



SDG YOUTH FORUM

10 September 2021 | UNPOG/DPIDG/UN DESA

5th Youth Forum on SDG Implementation

"Leveraging Public Governance and Enhancing Youth Engagement to Promote Green, Resilient and Sustainable Recovery from COVID-19"

10 September 2021

Via Zoom

1. Background

The 5th Youth Forum on SDG Implementation takes place at a critical historical juncture where the world is struggling to respond to the multidimensional challenges of COVID-19. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked devastating socio-economic havoc on the global economy, hindering the progress on the achievement of the SDGs. While attention is currently focused on those immediately affected by the COVID-19, there are many indications that the COVID-19 pandemic will have long-lasting social, cultural, economic, political, and multidimensional impacts on the whole of societies, including young people, as highlighted by the Secretary General's Report "Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity".¹

The pandemic has upended the lives of young people from every region, obliging them to adapt to new challenges in health, decent work and employment, food and nutrition security, and social isolation and exclusion sectors, among others. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), approximately 17 percent of young workers (18-24 years old) stopped working during COVID-19.² Millions of employees worldwide were impacted by job losses in the coronavirus-driven crisis. Young people have been forced to adjust to a "new normal" where social distance prevails, as diverse forms of distance learning are implemented to ensure the continuation of education and skills acquisition.

Despite being disproportionately impacted, youth around the world are coming together to respond to this crisis, demonstrating resilience, resourcefulness, and leadership while tackling injustice and demanding accountability. Young people are part of the solution, actively contributing to reduce the spread of the virus and mitigate the pandemic's impact. As torchbearers of sustainable development, young people are advocating for environmental action to drive transformative change at scale and leave no one behind. They are also the first to embrace new ideas and are pivotal to ensuring inclusiveness and equality in society, as envisioned in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They have shown that they can

¹ <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/SG-Report-Socio-Economic-Impact-of-Covid19.pdf>

² https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_745879/lang--en/index.htm



be a force for the development and drivers of innovation and progress at the local, national and global levels. Young people, as problem-solvers to find the solutions to the existential challenges in the future, shall be actively engaged in the [SDGs Decade of Action](#) to deliver the SDGs by 2030 and building back better.

Since early 2020, UNPOG has been working tirelessly to provide capacity support to developing countries to address the challenges of COVID-19 and engage the whole-of-society, including organizing the Annual Youth Forum on SDG implementation. Over the past four years, the Youth Forum on SDG Implementation has significantly evolved into a unique platform for young people to share their vision and elaborate their substantive contributions to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Against this backdrop, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG) through its Project Office on Governance (UNPOG) and in collaboration with the Ministry of the Interior and Safety (MOIS) of the Government of the Republic of Korea and Incheon Metropolitan City Government, is organizing a 5th Youth Forum on *"Leveraging Public Governance and Enhancing Youth Engagement to Promote Green, Resilient and Sustainable Recovery from COVID-19"*. The Youth Forum will provide an opportunity for youth residents in the Republic of Korea to share innovative solutions to the challenges and have an active part in pursuing the green, resilient and sustainable recovery from COVID-19 within their communities and beyond.

2. Objective

As we embark on this recovery journey – and building a "better" world - from the COVID-19 pandemic, young people are invited to frame their discussions and share their views, experiences, and ideas on the recovery from COVID-19, including a special focus on the SDGs. In doing so, a number of cross-cutting issues will frame the discussion, such as fostering resilience, drive, creativity, and leadership in building a more sustainable, just, and inclusive world for all, leveraging science, technology, and innovation to address youth unemployment, promoting gender equality, engaging youth for climate resilience and accelerating the digital transformation to strengthen accountable and transparent governance.

The Youth Forum will provide a space for discussion on the importance of young people to advance the youth development agenda for potential inclusion in key processes and frameworks such as the COVID-19 recovery. The Forum will also facilitate discussions of youth empowerment to build a resilient society in the post-COVID era. The Youth Forum is expected to enable the youth to raise their voices and exchange ideas to accelerate SDG implementation and combat COVID-19.

