreciation of what ageing means in different contexts.

New measurements and concepts of population ageing have significant implications for measuring living conditions and living arrangements of older persons as well as their contributions to their societies. Further, new measurement approaches impact on the assessment of older persons' needs for social protection and health care, their labour market participation as well as planning for life-long education.

These changes, and the various approaches to understanding and measuring ageing, also carry important implications for the review of long-term, international development goals. These include the objectives highlighted in the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) and, most recently, the 2030 Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

To take stock of these new concepts and methodological approaches to measuring ageing and to assess their applicability and possible implications for policy analysis and policy development at the national and international level, UN DESA's Population Division, the International Institute for Applied System Analysis (IIASA), and Chulalongkorn University, in collaboration with the UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP), are organizing an international expert group meeting on "Measuring population ageing: Bridging Research and Policy". One of the highlights of the event will be a moderated discussion of journalists on the role of media as they inform but also reflect public attitudes and opinions on population ageing.

The meeting will be held in Bangkok, Thailand from 25 to 26 February 2019 and is expected to be attended by about 80-100 government officials, academia, civil society and the media from all over the world.

Interested participants who will not be able to attend the event in person can follow the event via live-stream over the internet.

For more information: [Expert group meeting on "Measuring population ageing: Bridging Research and Policy"](#)



Inclusive social development – essential to achieve the global goals

Social exclusion is connected to all forms of inequality. It affects people’s well-being and deprives them of opportunities and civil representation, which can ultimately push powerless groups into the margins of society. “High and worsening inequality is becoming the defining issue of our time,” said UN DESA’s Under-Secretary-General Liu Zhenmin at a recent meeting

of the General Assembly’s Third Committee. “According to some estimates, the richest one percent of the global population owned 82 percent of stock of wealth in 2017, while the poorest half saw no increase in their wealth.”

“However, rising inequality is not inevitable,” Mr. Liu continued, referencing the important work of the Commission for Social Development and the fact that the priority theme of the Commission’s 57th session will be “Addressing Inequalities and Challenges to Social Inclusion through Fiscal, Wage and Social Protection Policies.”

Taking place at UN Headquarters in New York from 11 to 21 February, the event will feature four high-level panel discussions, general debates, as well as over 45 side events. Organizations accredited to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Member States and UN Agencies will come together to build on the outcomes of the 73rd Session of the UN General Assembly and the past Commission.

In addition to the main theme, the Commission will look closer at the emerging issue of the “Empowerment of people affected by natural and human-made disasters to reduce inequality: Addressing the differential impact on persons with disabilities, older persons and youth.”

There are also two newly added panel discussions – a ministerial forum on social protection and an interactive dialogue on the priority theme – which will allow for an in-depth consultation on topics of interest to the Commission.

The side events will cover a broad range of related issues, such as accountability mechanisms, family policies, youth entrepreneurship and national initiatives in various regions, including Africa, Latin America and Europe. In addition, the NGO Committee on Social Development will host a Civil Society Forum on 15 February to forge partnership among stakeholders.

“The role of this Commission is of crucial importance to providing substantive, engaging, technical and expert advice with concrete and action-oriented policy recommendations to ECOSOC and Member States,” remarked Ms. Sama Salem Poules, Vice-Chair of the Bureau of the Commission’s 57th Session. “Without inclusive social development, there will be no achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.”

Ms. Daniela Bas, Director of UN DESA’s Division for Inclusive Social Development, further stressed that fiscal, wage and social protection policies must be sensitive to the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups in society, such as persons with disabilities, older persons and youth, who are affected by natural and human-made disasters.

The multi-stakeholder panels at this year's Commission will reaffirm the commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by addressing the systemic causes associated with social exclusion and exchanging their views on equitable and inclusive social development.

For more information: 57th Session of the Commission for Social Development (CSocD57)

GET INVOLVED



Take action for a more equal world!

