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'Work to save multilateralism' PGA urges young staff, delegates



“Multilateralism is under serious threat. For the UN to stay relevant, major changes are needed. The next generation of diplomats needs to make responsible choices to ensure the survival of the rule-based multilateral order.”

These were among the takeaways of a discussion on 29 August, with the President of the 72nd session of the General Assembly Miroslav Lajčák, the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth Jayathma Wickramanayake, young delegates and UN staff members.

The event, organized by Young UN - Agents for Change, delved into the future of multilateral diplomacy and the UN. Members of Young UN emphasized that the success of UN reform requires building bridges between the new generation of UN civil servants and young delegates in Permanent Missions.

Participants in the forum identified challenges, as well as possible solutions to the crisis of the multilateral system. They expressed concern that, unless the rules of the multilateral order were safeguarded, the consequences would be either anarchy or one of coercion by those with might.

Participants felt the UN needed to change significantly to stay relevant in the face of competition from other international actors such as businesses and civil society, as well as from regional organizations that have expanded the scope of their policy decisions.

They also emphasized that the Security Council needs to better reflect the world that has transformed since the UN's founding. When asked to sum up their future vision of the UN, participants responded with phrases such as "inclusive", "no veto", and "sustainable".

The outgoing President of the General Assembly called on youth to bring in new ideas to modernize the UN system and applauded Young UN as an initiative in the right direction.

The Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth expressed her continuing support to Young UN and towards making the voices of young people heard.

Young UN is a voluntary and self-organized network, open for all serving UN personnel, which aims to work towards a UN that fully embodies the principles that it stands for. Since its inception in 2016, Young UN has grown into a grassroots network of over 700 professionals across over 80 duty stations spanning the entire UN system.

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