3. Thematic Focus

The COVID-19 pandemic has had innumerable negative consequences on the lives of people from around the globe, especially vulnerable groups. It has also highlighted the importance of youth-focused recovery from the pandemic as they have the skills, energy, and ideas of young people essential for expanding health care, including digital means, and addressing pollution and climate change. The main theme of the Forum is **"Leveraging Public Governance and Enhancing Youth Engagement to Promote Green, Resilient and Sustainable Recovery from COVID-19"**. The Forum is divided into two rounds with different sub-themes.

3.1 Preliminary Round

The preliminary round will address the following sub-themes, where youth participants will be asked to provide their innovative ideas and solutions:

3.1.1 Empowering the Youth to Strengthen Effective Governance

In September 2018, during the 73rd United Nations (UN) General Assembly's (UNGA) high-level General Debate, the UN Secretary-General unveiled Youth 2030, a strategy reflecting the UN's new commitment to working with and for young people.³ The Youth 2030 strategy highlights the importance of accountability and transparency, as is aligned with a priority of the international development agenda, which is to establish effective and accountable institutions reflected in SDG16 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The strategy also builds upon the set of principles of effective governance for sustainable development, developed by the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA). The principles seek to help build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels, with a view to achieving the shared vision for the people and the planet embodied in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.⁴

The COVID-19 pandemic and its economic and social repercussions have demonstrated that strengthening effective governance matters more than ever to ensure that no one is left behind. For inclusive and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and timely implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, it is crucial to engage youth in effective governance.

While various strategies have been adopted to promote effective governance, youth involvement can make a huge difference. Youth is a key ingredient in strengthening effective governance as their aspirations and hopes for a better future can provide the impetus to improve policy and outcomes. By engaging young people in effective governance, accountable processes, and decision-making processes, their demands can be mainstreamed in the design of public policies and services. Their role in effective governance should involve full participation, the rule of law, transparency, consensus-orientated equity, effectiveness, efficiency, accountability, and responsiveness. Youth should take an active role in each of these areas and understand their obligations to ensure that these areas are interwoven into the fabric of effective governance.

As a group that is highly affected by the pandemic and the subsequent restrictive measures, it is essential for young people to not only be beneficiaries or stakeholders but also be centrally involved as the designers and implementers of effective governance mechanisms against global crises. Young people are ready to contribute and lead recovery efforts – from innovating, mobilizing, spearheading new movements for social, economic, and environmental justice to driving accountability efforts to ensure no one is left behind in our new normal.

3.1.2 Engaging Youth for Climate Resilience

Following an "annus horribilis" of death, disaster, and despair, 2021 is a critical year for climate action and biodiversity. Secretary-General António Guterres emphasized that now is the time

³ <http://sdg.iisd.org/news/un-launches-2030-strategy-and-global-partnership-initiative-for-youth/>

⁴ <https://publicadministration.un.org/en/Intergovernmental-Support/CEPA/Principles-of-Effective-Governance>



to secure the well-being of people, economies, societies, and the planet.⁵ In accordance with the Principles of Responsible Investment (PRI) established in 2006 by the UN Global Compact in partnership with UNEP/FI, investors are encouraged to consider Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG), which are non-financial factors, when making an investment decision.⁶ And with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which 196 countries joined, as a long-term goal, countries aim to reach global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible to achieve a climate-neutral world by mid-century.⁷ Although more governments and businesses are committing to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, the world is still falling far short of that goal. It is crucial for everyone to commit to carbon neutrality by 2050 and take climate action to benefit people and the planet.

As the adverse effects of climate change continue to exacerbate by the increased intensity and frequency of natural hazards, the future of young people is further threatened. The world is home to 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10 to 24 — the largest generation of youth in history.⁸ Young people are increasingly aware of the challenges and risks presented by the climate crisis and the opportunity to achieve sustainable development brought by a solution to climate change. To this end, young people must be involved in climate change adaptation, as it is the children and young people of today who will face the worst effects.

Young people have been crucial in focusing global attention on the urgent need to act on climate. They have begun raising their voices, demanding action towards a more climate-resilient and sustainable society. Moreover, they have been bringing new ideas and radical ambition required to develop adaptation solutions, implement them at a large scale, and shape climate change adaptation measures and policies.