From UN DESA's World Economic Situation and Prospects report to the World Economic Forum in Davos, growing inequalities have been the focus of numerous high-level events and discussions. But as renowned economists and Heads of States battle it out on debate podiums, is there anything that you can do to reduce the inequalities between people?

International fora are attaching increasing attention to inequality, as governments and leaders increasingly realize that inequality is a significant barrier to eradicating poverty, maintaining global economic growth and achieving sustainable development for all. That is why reducing inequalities is a central concept in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, expressed in Sustainable Development Goal 10, but also in the principle of leaving no one behind.

This February, UN Member states and agencies, civil society organization, private sector representatives and experts from all over the world will gather in New York for the UN Commission for Social Development. The Commission will discuss ways of addressing inequalities and improving social inclusion through fiscal, wage and social protection policies.

The Commission will examine social protection policies that have proved to be effective at the national level, in a coherent and integrated way.

You too can get involved and have your say to ensure that vulnerable groups are protected and not left behind. On 15 February 2019, the Commission will hold a Civil Society Forum at the UN Headquarters in New York. Non-governmental organizations have long been a powerful voice in the debate on inequalities and this will be their chance to advocate for social protection for all. See how your organization can participate here: <https://ngosocdev.org/>

Stand up for inclusion! Join the Civil Society Forum, follow the Commission through the live webcast (webtv.un.org) and join the discussion on social media, using #CSocD57.

For more information: 57th Session of the Commission for Social Development



More than words: International year kicks off to protect indigenous languages

Languages play a crucial role in our daily lives. They also make up our unique cultural identities. Yet, of the about 6,700 languages spoken in the world today, 40 percent are at risk of disappearing. Most of them are indigenous languages. And when a language dies, it can mean the end of a community's values and traditions. This is where the 2019 International Year of Indigenous

Languages comes in. UN DESA Voice spoke with Mirian Masaquiza in UN DESA's Division for Inclusive Social Development (DISD), about the year and its mission to protect and preserve the world's indigenous languages.

How many indigenous languages are out there and how can we keep track of them?

"At present, 96 per cent of the world's approximately 6,700 languages are spoken by only 3 per cent of the world's population. The vast majority of the languages that are under threat are indigenous languages, and most of them would disappear.

States are the ones called to keep track on indigenous languages by recognizing the linguistic rights of indigenous peoples and developing language policies to promote and protect indigenous languages. Also, States should ensure that indigenous languages are adequately reflected in censuses and other data collection tools, such as questionnaires, surveys and participatory assessments."

The UN has declared 2019 the International Year of Indigenous Languages. What makes them so important?

"The 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages is very important as it will inspire speakers of indigenous languages to use it in a daily life with pride. Member States and other stakeholders will understand the need to include indigenous languages into specific programmes and activities to promote and protect them. Most importantly, the world will see a revival of a movement that is fighting for the right to use the language of their ancestors.

This international year will continue to raise key issues and concerns associated with indigenous languages on an ad hoc basis. Further, it will be an opportunity to compile and share good practices and tools for language revitalization, considering the different needs based on the different situations of indigenous languages."

What is threatening the indigenous languages?

"I think that globalization, non-recognition of indigenous peoples and the rise of a small number of culturally dominant languages has led to a situation in which, some indigenous peoples do no longer use their indigenous language or no longer transmit it from parents to their children.

We as human beings should care about indigenous languages in the same way as we should care about the loss of the world's variety of plants and animals, its biodiversity."

What can we do to protect them?

"Article 13 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states that indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures and that States shall take effective measures to ensure that this right is protected.

For instance, indigenous peoples should highlight that indigenous languages are intrinsically valuable to their speakers and their cultures, not only as methods of communication but also as repositories of traditional knowledge that are important for understanding and sustaining biological diversity and providing important contributions to sustainable development. Further, promote the cognitive benefits of multilingual and bilingual speakers. These benefits are enjoyed not only by indigenous communities but also by all of society.

States should support the use of indigenous languages by developing incentives for speaking and disseminating indigenous languages beyond schools and language revitalization centres.

