

Concept Note

Youth-Led Digital Innovations for Sustainable Development and Climate Action in Asia and the Pacific

80th Commission Session

Date: 23 April 2024, 17:30-18:30 (GMT +7)

Location: In-person (Meeting Room A, [United Nations Conference Centre](#), Bangkok) and online (Zoom)

Organizers: United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Youth Empowerment in Climate Action Platform (YECAP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Regional Collaboration Centre (UNFCCC RCC) Asia and the Pacific, and the Asia-Pacific Issue-based Coalition on Raising Ambitions on Climate Action.

Event Page: <https://bit.ly/4cV7Y7t>

About

This side event of the 80th Commission Session on "Youth-Led Digital Innovations for Sustainable Development and Climate Action in Asia and the Pacific" will bring together regional youth, policymakers, and other participants to highlight existing and emerging youth-led digital innovations for the SDGs and climate action in Asia and the Pacific, including applications of artificial intelligence. It will also build off the dialogue and messages from relevant events such as the Asia-Pacific regional session of the ECOSOC Youth Forum and the concurrent YECAP Regional Dialogue on Youth Empowerment.

Furthermore, this side event will explore how governments can work with and support youth-led digital innovations, while also closing the gender digital divide, in the necessary spirit of cooperation across the whole of society and in the interest of better leveraging solutions. Given the nature of the topic, this side event aims to do this in an engaging and interactive format, will have in-person and online attendance options, and will be open to all Commission Session participants and other interested persons.

Background

The [eightieth session](#) of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) will be held from 22 to 26 April 2024 at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok, Thailand. It will be guided by the theme "Leveraging digital innovation for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific" and will be an opportunity to strengthen

region-wide cooperative action on leveraging digital innovation for the accelerated implementation of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).

The session will bring together government leaders and ministers from across Asia and the Pacific, as well as other key stakeholders, to discuss how digital innovation can more inclusively contribute to the achievement of the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) across multiple disciplines. Meanwhile, when discussing key stakeholders in this context, youth must be considered among them.

As the world rapidly approaches a more dynamic and complex future, the limitless potential of youth remains constant. With multiple global crises continuing to exacerbate poverty and disparities, a collective and intergenerational solidarity is needed more than ever. In these challenging times, youth are essential innovators and agents of change; their brave ideas, bold action, digital literacy, and genuine excitement and commitment are strong indicators that they are poised to overcome any barriers that stand in the way of achieving the SDGs, especially SDG 13 on climate action. Youth are at the forefront of the climate crisis, and it is estimated that over 400 million young people in the Asia-Pacific region are currently affected by climate change, with this number expected to increase in the coming years.

Yet, young people remain at the margins and youth-led innovations tend to be under-resourced and overlooked, and their unique talents, creativity, contemporary and tech-savvy approaches, and entrepreneurial spirit continue to be a relatively untapped resource. Many young people across Asia and the Pacific, especially young women and girls, are also struggling to access quality education, green skills development, decent employment opportunities (especially in rural areas), and resources to develop and implement solutions. Furthermore, given the rapid aging of the population in the region, and since the youth of today will be the future of tomorrow, it is important to focus on harmonious and supportive intergenerational relations.

Fortunately, the role of youth as innovators for climate action and the SDGs has been receiving greater attention and countless youth-led digital innovations have emerged, as evidenced by engagement with the work of [Youth Co:Lab](#) (co-led by UNDP and Citi Foundation), [YECAP](#), and Youth Digitalization for Employability and Entrepreneurship Program (YDEEP), co-led by UNDP. Furthermore, the energy and ingenuity of youth solutions, and the appetite to support them, was confirmed at the recent 11th Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) [Youth Climathon](#), which saw the ideation/development of 27 innovative climate action solutions and paved the way for a high-level demonstration of Asia-Pacific youth climate action innovation.

The APFSD Youth Climathon was itself in response to the 79th Commission Session [youth statement](#) which called for meaningful partnerships with young people and support for their development and access to opportunities. At the same time the Youth Climathon coincided with the annual preparatory APFSD Youth Forum, whose 2024 [Asia-Pacific Youth Call to Action](#) numerously mentions fostering a “culture of innovation,” which is both a priority for and a strength of youth.

****Digital technology** refers to technology that utilizes digital data (expressed as a series of the digits 0 and 1) that is processed, transmitted, and stored electronically. This can include the internet, computers, cameras/sensors, and other devices, with **artificial intelligence**—the simulation of intelligence by machines, especially computer systems—also playing an important and emerging role.*

Event Objectives

This side event will:

- Present the messages from the [11th APFSD](#), the Asia-Pacific regional session of the ECOSOC Youth Forum, and the concurrent [YECAP Regional Dialogue on Youth Empowerment](#).
- Highlight existing and emerging youth-led digital innovations for the SDGs in Asia and the Pacific, with an emphasis on climate action and artificial intelligence.
- Explore how governments can work with and support youth-led digital innovations.
- Discuss the ways to bridge the gender digital divide and leave no one behind.

Event Agenda

Total time: 60 minutes

| Time | Title |
|-------------|---|
| 17:30-17:35 | Opening Remarks |
| 17:35-17:40 | Messages from the 11th APFSD, ECOSOC Youth Forum, and YECAP Regional Dialogue |
| 17:40-18:25 | Youth-led Digital Innovations: Panel discussion and interactive session |
| 18:25-18:30 | Closing Remarks |

Who Can Participate

This side event is open onsite and online (hybrid) to all participants of the 80th Commission Session and for other interested persons. Please register accordingly (see below).

Registration

For **all** registrants, please register using the form here: <https://bit.ly/youthledinnovation>

- For **onsite attendance**, please register by 10 April and, to access the United Nations Conference Centre, you **must also register** on the United Nations Indico system by 10 April here, selecting the final option “Registration for Others”:
<https://indico.un.org/event/1007591/registrations/>

*Please note that this will require creating an Indico account if you do not already have one.

- For **online attendance**, you will be sent the meeting link and further instructions after registering.

Contact

For any questions or for more information, please contact:

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