When empowered and engaged, young people can be an important positive force for change and climate action. Their ideas and participation are key to building climate resilience and achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As agents of change, young people can directly develop and implement youth-led projects on the ground. They can offer examples of sustainable lifestyles, mindfulness, sustainable consumption and participate in local, national, and international initiatives and campaigns.

3.1.3 Digital Transformation to Address Youth Unemployment

Rapid technological advances of the "Fourth Industrial Revolution"—characterized by merging physical assets and digital technologies—present young people with both opportunities and challenges in the labor market. Paradoxically, despite being enthusiastic early adopters of new technologies, young people have deep-seated anxieties about the impact that the most recent advances in robotics and artificial intelligence could have on their future employment prospects. In both developed and developing countries, these concerns are certainly justified as young people are more likely to work in occupations at greater risk of automation and are consequently more exposed to the risk of unemployment and inactivity.⁹

The COVID-19 crisis has further exacerbated the risks of unemployment for young people.

⁵ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/01/1083162>

⁶ <https://www.unpri.org/pri/what-are-the-principles-for-responsible-investment>

⁷ <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>

⁸ <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/youth-in-action>

⁹ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_737648.pdf



Employment opportunities have significantly decreased and have been worsened by lockdowns, with the latest data putting the global youth unemployment rate at 13.6 percent in 2020.¹⁰

In addressing these challenges, it is crucial to acknowledge the important role of digital transformation and information and communication technologies (ICTs) in alleviating the challenges youth face in employment. Digital technology allows for increased access to quality jobs for youth and other groups and greater demand for new forms of work. They can deliver the specific skills that youth need, support outsourcing jobs in remote places, foster new ways of networking between youth about the labor market and create new career models.¹¹

As "digital natives", young people tend to be early adopters of new technologies and are better equipped with ICT knowledge and expertise. There are emerging industries that require young people with advanced digital skills. As more young people are equipped with digital expertise and are nearly two times more networked than the global population, the skills gap can be addressed.¹² This will ultimately increase young people's employability, create quality jobs, and spark innovation across all sectors in the digital economy. In addition to improving career opportunities, digital technology has the potential to enable youth entrepreneurship and lower barriers associated with it. Digital business solutions play a critical role in both enabling business expansion and boosting the efficiency of existing operations.¹³

Leveraging digital and frontier technologies can significantly contribute to providing equal opportunities for young people to enhance their capacities and skills. Strengthening their future work skills and matching their creativity and innovation with technology-based solutions will pave the road to a pro-employment COVID-19 recovery.

3.2 Main Round

The main round will cover three sub-themes based on the three Training Toolkits developed by UNPOG/DPIDG/UN DESA. The sub-themes are relevant to the critical role of youth in building back better from the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.2.1 Government Innovation for Social Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups

Government needs to move from business-as-usual governance to innovation for ensuring the inclusion of vulnerable groups, including youth, persons with disabilities, the poorest, migrants and refugees, etc. A paradigm shift with innovative approaches, strategies, and practices is required for the government, in collaboration with other stakeholders, to effectively address special vulnerabilities and demands of vulnerable groups that are often multi-faceted, dynamically evolving, and context-specific. Also, many vulnerable populations confront multiple vulnerabilities, e.g., young people with disabilities, young migrants and refugees, and young people in poverty. Furthermore, these vulnerable young people have been disproportionately affected by the socio-economic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, confronting the challenges such as the lack of access to online education and health services and the loss of jobs and income, among others.

It is essential that government promotes innovation in governance toward an inclusive and

¹⁰ ILO, "Youth Aspirations and the Future of Work", Page 5

¹¹ <https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/DigitalTechforYouthEmploymentApproach.pdf>

¹² <https://thalesetd.medium.com/the-role-of-young-people-in-the-fight-against-climate-change-aadf0d06b496>

¹³ <https://www.youthcolab.org/post/youth-entrepreneurs-engaging-in-the-digital-economy-the-next-generation>



participatory governance framework for inclusion and participation of vulnerable groups, including youth, in the processes of policy designing, development, implementation, and monitoring and review. The government can better understand and address youth's special vulnerabilities and demands through co-designing and co-creating public service. It is also important to effectively leverage frontier technologies and digital government to provide more inclusive public service to vulnerable groups, enable their participation in the policy processes, and foster their socio-economic empowerment, including through participation in the digital economy.

