



*The Permanent Mission of Portugal
to the United Nations*



Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka
to the United Nations



International
Labour
Organization



United Nations
Youth Office

World Youth Skills Day 2024

Youth Skills for Peace and Sustainable Development

New York, 15 July 2024

Virtual event, 10:00 am – 11:30 am EST

Background

Ten years ago, in December 2014, the United Nations General Assembly established World Youth Skills Day as to emphasize the critical importance of equipping young people with essential skills for employment, decent work, and entrepreneurship, as well as for addressing global challenges and advancing sustainable development.

2024 marks a significant milestone to reflect on the transformative progress made in youth skills development over the past decade, but also the gaps that remain and the challenges that still need to be addressed, in the context of a constantly evolving world of work. The international community has amplified its efforts to bridge the gap between education and employment, adapting to rapid technological advancements and shifting economic priorities.

Today's youth face increasing challenges that threaten not only their individual futures but also the overall peace and stability of societies around the world. Among the most disruptive of these challenges are conflicts, whose induced polarization renders educational and training environments unsafe and inaccessible, puts a break to job creation, and weakens the enabling environment for young workers and young entrepreneurs to thrive. Conflicts contribute to cycles of violence and instability, impacting young people's ability to contribute to their communities. Additionally, youth today must navigate an increasingly divided online environment where hate speech, cyberbullying and disinformation campaigns are prevalent, further disrupting their social interactions and undermining their mental well-being.

At the same time, expectations towards a workplace free from harassment, violence and conflict have gained momentum. In many workplaces, gender-based violence and harassment are no long tolerated. The ILO RC190 - Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) details actions member states are expected to take to protect workers from violence and harassment. The convention is particularly important for young people that have often less negotiating power in their job experiences.

Skills development where peace is adequately mainstreamed is an important part of the answer to conflicts. Skills development interventions strengthen mutual understanding and trust between groups. Skills development also increases young people's employability reducing conflict around the control of income generating assets; skills development can also address grievances and perceptions



of injustice. The goal is therefore to equip young people affected by conflict with market relevant technical skills, including the skills demanded by the digital and green economies; core skills including social and emotional learning (SEL) skills to build up agency, resilience, empathy; interpersonal skills, and the skills to effectively engage in the peace and security agenda.

The recent report by the Secretary-General on Youth and Peace and Security highlights the need to promote youth inclusion in peace and security and calls on member states and regional organizations to provide young people with the necessary skills and knowledge for engaging in peace processes, conflict prevention, climate justice, and peacebuilding. Similarly, UNESCO's "Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights, and Sustainable Development" provides guidance on education and skills development efforts for young people to become agents of change and lead efforts toward a more peaceful, just and inclusive future. Additionally, the Youth Declaration on Transforming Education calls for a comprehensive education framework based on peace and human rights and urges decision-makers to establish a safe learning environment, free from all forms of violence and discrimination.

Reflecting on progress around the World Youth Skills Day 2024 and setting directions for future initiatives, the international community's commitment to empowering youth with comprehensive skills for peace and sustainable development is crucial, particularly as young people are at the forefront of global efforts in shaping a peaceful, prosperous, sustainable and inclusive future. This ongoing commitment ensures that the educational strides we make are not only maintained but also adapted to meet the evolving challenges and opportunities of our global society.

Objectives

To celebrate this milestone, the Permanent Missions of Portugal and Sri Lanka to the United Nations, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the International Labour Organization, and the United Nations Youth Office are convening a virtual panel discussion to:

- Review effective practices and interventions to advance skills development that enables youth to contribute actively to peace and sustainable development.
- Highlight youth's contribution to the acceleration of the achievement of the SDGs especially those related to skills and decent work for peace and resilience,
- Highlight the positive experiences and skills of young people that have contributed to a workplace free from violence and harassment.
- Explore ways to foster social and emotional learning into education and training systems to equip youth with skills for empathy, resilience, and conflict resolution.
- Explore ways to foster global citizenship education and integrate it in curricula at all levels of education, including TVET, to enhance understanding of global issues and empower youth to act as agents of change.