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Major Group for
Children and Youth
the space for children and youth in the United Nations



Financing for Development
Children & Youth Constituency

Messages On Behalf of Youth

Ministerial Opening

The High-level Segment of the Economic and Social Council,
including the three-day ministerial segment of the High-level
Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)

Mr. Jaewon Choi

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

Executive Director
DMUN Foundation

10:00 - 11:00 | 13 July 2026 | General Assembly Hall

AS DELIVERED

Mr. President,

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished Heads of Government,

Heads of State, Ministers, Guests, and Colleagues,

All protocols observed.

My name is Jaewon Choi, and I speak today on behalf of the Major Group for Children and Youth, or MGCY; the designated youth constituency at the UN, engaging more than 20,000 youth organizations in over 50 UN processes.

But I also speak as a 17-year-old young person.

Earlier this April, thousands of young people gathered for the ECOSOC Youth Forum. Even right now, at HLPF, over 400 young people, with more than 150 of them being children, are present.

I have the great honour of carrying their countless voices and messages, in all their diversity, to this hall today.

But the children and youth I represent, for the most part, never had the opportunity to be in this building.

They are in classrooms that may not open next term. They are in fields that flooded last year that once again flood. They are in lines for jobs that were promised and never realized. They continue to be silenced and targeted by ongoing conflicts across the world.

No generation is less represented in this hall. No generation is more affected by the consequences of what this institution decides.

Please allow me to deliver the following messages from children and youth.

First, on the future of multilateralism.

Excellencies, we live in a world of interconnected crises— climate change, armed conflict, debt distress, rising living costs, and technological divides, among others— are compounded by an increasingly fragmented multilateral system. Addressing these requires a renewed commitment to multilateralism.

When UN75 took place just 5 years ago, it gave children and youth hope for renewed multilateralism and led to the launch of *Our Common Agenda*. UN80 cannot strip away that hope.

We call for the reformation of the international financial architecture, which is mortgaging our generations. When countries suffering from debt sacrifice our education to make repayments, they spend the potential of an entire generation on budget balancing.

On the road to the 2027 SDG Summit, we call for the launch of an intergovernmental process towards a UN Convention on Sovereign Debt as a prerequisite for fast-tracking Agenda 2030 and any post-2030 framework.

We must also urgently reform the decision-making processes of the international financial institutions and provide young people and stakeholders with designated seats on the boards of multilateral development banks.

We call for an ambitious Security Council reform, while initiating structured engagement of civil society in the Security Council. We further call for UN80 Peace and Security provisions to strengthen prevention, mediation, and sustaining peace.

Let's make one thing clear: any reforms or mergers must be guided by what functions need to be preserved and strengthened, not simply by which structures or bodies survive the cuts. We call for stakeholder engagement functions and programmatic initiatives that deliver last-mile results to be protected and further strengthened.

On the specific UN80 work packages, we call for the proposed DESA realignments under Work Packages 7 and 13 to strengthen its normative and analytical role on sustainable development.

Under Work Package 9, the proposed Human Rights Group must reinforce - rather than weaken - the independence of the human rights system.

Any configuration involving UN Women and UNFPA should be evidence-based and safeguard commitments on sexual and reproductive health and rights. We echo the concerns of the feminist community that strongly discourage this merger.

UN Data Commons should ensure governance that includes stakeholders, integration of citizen-generated and disaggregated data.

Work Packages 6 and 12 on the Regional Reset and Regional Integrated Platforms must be driven by the needs of Member States, rather than donor priorities.

Let us protect the mandates that keep the UN so close to the people it is meant to serve. So-called efficiency that severs this organization from young people, women, indigenous peoples, and civil society is nothing more but mere retreat.

Second, in addition to the recommendations on SDG 17, for other goals under review this year, children and youth call for the following:

Under SDG 6, we call for accelerated action on universal access to safe water and sanitation, while ensuring meaningful youth engagement through a dedicated youth forum at the 2026 UN Water Conference.

Under SDG 7, we call for a just and equitable energy transition, expanded renewable energy, and universal energy access; and we call upon member states to enshrine this by establishing a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Under SDG 9, we call for resilient infrastructure, inclusive digital development, and stronger global governance of artificial intelligence.