Through engagement and empowerment, vulnerable groups can become the agents of change for sustainable development. Particularly, the ideas, skills, and capacities of youth, who are better equipped with digital skills than other population groups and actively harnessing digital platforms such as social media, can greatly contribute to forging innovative solutions to diverse policy issues in society. Therefore, it is essential to develop inclusive mindsets as well as the capacities and skills of public servants and the whole society, including vulnerable groups themselves, to promote innovation for building inclusive societies.

3.2.2 Effective National to Local Public Governance for SDG Implementation

Implementing the 2030 Agenda will depend on how the SDGs are coordinated and implemented through national to local governance. Effective public governance, through better national-to-local coordination for policy coherence and a streamlined process of stakeholder engagement for the inclusive and participatory decision-making process, is essential in achieving the 2030 Agenda. Local governments are in a unique position to engage all stakeholders in designing policies and development strategies. Critical to the success of the 2030 Agenda is the role of young people in engaging with the local and national government in delivering on policies and programmes on the ground; the role of public-private partnerships in driving the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including financing and harnessing technology for data collection and utilization; and the role of youth participation in informing equitable and diverse policy design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Youth participation is a key mechanism for forging connections between SDG implementation nationally and locally. This builds local ownership and community-level capacity to monitor SDG implementation and in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. Public governance is instrumental in building trust among young people, supporting their transition to strengthening their relationship with public institutions. Public governance measures that promote, among others, principles of competence, sound policymaking, collaboration, integrity, transparency, accountability, inclusiveness, and stakeholder participation are strong predictors of trust in institutions. In the context of COVID-19, these principles are preconditions to build back better.

COVID-19 exacerbates existing inequality, particularly for those in vulnerable positions, leading to the destabilization of societies and governments. Siloed approaches are no longer feasible. It is urgent to recognize, promote and support young people's positive role as engaged citizens, positive agents of change, bold innovators, and committed partners. Tackling the COVID-19 pandemic requires an effective public governance agenda through a "whole-of-society" and "all sectors" approach. In doing so, the involvement of young people needs to be ensured at all levels. Transformation of public governance that supports meaningful inclusion of youth, prioritization of partnerships and collaborations with youth as equal partners, and

investment in the capacity and leadership of youth and conducive space for youth organizations are some strategies to overcome the barriers.

The theme on *Effective National to Local Public Governance for SDG Implementation* seizes the opportunity to raise awareness of the role of young people in public governance and to understand the challenges and barriers for meaningful youth participation caused by exclusion and human rights violations of young agents of change.

3.2.3 Risk-Informed Governance and Innovative Technology for DRR and Resilience

Ensuring disaster risk reduction (DRR) and building resilience is vital for accelerating progress on achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Every aspect of sustainable development is undermined by disasters, whether social, economic, or environmental. Disaster risks and their impacts are exacerbated by the consequences of weak governance, weak institutional arrangements, non-risk-informed policies, poor youth engagements, poverty, unplanned and rapid urbanization, unsustainable use of natural resources, declining ecosystems, extreme weather events, disruptive climate change, and increasing environmental, social, technological and biological health hazards. The Sendai Framework for DRR (2015-2030) calls for governments and other decision-makers to include children and youth in designing and implementing policies, plans, and standards for achieving DRR and resilience. Putting this into practice requires the meaningful participation of young people in the decision-making process and ensuring their effective engagement.

