



## RISE. REIMAGINE. REBUILD: A WORLD FOR ALL 31ST SESSION | AUGUST 12-14, 2026

### INTRODUCTION

Humanity stands at a defining crossroad. As the world watches mass atrocities unfold and crises multiply across continents, young people are stepping forward, demanding meaningful participation, reimagining governance, and reshaping the global agenda across cultures and borders.

Supporting brave young people is deeply rooted in the mission of AFS Intercultural Programs. We empower youth to become global citizens who are prepared to bridge divides and drive positive change.

**The 2026 AFS Youth Assembly will bring together the world's most talented young leaders to learn, engage, and take action.** As an expression of the AFS Intercultural Programs mission to empower youth, this conference will equip hundreds of young people with new knowledge, skills, and networks needed to be leaders who can initiate positive change on the global stage. Through discussions, skill-building workshops, networking, and ideation challenges, and with the support of experts and practitioners in the field, young attendees will gain the relevant resources and opportunities they need to become equal partners in achieving change.

### RISE. REIMAGINE. REBUILD: A WORLD FOR ALL

The 31st Session of the AFS Youth Assembly, themed **"Rise. Reimagine. Rebuild: A World for All,"** envisions a future where communities overcome adversity, reimagine systems, and rebuild societies that are inclusive, equitable, and resilient. With enormous courage, it is a call to action for young people everywhere to rise above the challenges of today, to reimagine what is possible, and to rebuild a world that truly leaves no one behind.

There is an alarming loss of trust in institutions, governments, and people along with the urge to stand up against the massive tide of crises we face today. "Inequalities are widening. Trust is eroding. Communities are struggling with conflict, climate change, and rapid technological change. And yet, we also see extraordinary innovation, resilience and solidarity. This is our chance to rebuild trust between governments and their people – and among nations," *stated Li Junhua*, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs.

These converging challenges are transforming economies, ecosystems, and societies. However, one force continues to rise above uncertainty, the power of young people. With more than 1.3 billion youth worldwide poised to shape the next chapter of our future, their creativity, resilience, and conviction are redefining what global leadership looks like.

As the SDGs lag behind with just five years remaining, the call for renewed commitment to social development grows louder. The upcoming Second World Summit for Social Development reflects this urgency, reaffirming that inclusion, equality, and human dignity must remain at the heart of the global agenda and no one is left behind. With social development at center stage, the global community will be better equipped to commit to the SDG agenda.

### AN AGENDA BY YOUTH, FOR YOUTH

Following consultations with hundreds of young leaders around the world, four core areas were identified for the AFS Youth Assembly program agenda, where urgent challenges intersect with extraordinary opportunities for youth-driven collective action:

- TRACK 1** Reclaiming Development as a Human Right for All
- TRACK 2** Policy, Justice and Adaptation: Real-World Solutions for Climate Resilience
- TRACK 3** Rethinking Education: Youth Innovation for Future-Ready Skills
- TRACK 4** Bridging Divides: The Power of Connection in a Polarized World

2026 marks the 40th anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development. *Track 1* highlights that development is a universal human right tied to peace, justice, and dignity, with a focus on youth empowerment, economic mobility, and inclusion for those affected by conflict, displacement, and climate crises. *Track 2* explores climate resilience through fair policies, inclusive justice, and practical adaptation, addressing the urgent risks of crossing climate tipping points that endanger people and the planet. *Track 3* reimagines education as a

platform for youth innovation, promoting entrepreneurial mindsets and the responsible use of AI to drive sustainability and equity. *Track 4* empowers youth to use media, technology, and AI to bridge divides, transform polarization into partnership, and build trust and inclusive communities in a connected world.

Attendees can either concentrate in detail on one core area, or explore various topics according to their preference and expertise. The program will also consider the intersections of these issues.

Additionally, AFS Youth Assembly Delegates will have various opportunities to showcase their individual work and generate impact including through the **AFS Award for Young Global Citizens Pitch Competition for \$10,000, Outstanding Youth Delegate Award; an Action & Impact Hub**, and upon completion of the event will join our **Alumni Impact Network** focused on action and impact to help support youths journey in the next phase of their life.

To further enrich the AFS Youth Assembly experience, three immersive thematic Academies will be offered to Delegates to delve into the topics of the *International Affairs* for participants interested in the work of international organizations and the United Nations, *Global Citizen Changemakers* on creating social impact, and *Educators* for young teachers bringing the SDGs into their classrooms around the world.

### THE OBJECTIVES

Over the course of the AFS Youth Assembly, delegates will pursue the following objectives:



#### Connect and engage

Build partnerships and motivation by connecting with influential young leaders, experts, and practitioners from across sectors and world regions.



#### Learn and develop skills

Discover groundbreaking new tools, knowledge, training, and resources to succeed in their projects.



#### Take action and create impact

Co-create solutions and engage in new initiatives and opportunities to accelerate your impact in local communities and the world.

### THE OUTCOMES

**The outcome of the AFS Youth Assembly is a powerful cross-sector and cross-national network (already 20,000 strong across 160 countries) connecting the next generation of leaders, translated into action-based projects and initiatives after the conference.** Delegates will leave the conference equipped to confront challenges, seize opportunities, and make a difference in their societies and communities.

We expect participants to experience the AFS Youth Assembly not as an event, but as part of a journey that helps them realize positive change on the ground in their communities and across the world. To continue their impact journey, Delegates are encouraged to stay in touch with our global Alumni Impact Network, as part of an international movement of young changemakers developing groundbreaking solutions to tackle the world's greatest challenges. This network reflects

AFS's long-standing commitment to nurturing global citizens and supporting their passion for making a difference in the world. Furthermore, Delegates are encouraged to take on leadership roles within AFS Youth Assembly programs, becoming the change they seek in their communities, and bringing these unique opportunities to young changemakers locally. They also enter the larger community of AFS alumni, which is 500,000 strong across 75+ years of history.

#### Let's Rise, Reimagine and Rebuild: A World for All.

*The Youth Assembly is convened by AFS Intercultural Programs, a global non-profit that empowers young people from all backgrounds with essential global skills—and the passion for making a difference*

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE AFS YOUTH ASSEMBLY HERE:

[www.youthassembly.org](http://www.youthassembly.org)