Under SDG 11, we call for renewed implementation of the New Urban Agenda to build inclusive, resilient, and sustainable cities, with meaningful participation of local communities and youth.

Additionally, we welcome this year's GA review of ECOSOC and the HLPF, which strengthens the HLPF through a more holistic review of the SDGs starting next year, further institutionalizes the role of Major Groups and other Stakeholders, and enhances the Voluntary National Review cycle, reflecting many of the priorities long advocated by children and youth.

Third, for the Pact for the Future.

Nearly two years after its adoption, I think we can all say with confidence that where meaningful and true partnerships have been realized, the Pact delivered.

Youth constituencies co-designed the Global Youth Investment Platform, revitalized the UN Youth Fund, and are working alongside the Secretariat to produce the Second Progress Study on Youth, Peace, and Security. The Major Groups and Other Stakeholders are at the table in negotiations of the Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation. And the Global Digital Compact has begun to integrate international AI Governance to the wider technology facilitation mechanism.

Excellencies, this is the difference between consultation and partnership. In these examples, stakeholders and rightsholders did not simply react to decisions but helped shape and implement them.

However, the implementation across the Pact's fifty-six actions remains disparate. We still await clarity on certain actions, including the reform of the international financial architecture under Action 47, the security council reform on actions 39 and 40, action 50 on the credit rating agencies, and action 54 on the strengthening of international responses to complex global shocks.

We welcome the intergovernmental process launched for beyond GDP but calls upon that process to focus on uptake and integration of these metrics under the debt and economic frameworks.

Furthermore, as the 2028 stocktake for the Pact quickly approaches, we need a transparent implementation and reporting framework that covers all fifty-six actions, co-created with rightsholders and major groups and other stakeholders at the table.

Finally, and most importantly, on meaningful engagement.

Excellencies, a revitalized UN must institutionalize meaningful youth and rightsholders engagement across all pillars of its peace and security, sustainable development, human rights, and humanitarian action.

As outlined in the *Principles and Barriers for Meaningful Youth Engagement* document, youth engagement must be self-organised, legally mandated, rights-based, designated, well-resourced, and accountable.

Member States should provide financial support to and systematically consider the recommendations emerging from over 30 youth constituencies and more than 20 recurring youth forums across UN processes, which includes the Youth Environment Assembly, the Migration Youth Forum, and regional youth forums ahead of the Regional Forums for Sustainable Development, just to name a few.

We must recognize the unique value of the ECOSOC Youth Forum. Co-organized by more than 100 UN entities and youth constituencies, and at a time when UN80 is focused on efficiency, the youth forum is a primary case that demonstrates the UN System delivering as one.

Let us also not forget that true development is not implemented in this hall. It is implemented by frontline communities, especially young people who serve them—most of whom work without salaries, without funding, without recognition.

We therefore call for the establishment of a Local Community Fund for Sustainable Development to provide direct support to civil society organizations.

We also call for the systematic use of existing self-organized mechanisms whenever new UN processes are initiated and institutionalising of the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders across the work of the UN.

Excellencies, only four years remain until 2030, and barely one third of the measurable targets of Agenda 2030 are on track.

Arms expenditure is rising with thousands of children, youth and women impacted by the ongoing conflicts. At the same time, the social budgets that billions depend on, for schools, for clinics, for protection, are mercilessly cut.

Behind every one of those budget cuts is a young person whose future has just been assaulted. The stark inequalities in delivery lay bare as solidarity in international cooperation declined. This gap will not, and never, close on its own.

Dear friends, eighty years ago, when the negotiators of the San Francisco Conference drafted the preamble to the United Nations Charter they began the Charter with “We the people.”

Not “we the Ministers.”

Not “we the Governments.”

Not, “we the Member States.”

But “we the Peoples of the United Nations.”

As we look towards the next 80 years of the United Nations, let us remember: the demands that you hear today are from young people is not a “wish list”. It is the essential requirements of the reform that this milestone requires.

Young people have already made their choice.

We choose inclusion. We choose multilateralism.

Because when the Charter, I quote, “determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war” they meant us: young people.

And therefore, when history asks what became of that determination at eighty: let us not reply with excuses through actions.

Do not simply listen to us. Respond, deliver, and act with us.

I thank you very much.

END OF STATEMENT