

# Media Update

18 September 2020

## United Nations

SECRETARY-GENERAL MESSAGE

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

--

### VIDEO MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DEMOCRACY 15 September 2020

As the world confronts COVID-19, democracy is crucial in ensuring the free flow of information, participation in decision-making and accountability for the response to the pandemic. Yet since the beginning of the crisis, we have seen the emergency used in a range of countries to restrict democratic processes and civic space. This is especially dangerous in places where democracy's roots are shallow and institutional checks and balances are weak.

The crisis is also highlighting – and aggravating – long-neglected injustices, from inadequate health systems to social protection gaps, digital divides and unequal access to education; from environmental degradation to racial discrimination and violence against women. Along with the profound human toll, these inequalities are themselves threats to democracy.

Well before the pandemic, frustration was rising, and trust in public authorities was declining. A lack of opportunities was driving economic unease and social unrest. Today, it is clear that Governments must do more to listen to people demanding change, open new channels for dialogue and respect freedom of peaceful assembly.

On this International Day of Democracy, let us seize this pivotal moment to build a more equal, inclusive and sustainable world, with full respect for human rights.

**Video Link:**

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/downloads2.unmultimedia.org/public/video/evergreen/MSG+SG+Democracy+Day+15+Sept/MSG+SG+International+Democracy+Day+15+Sept+CLEAN.mp4>

\*\*\*

# United Nations

## PRESS RELEASE

### United Nations launches 2020 Class of 17 Young Leaders for the Sustainable Development Goals

*Young Leaders for the SDGs is a flagship initiative of the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth which recognizes the efforts of young people who are driving action and galvanizing others in support of the 2030 Agenda*

**18 September 2020, UN Headquarters, New York** — The United Nations today announced the names of the latest class of 17 Young Leaders for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

On a biennial basis, the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth recognizes 17 young changemakers who are leading efforts to combat the world's most pressing issues and whose leadership is catalyzing the achievement of the SDGs.

"As the UN marks its 75th anniversary during unprecedented times, the 2020 Young Leaders for the SDGs are a clear example of how young people are leading the way in shaping a more sustainable and inclusive future for all," said Jayathma Wickramanayake, the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth. "Despite being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, young people around the world continue to demonstrate immense resilience, resourcefulness and leadership in finding innovative solutions to recover better and achieve the SDGs."

These young leaders — between the ages of 18 and 29 years old — represent the diverse voices of young people from every region of the world, and are collectively responsible for activating millions of young people in support of the SDGs. This group will come together as a community to support efforts to engage young people in the realization of the SDGs both through strategic opportunities with the UN and through their existing initiatives, platforms and networks.

The 2020 Young Leaders for the SDGs are:

- AY Young, 29, United States
- Hadiqa Bashir, 18, Pakistan
- İlayda Eskitaşcıoğlu, 26, Turkey
- Jichen Liu, 23, China
- Lester Philipp Vargas Angeles, 24, Peru
- Loay Radwan, 21, Egypt
- Mariama Djambony Badji, 22, Senegal
- Martin Karadzhov, 27, Bulgaria
- Oluwaseun Ayodeji Osowobi, 29, Nigeria
- Ralf Toejnes, 28, Brazil
- Satta Sheriff, 22, Liberia
- Siena Castellon, 18, Ireland
- Tania Rosas, 29, Colombia
- Tim Lo Surdo, 26, Australia
- Udit Singhal, 18, India
- Vanessa Nakate, 23, Uganda
- Zahin Razeen, 22, Bangladesh

More information on the 2020 Young Leaders for the SDGs, including the full profiles of the Young Leaders and their commitments to advancing the SDGs, is available at [un.org/youthenvoy/about-theyoung-leaders-for-the-sdgs](https://un.org/youthenvoy/about-theyoung-leaders-for-the-sdgs).

### **About the Office of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth**

In 2017, the UN Secretary-General appointed Jayathma Wickramanayake of Sri Lanka as his Special Envoy on Youth and as the youngest senior official in the history of the organization.

Ms. Wickramanayake's mandate is to harmonize the UN system efforts on youth development, enhance the UN response to youth needs, advocate for the development needs and rights of young people, as well as to bring the work of the United Nations on youth closer to them. The Envoy on Youth also acts as the advisor to and the representative of the Secretary-General on youth related matters.

For more information, follow @UNYouthEnvoy on social media and visit our website at [un.org/youthenvoy](http://un.org/youthenvoy).

### Media Contact

Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth

Matthew Hunter

+1 (631) 829-4275

[matthew.hunter@un.org](mailto:matthew.hunter@un.org)

###