The United Nations system should intensify efforts to promote indigenous language preservation and revitalization, as well as education in the indigenous mother tongue."

For more information: [International Year of Indigenous Languages](#)

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT



UN DESA reveals latest global economic trends

The global economy will continue to grow at a steady pace of around 3 percent in 2019 and 2020 amid signs that global growth has peaked. However, a worrisome combination of development challenges could further undermine growth, according to the United Nations World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) 2019, which was launched on 21 January.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres cautioned "While global economic indicators remain largely favourable, they do not tell the whole story." He said the World Economic Situation and Prospects 2019 "raises concerns over the sustainability of global economic growth in the face of rising financial, social and environmental challenges."

Global growth is expected to remain steady at 3.0 per cent in 2019 and 2020, after an expansion of 3.1 per cent in 2018. Growth in the United States is projected to decelerate to 2.5 per cent in 2019 and 2 per cent in 2020, as the impulse from fiscal stimulus in 2018 wanes. Steady growth of 2.0 per cent is projected for the European Union, although risks

are tilted to the downside, including a potential fallout from Brexit. Growth in China is expected to moderate from 6.6 per cent in 2018 to 6.3 per cent in 2019, with policy support partly offsetting the negative impact of trade tensions. Several large commodity-exporting countries, such as Brazil, Nigeria and the Russian Federation, are projected to see a moderate pickup in growth in 2019–2020, albeit from a low base.

However, economic growth is uneven and is often failing to reach where it is most needed. Per capita incomes will stagnate or grow only marginally in 2019 in several parts of Africa, Western Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. Even where per capita growth is strong, economic activity is often driven by core industrial and urban regions, leaving peripheral and rural areas behind. Eradicating poverty by 2030 will require both double-digit growth in Africa and steep reductions in income inequality.

Further clouding the prospects are a confluence of risks with the potential to severely disrupt economic activity and inflict significant damage on longer-term development prospects. These risks include waning support for multilateral approaches; the escalation of trade policy disputes; financial instabilities linked to elevated levels of debt; and rising climate risks, as the world experiences an increasing number of extreme weather events.

The contemporaneous appearance of several important risks endangers efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development—the universally adopted plan containing 17 specific goals to promote prosperity and social well-being while protecting the environment. “Alongside various short-term risks, there is an increasing urgency to deal with much more fundamental problems. What we have hitherto viewed as long-term challenges, such as climate change, have become immediate short-term risks,” emphasized Elliott Harris, UN Chief Economist and Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development.

Strengthening global cooperation is central to advancing sustainable development

The report underscores that strengthening global cooperation is central to advancing sustainable development. The multilateral approach to global policy making is facing significant challenges, including a trend toward greater unilateral actions. Pressures have materialized in the areas of international trade, international development finance and tackling climate change. These threats come at a time when international cooperation and governance are more important than ever—many of the challenges laid out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are global by nature and require collective and cooperative action. Waning support for multilateralism also raises questions around the capacity for collaborative policy action in the event of a widespread global shock.

Global trade tensions pose a threat to the economic outlook

Amid the rise in global trade tensions, global trade growth moderated over the course of 2018, from growth of 5.3 per cent in 2017, to 3.8 per cent. While tensions have materially impacted some specific sectors, stimulus measures and direct subsidies have so far offset much of the direct economic impacts on China and the United States. But a prolonged escalation of trade tensions could severely disrupt the global economy. Directly impacted sectors have already witnessed rising input prices and delayed investment decisions. These impacts can be expected to spread through global value chains, particularly in East Asia. Slower growth in China and the United States could also reduce the demand for commodities, affecting commodity exporters from Africa and Latin America.