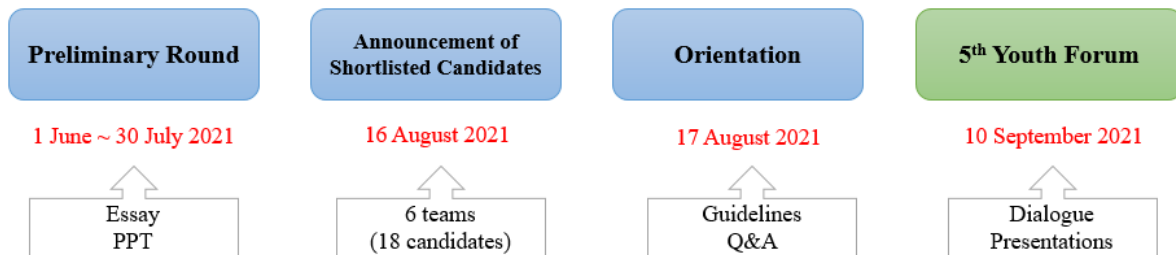
Half of the world's population are youth, and they are often hit first and hardest with disproportionate disaster impacts. The youth stand to benefit most from reducing disaster risk and impacts, curtailing climate chaos, and achieving the SDGs. Engaging youth groups is an important entry point to reduce the environmental impact of recovery efforts, including awareness-raising and engagement in environmentally sustainable livelihoods initiatives, strengthening environmental and economic resilience, and sustainable use of natural resources. Undeniably, the youth are endowed with the skills, competencies, capacities, and self-confidence to express their views in all stages of disaster risk reduction. Strengthening their voice includes active attention to addressing poverty, discriminatory cultural norms, or other factors limiting their participation. Young people have the potential to share and contextualize knowledge on DRR, integrate local and scientific knowledge, and form protective action decision making, and advocate for change.

In line with the above, UNPOG developed a Training Toolkit on Risk-informed Governance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience, which is part of UN DESA's Curriculum on Governance for SDGs. The Toolkit is expected to strengthen capacities for promoting risk-informed governance and innovative technology for DRR and resilience, including among youth.

4. Eligibility for Application

Young individuals born between 1995 and 2005, residing in the Republic of Korea, are eligible to apply regardless of nationality and educational background.

5. Forum Process



- Submission of essays and PPTs will only be received in groups (3 people per team).
- Young individuals from different schools can form a team.

① Preliminary Round

- Submit the following documents to jihyun.joung@un.org by **30 July 2021 (Fri)**
 - Application with a short essay (maximum of 1500 words)
 - PowerPoint Presentation (maximum five slides, saved as both PDF and PPT)
 - Consent to use personal information
- Submission of essays and PPTs will only be received in groups (3 people per team)

Theme:

"Leveraging Public Governance and Enhancing Youth Engagement to Promote Green, Resilient and Sustainable Recovery from COVID-19"

- Select **one topic** from the three following themes:
 - *Empowering the Youth to Strengthen Effective Governance*
 - *Engaging Youth for Climate Resilience*
 - *Digital Transformation to Address Youth Unemployment*

Essay Guiding Question

Propose a policy or government program which engages youth in building resilience in society.

- The following questions aim to guide you in writing your essays. These guiding questions are for your consideration.
- The questions are cross-cutting for all the above three topics.
 - What are the current challenges youth face? What are their current needs?
 - What is the scope of your project? (eg. national, regional, local)
 - Which stakeholders will be engaged? (Non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, local/national government, private sector, etc.)
 - What are the main objectives of your policy or government program?
 - What methodology approach will you use to engage the youth?
 - How will you monitor or measure the achievements of your policy or government program?

② Announcement of Shortlist Candidates



- Date: 16 August 2021 (Mon)
- Shortlisted applicants will be notified individually via email
- Shortlisted applicants will be assigned a topic for the Youth Forum group discussions
 - Each group will be assigned a topic to discuss at the Youth Forum
 - Each group is required to conduct thorough research on the assigned topic in preparation for the group discussions

③ Orientation

- Date: 17 August 2021 (Tues), 15:00 (KST)
- Shortlisted applicants are strongly encouraged to attend the Orientation Session
- The Orientation Session will help applicants better prepare for the Youth Forum by providing an overview of the agenda, presentation, and the assignment

④ Youth Forum

- Date: 10 September 2021 (Fri), 13:00 – 17:00 (KST)
- Venue: Online Platform (Zoom)
- Participants: 6 teams (18 selected applicants)
- The Youth Forum Session will include keynote lectures, group presentations, and discussions.
- After an evaluation process, three teams will be awarded ministerial and mayoral awards.

