Why is the Youth Forum being held?

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is organizing a virtual Youth Forum on “Countering Corruption through Collaboration: Youth Perspectives and Engagement” (the Youth Forum).

The Youth Forum is a special event that will directly contribute to the United Nations Special Session of the General Assembly (UNGASS) on challenges and measures to prevent and combat corruption and strengthen international cooperation, to be held from 2 to 4 June 2021 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

The United Nations is committed to empowering youth and facilitating youth engagement at all levels, in line with the UN Youth Strategy. Young people also tend to be particularly affected by corruption which affects employment prospects and a decent future, and impedes access to basic services, education, health care. At the same time, young people around the world play a crucial role in developing and implementing innovative, creative anti-corruption efforts.

This Youth Forum therefore aims to invite young people to jointly share their experiences, ideas and creativity about how to curb corruption, thereby advancing young people’s contributions to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions.

Through the Youth Forum, young people will be able to directly contribute to policy discussions about preventing and countering corruption at the United Nations by participating in a series of thematic virtual roundtable discussions addressing the effects of corruption on young people, as well as the importance and value of youth engagement in preventing and countering this crime.
What is the mandate for the Youth Forum?

The United Nations Special Session of the General Assembly on challenges and measures to prevent and combat corruption, and strengthen international cooperation, will be held pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 73/191 and 74/276. General Assembly resolution 74/276 encouraged “the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, subject to the availability of extrabudgetary resources, to organize a youth forum to discuss ways for young people to contribute to efforts to prevent and counter corruption, and invites a youth forum representative, selected by the President of the General Assembly, to participate in the special session, including through the delivery of a statement on the outcome of the discussions at the youth forum, during the opening segment of the special session” (“the Youth Forum Summary Statement”).

Accordingly, the main elements and ideas discussed at this Youth Forum will be directly communicated to Heads of State and Government through the Youth Forum Summary Statement to be delivered by the youth forum representative during the opening segment of UNGASS itself. The Youth Forum Summary Statement will also be shared on the UNGASS website and transmitted to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. Further details about the preparatory process for the Youth Forum Summary Statement are listed below.

What is the context of the Youth Forum?

Corruption is a complex social, political and economic phenomenon that affects all countries and hinders the rule of law. It undermines democratic institutions, erodes economies, contributes to political instability and impairs the ability of governments to function effectively and provide the critical services that their citizens need. Corruption hinders sustainable development and respect for human rights. Addressing corruption in society is linked to the promotion of individual and social integrity. Many everyday situations challenge integrity and ethical judgement, from skipping a line to using a position to gain undue advantage.

Corruption affects all categories of populations, including young people. Everyone can play a part in preventing corruption by acting with personal integrity and making ethical choices. In this regard, citizen and youth participation is critical to countering corruption.

It is important that our future leaders have an enhanced understanding of the negative societal and economic impacts of corruption, including on their own generation. The Youth Forum will therefore provide an opportunity to discuss the multi-faceted ways in which corruption is affecting young people, and how the international community can come together to increase a shared understanding of these effects and how to shape a corruption-free environment.

The Youth Forum is also taking place at a time when the world is struggling to respond to the multi-faceted challenges of COVID-19. Corruption thrives in times of crisis and the ongoing pandemic has been no exception. As UN Secretary-General António Guterres has put it, “the response to the virus is creating new opportunities to exploit weak oversight and inadequate transparency, diverting funds away from people in their hour of greatest need”: UN Secretary-General’s Statement on Corruption in the Context of COVID-19, 15 October 2020.
As we continue to battle with COVID-19, and embark on a Decade of Action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the Youth Forum will invite reflections on how the pandemic and its management are presenting new opportunities for corruption, and the impact this is having on the youth of today.

The multidimensional nature of corruption can only be addressed by a whole-of-society approach that engages young people as partners and a rich source of creative ideas, as well as drivers of changes in attitudes and behaviour. Around the world, youth-led civil society organizations and individuals are providing a unique contribution in preventing and countering corruption. Young people often offer creative, innovative solutions, and may be best able to mobilize their peers in resisting corrupt practices. The Youth Forum will therefore provide an opportunity to share, and celebrate, the many positive examples of youth engagement in the fight against corruption.

As noted, the Youth Forum is also being held to contribute to the UNGASS against corruption taking place on 2-4 June 2021. UNGASS will provide a unique opportunity for Governments and the international community to take stock of global efforts and commitments, and identify solutions to common challenges in preventing and countering corruption.

The political declaration, expected to be adopted during the UNGASS, is anticipated to cover a wide range of thematic areas ranging from prevention to criminalization and law enforcement, international cooperation and asset recovery, relevant cross-cutting issues, as well as forward-looking, innovative approaches on how the international community can advance the global fight against corruption, including harnessing young people’s potential to act as multipliers when translating the joint commitments into practical and actionable measures.