An abrupt tightening of global financial conditions could spark financial turmoil

As global financial conditions tighten, an unexpectedly rapid rise in interest rates or a significant strengthening of the US dollar could exacerbate emerging market fragilities, leading to heightened risk of debt distress. This risk can be further aggravated by global trade tensions, monetary policy adjustment in developed economies, commodity price shocks, or domestic political or economic disruptions. Many low-income countries have already experienced a substantial rise in interest burdens. Countries with a substantial amount of dollar-denominated debt, high current account or fiscal deficits, large external financing needs and limited policy buffers are particularly vulnerable to financial stress.

Climate risks still not fully integrated into economic decision-making

A fundamental shift in the way the world powers economic growth is imperative. Economic decision-making must fully integrate the negative climate risks associated with emissions. This can be achieved through tools such as carbon pricing measures, energy efficiency regulations such as minimum performance standards and building codes, and reduction of socially inefficient fossil fuel subsidy regimes. Governments can also promote policies to stimulate new energy-saving technologies, such as research and development subsidies. In countries that remain highly reliant on fossil fuel production, economic diversification is vital.

For more information:

[World Economic Situation and Prospects 2019](#)

[Watch: Press briefing on 21 January 2019](#)

[Watch: Facebook live event on 21 January 2019](#)

Recognizing the role of migration in achieving the global goals



Today, 258 million people are international migrants, living outside their country of birth. They make important contributions to both their host and home countries. For example, in 2017 alone, they sent an estimated \$466 billion in remittances to low- and middle-income countries. International migration makes a critical contribution to sustainable development by raising the productivity of migrant workers and thus increasing the global economic output. In many situations, it also helps to narrow inequalities, reduce vulnerabilities and alleviate the demographic imbalances impact of population ageing.

On the heels of the recent [intergovernmental conference](#) in Marrakech last December, the Population Division of UN DESA will convene researchers and other experts for a one-day symposium on 26 February 2019, to review evidence on interrelations between international migration and development.

Taking place at UN Headquarters in New York, the symposium is being organized in lieu of the annual coordination meeting on international migration, in close coordination with the Office of the President of the General Assembly, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Network on Migration.

The symposium will highlight opportunities for addressing issues related to migration and development during the high-level political forum on sustainable development taking place in July and September 2019, as well as ways and means of improving the collection and use of migration data in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. It will also promote the sharing of information on recent initiatives on international migration and development.

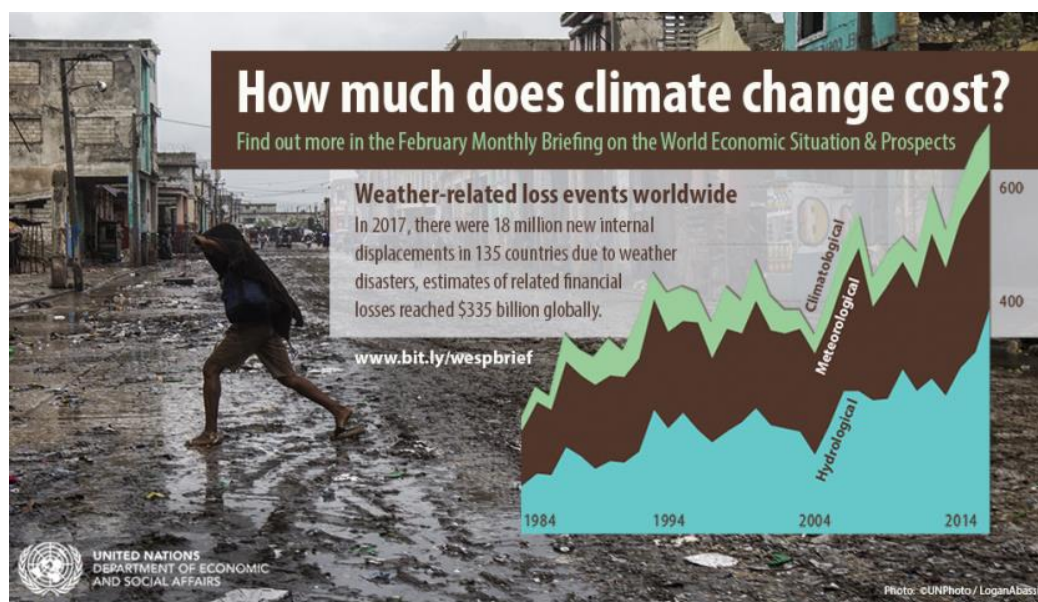
By bringing together experts on international migration from the United Nations system, other intergovernmental organizations, national governments, civil society, academia and the private sector, the expert symposium will offer an opportunity to advance the global discussion and to share practical information about ongoing and anticipated activities on migration and related topics. The event also aims at exploring ways to strengthen the evidence base on international migration, which is crucial for developing and implementing sound policies, dispelling myths and countering xenophobia.

