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Panel Statement

ECOSOC after 80: Strategic imperatives for the future

2026 Coordination Segment of the Economic and Social Council

Mr. Jaewon Choi

Executive Director

DMUN Foundation

Thematic Focal Point on International Tax Cooperation
Financing for Development Children and Youth Constituency
Major Group for Children and Youth
(Children and Youth International)

**Statement on behalf of
Major Group for Children and Youth
(Children and Youth International)**

15:00 – 17:45 | 29 January 2026 | ECOSOC Chamber

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Thank you very much for the floor, Mr. Moderator.

Your Excellencies, distinguished colleagues, all protocols observed.

It is truly a great honor to be here today, speaking on behalf of the Major Group for Children and Youth, the mandated constituency engaging over 20,000 youth organisations in over 50 intergovernmental and 200 multistakeholder processes.

I am also 16 years old.

Distinguished colleagues, we meet at a time when multilateralism is under strain, ecological breakdown is accelerating, inequality is widening, and the credibility of international law is being tested in full view of the world. In light of this, ECOSOC must rise to the challenge and provide principled, accountable, and effective multilateralism.

From the perspective of children and youth, allow me to highlight four strategic imperatives for ECOSOC's role in the UN80 process:



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First, ECOSOC and the UN system must protect and expand meaningful participation of all rightsholders and stakeholders. We call for a transparent and inclusive reform process that ensures full, equal, and meaningful participation of civil society and rightsholders across all tracks.

We call for a dedicated civil society track as part of the UN80, co-designed with Major Groups and Other Stakeholders, providing rightsholders with timely access to documentation, regular consultations with the work packages, and opportunities to deliver our inputs in both in person and hybrid means.

This must build on the model seen in Agenda 2030 negotiations, the mid-term review of the Sendai Framework and the Stockholm+50 process in the principle of no regression. The MGOS coordination mechanism has already shared concrete proposals on this with Mr. Ryder's office.

Second, ECOSOC and the UN must not let demands for budget efficiency hollow out its essential, mandated functions. While noting the very pressing concerns of financial liquidity, we suggest that any



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restructuring exercise must be done on the fundamental basis of what functions should be enhanced and retained.

Programmatic initiatives affecting marginalized groups and UN staff that engage with youth and civil society must be retained in any restructuring. In the context of ECOSOC, this must mean strengthening DESA and its ability to carry out the development agenda.

Additionally, any reform must strengthen the self-organised youth and civil society mechanisms and convening linked to that avenue, which, for ECOSOC includes the CSW Youth Forum, the ICPD Youth Platform, the FfD CSO engagement modalities.

Third, when it comes to mandate implementation review, we welcome the work being done under the ad hoc working group. We however strongly caution against reopening any core gender and human rights mandates as part of mandate implementation review.

Normative frameworks like the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Convention on the Rights of the Child, World Programme of Action for Youth and others are and should not be time-bound programmes, but



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foundational global commitments that must be protected and upheld.

Therefore, we suggest adding a clear principle of no regression as part of any future mandate assessments.

Finally, ECOSOC reforms cannot only be based on the past and budget constraints. Currently, we are missing holistic impact assessments across peace and security, humanitarian matters, and development on what proposed restructuring may lead to. This should be built in as part of the UN80 exercise.

Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues, as we look to the next 80 years of ECOSOC our North Star should be this simple question: Does this Council bring the United Nations closer or farther from the people it exists to serve?

I thank you.



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Final Reflection

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Thank you very much for giving me the floor again.

First, let me express my deep appreciation to you, Mr. Moderator, for your tireless facilitation of this exceptional panel, and my fellow panelists for their insightful remarks.

Distinguished colleagues, I think our discussion today has given us one very important and universal imperative: ECOSOC must change— The UN must as well.

But in the context of these reforms, the Council's attention cannot be consumed by administrative and logistical discussions when humanity needs principled, accountable, and effective multilateralism more than ever.

ECOSOC and UN reform must operate within rights-based guardrails that maintain accountability in all aspects of its governance. As we consider restructuring and merging subsidiary bodies of this Council, we must require explicit safeguards for transparency and effective civil society participation.



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Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues, Mr. Vice President, the Charter of the United Nations does not begin with “We the Member States,” but “We the people.”

Effective and meaningful reforms to this Council must demonstrate to all peoples of the United Nations that their voices, including the voices of even a 16 year old like me, are meaningfully represented and reflected.

I thank you.