Theme:

"Leveraging Public Governance and Enhancing Youth Engagement to Promote Green, Resilient and Sustainable Recovery from COVID-19"

- Participants will be divided into three breakout rooms (2 groups per breakout room):
 - All selected groups will receive detailed guidelines to prepare for the Youth Forum group discussions on 16 August 2021 (Mon).
 - Each group will be assigned a topic to discuss at the Youth Forum in advance
 - Each group is required to conduct thorough research on the assigned topic in preparation for the group discussions.
 - **Breakout Room 1:** Government Innovation for Social Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups
 - **Breakout Room 2:** Effective National to Local Public Governance for SDG Implementation
 - **Breakout Room 3:** Risk-Informed Governance and Innovative Technology for DRR and Resilience

Group Discussion Instructions:

Write a resolution paper:

- Share the solutions each group has prepared.
- Discuss and draw a consensus on the solutions to the problems you are trying to solve.
- Prepare to present the resolution paper to all participants (10 mins. each).

6. Evaluation

- **Preliminary Round:** Essay and PPT (60 points)
- **Youth Forum:** Group Discussion (40 points)
 - Essay Presentation (10 points)
 - Group Discussion and Presentation of Resolution Paper (30 points)

7. Awards

- Ministerial awards by the Minister of the Interior and Safety, Republic of Korea
- Ministerial awards by the Minister of Environment, Republic of Korea
- Mayoral awards by the Mayor of Incheon Metropolitan City, Republic of Korea

8. Certificate

- Upon successful completion of the Youth Forum, all participants will receive a Certificate of Attendance issued by UN DESA, which will be valuable proof of acquiring in-depth knowledge on SDGs for your academic and professional practice.

9. Organizers

- UNPOG/DPIDG/UN DESA
- Ministry of the Interior and Safety, Republic of Korea
- Incheon Metropolitan City, Republic of Korea

10. Sponsor

- Ministry of Environment, Republic of Korea

11. Contact Information

- Ms. Jenny Joung
jihyun.joung@un.org (070-4230-7337)

12. Draft Agenda

Time (KST)	Agenda
13:00 – 13:10 (10 mins.)	Opening & Introduction
	Opening Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Bokyun Shim, Head, United Nations Project Office on Governance, DPIDG/UN DESA (5 mins) • Ministry of the Interior and Safety, Republic of Korea (3 mins.) • Incheon Metropolitan City (3 mins)
13:10 – 13:40 (30 mins.)	Keynote Speech
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Jolly Amatya, Secretariat of UN Major Group for Children and Youth (UN MGCY) TBC (15 mins.) • Ms. Aya Chebbi, African Union Special Envoy on Youth First African Union Youth Envoy TBC (15 mins)

13:40 – 14:40 (60 mins.)	Preliminary Round Essay Presentation (6 teams – 10 mins. each)
14:40 – 15:40 (60 mins.)	Group Discussion (3 breakout rooms of 2 teams – 6 people per group) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breakout Room 1: Government Innovation for Social Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups Breakout Room 2: Effective National to Local Public Governance for SDG Implementation Breakout Room 3: Risk-Informed Governance and Innovative Technology for DRR and Resilience
15:40 – 16:10 (30 mins.)	Resolution Paper Presentation (3 groups – 10 mins. each)
16:10 – 16:20 (10 mins.)	Break
16:20 – 16:45 (25 mins.)	Open Dialogue
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderator: Mr. Keping Yao, Senior Governance and Public Administration Expert, UNPOG/DPIDG/UN DESA
	Judge Evaluation
16:45 – 16:55 (10 mins.)	Announcement of Awards Winners
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministerial awards by the Minister of the Interior and Safety, Republic of Korea (One team, three winners) Ministerial awards by the Minister of Environment, Republic of Korea (One team, three winners) Mayoral awards by the Mayor of Incheon Metropolitan City, Republic of Korea (One team, three winners)
16:55 – 17:00 (5 mins.)	Closing Session & Group Photo
	Closing Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Bokyun Shim, Head, United Nations Project Office on Governance, DPIDG/UN DESA