

## **Thirteenth session of the IRENA Assembly**

### **2023 IRENA Youth Forum: The New Generation of Decision Makers “Empowering Youth to Lead an Equitable Energy Transition for a Sustainable Future”**

13 January 2023, 13:30 – 15:30 GST  
St. Regis Hotel, Saadiyat Island, Abu Dhabi

#### ***Background***

Youth are uniquely threatened and impacted by the lack of access to energy and the effects of climate crisis; however, as important actors in raising awareness and providing ambitious and innovative solutions worldwide, youth have successfully brought increased urgency to the international public debate on sustainable development, climate action and an equitable energy transition. A global effort to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 7 (SDG7), zero net emissions and limit global warming to 1.5°C by 2050 requires policymakers, financiers, project developers and youth to partner on solutions and planning. In order to create an enabling environment for these joint efforts, young people, particularly those from vulnerable groups, need access to the skills, opportunities, networks and resources to be empowered as leaders on an equitable energy transition.

IRENA recognises the critical role of youth at every level of planning and decision-making for universal energy access and an inclusive, sustainable and climate-resilient future. Through specialised youth strategies, educational programs and convening events, IRENA offers platforms for youth to amplify their voice and find, create and implement solutions to accelerate an equitable energy transition.

IRENA strategically engages youth through various initiatives that follow the vision of empowering young leaders, and since 2020, has hosted its annual Youth Forum, a platform for an innovative dialogue between youth and global pioneers on the role of youth in accelerating the realisation of an equitable energy transition.

The 2023 edition of the IRENA Youth Forum will bring together young people from different countries and backgrounds to discuss the theme "Empowering Youth to Lead an Equitable Energy Transition for a Sustainable Future," in line with the theme of the 13<sup>th</sup> Session of the IRENA Assembly "World Energy Transition – The Global Stocktake".

#### ***Objectives***

“By the youth for the youth” is the approach taken by IRENA in designing this fourth edition of the IRENA Youth Forum. Recognizing the importance of listening to youth, giving them the leadership to self-determine their needs, and to provide them with a “seat at the table”, IRENA decided to entrust the design of the Forum to youth. This was done by setting up a working group, soliciting input from IRENA members of the [Global Council on Enabling Youth Action for SDG 7](#), and creating a pre-forum survey to gather youth perspectives and recommendations.

Youth from around the world and from different backgrounds responded to the survey and emphasised the necessity of involving youth in policy making processes, creating capacity building opportunities for youth including equipping them with technical skills, ensuring gender equity for an equitable energy transition, and enabling local, national, regional and global cooperation.

Within this context, the main objectives of the IRENA Youth Forum are to identify (1) ways to meaningfully engage youth in energy policy and decision making at the local, regional, and global levels, and (2) identify the enabling conditions to support youth initiatives that accelerate universal energy access and a sustainable, resilient and equitable energy transition.

The IRENA Youth Forum will highlight how youth can be involved at different levels of energy policy for a just and inclusive energy transition as the New Generation of Decision Makers. The Forum will connect youth with opinion leaders, government officials, parliamentarians and legislators, peers and IRENA experts to identify ways to further engage in energy policy.

Participants of the 2023 edition of the IRENA Youth Forum will be empowered to promote and ask for greater youth participation in energy policy and encourage public and private sector leaders to commit to creating enabling conditions for youth to act. Youth participants will bring new ideas and insights to the Forum on what young people are calling for from leaders for a sustainable and equitable energy transition, how they want to be involved in policy design and implementation, and what a youth-inclusive approach to introducing finance and policy mechanisms looks like in practice.

### *Topics and Thematic Questions*

#### **1. Youth involvement in energy policy at different levels**

- How to involve youth in policy formulation, agenda setting, implementation and evaluation?
- Where can youth play roles as policy makers themselves, analysts and researchers, stakeholders and citizens, and influencers and advocates?

#### **2. Financing mechanisms that can be put in place to support the emergence of youth-led clean energy solutions and initiatives**

- Identifying effective policies to finance youth projects and the structure needed to allow youth to access these mechanisms.
- What does youth-inclusive finance look like in existing climate and energy transition funds?
- Mapping the barriers and opportunities for youth in accessing different financial mechanisms (concessional finance, grants and contributions, investment, repayable loans, etc.). Unpacking the stages and project-types that best fit each mechanism and the strategies youth can use to most effectively access the right finance for them.

#### **3. Capacity building opportunities for youth**

- Identifying the formal and non-formal education and technical vocational training needed to access jobs and opportunities in the energy transition.
- Examining existing research on energy transition jobs, from IRENA, to Power for All, to LinkedIn and ILO, to Student Energy's work with Orsted — where are the gaps and what is the projected growth in job opportunities for youth?

- Identifying Just Transition Principles and how they apply to youth and capacity-building opportunities that give them access to secure livelihoods. Can Just Transition principles and approaches to energy policy design be used to develop youth-inclusive, capacity-building policies with governments?
- What are the ideal roles played by workplace development programs, formal education and civil society? What supports do they need or how do they need to change to be fit for purpose?

#### **4. Leaving no youth behind**

- Mapping of equitable energy transition policies pathways at local and national levels to ensure that energy policies include the children, young people and marginalised groups such as indigenous populations and women.
- Examining the role of youth in accelerating the transition to universal access to energy.
- How can the Global Road Map for Accelerated SDG 7 actions be implemented in a manner that does not leave any youth behind?

#### *Guiding Questions*

- How can youth be empowered to be the New Generation of Decision Makers?
- What are the current barriers to youth participation in decision-making, and how can they be addressed? How can policymakers further promote youth engagement in the energy space?
- How can governments promote youth engagement internally (within their structure) and externally (through support mechanisms or recognition)?
- What do youth need to lead an equitable energy transition?
- How do youth contribute to the global stocktake? How do youth contribute to SDG7 and leave no one behind agenda?

#### *Associated Publications*

[World Energy Transitions Outlook](#) (2022)

[The Breakthrough Agenda Report](#) (2022)

[Renewable Energy Targets: A guide to design](#) (2022)

[IRENA's Energy Transition Support to Strengthen Climate Action](#) (2022)

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