The expert symposium will contribute to the high-level debate on international migration and development to be convened by the President of the General Assembly on Wednesday, 27 February 2019, which will focus on synergies between the SDGs and the Global Compact. On 28 February 2019, IOM will hold this year's first session of the International Dialogue on Migration under the theme "Youth and migration: Engaging youth as key partners in migration governance", bringing the voices of young migrants and agents of change into the global debate.

Photo courtesy of IOM

For more information: Expert Symposium on International Migration and Development

Hooked on carbon – how can we break the habit?



UN DESA's latest *World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP)* report could not be any clearer: the global transition to cleaner energy is not happening fast enough.

After three years of remaining flat, energy-related carbon emissions picked up again in 2017, reaching a new historic high, and preliminary evidence suggests that this worrisome record will be crushed again for 2018. This increase in emissions coincides with robust growth in global GDP – a sure sign that, despite progress on renewable energy sources, the world economy is still very much carbon-dependent.

This spells trouble not only for the climate and the environment, but for every aspect of our lives, including the global economy. The 2019 WESP report warns that climate change, which used to be a long-term economic risk, has now become a very real and direct threat to economic activity and to the livelihoods of millions of people.

According to Munich Re's NatCatSERVICE, the number of weather-related loss events has more than tripled since the 1980s, and 2017 ranked among the top five years with most natural catastrophes. That same year, natural events caused losses estimated at a whopping \$335 billion and, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, displaced 18 million people in 135 countries. Extreme weather continued in 2018, leaving more than 10,000 deaths in its wake.

Things are likely to get worse, warns the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, unless we reduce our carbon pollution by 45 per cent by 2030 and bring it down to 'net zero' by 2050. We can only achieve such dramatic reductions if we decouple our economic growth from carbon emissions or, in other words, if we end our economy's addiction to fossil fuels.

One way to facilitate the required technological and economic transformation is to put a price on carbon pollution. This can be achieved through measures such as emissions taxes or emissions rights trading mechanisms. Fair and equitable carbon pricing would create an incentive for developing innovative low-carbon technologies and generate an additional source of revenue. Governments could redistribute that revenue as social transfers to ease the transition to the low-carbon economy.

Carbon pricing could also help to pay for low-emissions technology and infrastructure and incentivize natural climate solutions, such as reforestation, land-use change and other ecosystem-based approaches. These measures could accelerate efforts towards economic diversification in countries that remain highly reliant on fossil-fuel production.

To learn more about the effects of climate change and its policy challenges, read the February issue of UN DESA's *World Economic Situation and Prospects Monthly Briefing*. Every month, the WESP Monthly Briefing brings you the latest and most relevant information on global economy. Stay tuned!

UPCOMING EVENTS

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 4-5 February,
New York | EGM on Budgeting and Planning in Support of Effective Institutions for the SDGs for the WPSR 2019 |
| 8 February,
New York | Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, 2019 regular session |
| 11-21 February,
New York | 57th Session of the Commission for Social Development (CSocD57) |
| 20 February,
New York | Launch of the World Youth Report on "Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" |
| 27 February,
New York | High-level Debate on International Migration and Development |

FIND US ALSO ON:



© United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
[Unsubscribe](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Privacy Notice](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Copyright](#)