



Statement by Pedro Manuel Moreno, Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD

## World Investment Forum 2023: Youth Forum opening

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates  
16 October 2023

Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed guests, and most importantly, dear youth gathered here today,

It is both a pleasure and an honour to address you at the opening of the Youth Forum of the 2023 World Investment Forum in Abu Dhabi. Let me begin by extending a heartfelt thank you to the city of Abu Dhabi, which serves not just as a bridge between the East and the West, but today, as a bridge between the present and the future.

This is already the fourth edition of our Youth Forum, and in all of them we have learnt so much from you.

I understand that amongst us are many newcomers, to whom I say, from the bottom my heart: welcome, please feel at home! But I understand also that there are many here who have already participated in previous forums. To you I also extend a very warm welcome and our gratitude for your effort to be here again.

I want to keep my remarks short, as the agenda today could not be more packed.

The theme of the 2023 Youth Forum is Investing in sustainable development. This week, you will deep dive and debate on three very important issues, technology and innovation, greening of industries, and reimagining education.

I would like to share some thoughts that can accompany you during your discussions.

Firstly, on technology and innovation: Technology is not just about gadgets, apps, or the latest trend. It's about leveraging the power of the digital age to address some of the world's most pressing challenges.

From harnessing the potential of AI to address global health issues, to utilizing blockchain for transparent and secure governance systems – the possibilities are endless. But with these opportunities come immense responsibilities. Your discussions should not only explore the potential of these innovations but also address the ethical dilemmas they pose, especially at a time where the digital and data divide is widening, both between and within countries, and where issues of human rights, democracy, privacy, and the mere confusion between fake news and truth are affecting in all ways possible our lives and our societies.

Secondly, on the greening of industries: We are at a pivotal juncture in our history. The clock is ticking, and the planet needs our concerted action. Industry can turbocharge development, but it can also derail it. Countries at the frontlines of the quest to end energy poverty have a historic opportunity today to do it in a way that is green – but for that, they need technology, trade and financing, and these are lacking. It is crucial that we transition to a circular economy, making industries more sustainable and less wasteful. You, the youth, have the power to inspire and lead this change from within. Creating new companies, joining and renovating old ones, bringing key disruptions and ideas for change. I understand that a number of you are attending meetings at the COP next month. Please use this forum as a brainstorming and preparatory session for the critical debates which will take place there.

And finally, reimagining education: Education is the cornerstone of any society, molding minds that build the future. In an age where information is at our fingertips, our educational systems must evolve to focus on critical thinking, empathy, and adaptability. We need to prepare for a world that's rapidly changing, where the jobs of today might not exist tomorrow, and where lifelong learning becomes the norm. Education must be holistic,

inclusive, and, above all, empowering. It must equip us not just with knowledge, but with the mindset to adapt, grow, and build amongst us the values of peace, tolerance, and diversity.

Ladies and gentlemen of the youth,

In closing, let me remind each and every one of you: The true power of a forum like this is not in the speeches, not in the official proceedings, but in the countless informal conversations, the unplanned collaborations, the spontaneous brainstorming sessions. It's in the passion you bring, the stories you share, and the determination with which you face challenges head-on.

We are at an inflection point in history. Your voice matters, your ideas count, and your actions have the power to shape the world.

So, harness this opportunity. Reach out to the person sitting next to you, network, challenge the status quo, dream big and act even bigger.

Lastly, I wish you lots of success in the preparation of the Youth Declaration. I look forward to receiving it and discuss with our member States how to address the issues you raise.

Thank you, and my sincere wishes for a groundbreaking week ahead!



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