What are the objectives of the Youth Forum?

The Youth Forum will enable young people to reflect on how the international community can engage with youth in the design of future anti-corruption policy responses. It intends to provide a platform to drive an intergenerational (and multisectoral) dialogue on amplifying youth-led actions and enhancing youth engagement in anti-corruption efforts around the globe.

The Youth Forum is also intended to empower and inspire youth organizations and representatives to initiate and scale up their anti-corruption activities, and to discuss anti-corruption matters with their peer youth from all regions globally as well as international and regional organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector. Participants will be encouraged to connect with each other using the Youth Forum hashtags on social media, as outlined in the communication strategy below.
What is the format of the Youth Forum?

Due to COVID-19 and anticipated continued restrictions in May 2021 on holding in-person gatherings at the United Nations Headquarters, the Youth Forum will be held in a fully virtual format. This will provide the possibility for a larger audience to connect virtually from around the world and participate in the Forum discussion sessions.

The Youth Forum will be divided into a series of sessions over three days. It will begin on Monday 24 May 2021 with a high-level opening, featuring remarks by the United Nations Secretary-General (TBC), the President of the General Assembly (TBC), the Executive Director of UNODC, and the UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth.

The high-level opening will be followed by a virtual roundtable discussion. Two further virtual roundtable discussions will be held on Tuesday 25 and Wednesday 26 May, as well as a concluding session directly after the last roundtable discussion. Further details about these roundtable discussions are contained in the Youth Forum Programme.

During the interactive sessions, moderators will engage with panellists and the audience, including by raising pertinent questions related to the various themes to be addressed. When registering for the Youth Forum, participants are invited to pose particular questions and priority issues they would like to see addressed during the roundtable discussions.

Due to the need to hold the event within existing resources, as outlined in General Assembly resolution 74/276, the Forum will be held in English, without interpretation.

What will be the outcome of the Youth Forum?

As noted above, through resolution 74/276, the General Assembly “invited a youth forum representative, selected by the President of the General Assembly, to participate in the UNGASS special session, including through the delivery of a statement on the outcome of the discussions at the youth forum, during the opening segment of the special session”.

The Youth Forum Summary Statement will be prepared in the days between the Youth Forum and the UNGASS by the youth forum representative, selected by the President of the General Assembly. To assist the youth forum representative in preparing the Youth Forum Summary Statement, UNODC will allocate two youth rapporteurs to each of the roundtable discussions to prepare a summary of the discussions. There will therefore be six youth rapporteurs in total from geographically diverse locations.

Furthermore, roundtable 3 is intended as a dedicated forward-looking session during which participants will have a specific opportunity to suggest particular priorities they would like to see reflected in the Youth Forum Summary Statement.

This Statement is expected to serve as a direct call from young people on the current challenges they see in preventing and countering corruption, as well as their expectations of the international community in addressing the crime during UNGASS and beyond. The Youth Forum Summary Statement will also be posted on the UNGASS website as well as UNODC’s Twitter and Facebook pages, and transmitted to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

https://ungass2021.unodc.org  #unitedagainstcorruption #youth2030
Who can participate in the Youth Forum?

The Youth Forum intends to bring together young people, as well as youth organizations and experts in corruption from wide and diverse background and countries. As there will not be interpretation, participants will need to be able to communicate in English. Registration for the Youth Forum is open to the following personnel / organizations:

- **Individual Young Person** (a single individual age 30 and below who wants to attend the Forum in a personal capacity and not on behalf of an organization)
- **Individual Person** (a single individual age 31+ who wants to attend the Forum in a personal capacity, not on behalf of an organization, due to particular expertise in the field e.g. academic)
- **Youth-led Organization** (an organization run by youth, age 30 and below)
- **Youth or anti-corruption-focused Organization** (an organization run by adults, age 30+ working on relevant youth / corruption issues)
- **Regional or international organization** working on relevant youth / corruption issues

How can I register for the Youth Forum?

Registration for the event is now closed. Details to connect to the event will be circulated to registered participants by **Friday 21 May 2021**.

What is the communication strategy for the Youth Forum?

The Youth Forum will take place virtually through an online platform. It will be publicized on UNODC’s social media platforms, including Twitter and Facebook. Participants are encouraged to use the hashtags #UnitedAgainstCorruption and #Youth2030 to engage in a dialogue about the Youth Forum through social media. UNODC will mobilize the UN system prior to, and during, the Forum to advertise it throughout their networks and social media platforms.

Additional information about communications will be shared in the logistical information note.