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CONCLUSIONS OF THE YOUTH FORUM

OUTLINE

Background: On 14 and 15 November 2023, 173 young people from 154 UNESCO Member States and Associate Members came together at UNESCO's Headquarters as participants in the 13th UNESCO Youth Forum. The Forum, entitled "The social impact of climate change and the need to achieve an equitable climate transition", provided the opportunity for exchange among the young climate leaders and activists, as well as, for the first time, between them and Youth Ministers. It led to the formulation of global and regional youth recommendations and the elaboration of a call for action, provided in this document. Five youth-led projects were also selected for support through the UNESCO Global Youth Grant Scheme as tangible follow-up to the Forum.



Job: 202304731

I. Call for action

We, the participants of the 13th UNESCO Youth Forum, call on global decision-makers to look at our planet at this very moment:

We are already fighting fires on a daily basis... Extreme events are already devastating entire cities... and vulnerable communities are already suffering the consequences of climate change.

We are running out of time.

Thus, we call upon UNESCO Member States to take youth voices seriously and to deliver on climate commitments without further delay; We call upon them to take concrete, immediate action towards unanimously declaring a climate emergency and decoupling our economic system from fossil fuel consumption. This must include ensuring that those in developing countries are sufficiently supported in climate adaptation and resilience efforts.

It is time to take a real step forward towards a just transition to a green economy. This entails massively and “wisely” encouraging and investing in decarbonized industries as well as green transition domains such as: clean energy, sustainable transport, green jobs, equitable drinking water supply systems and climate-friendly agricultural practices in order to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels.

To reestablish a balance in our ecosystems and ensure a livable future, we need redoubled efforts to safeguard and expand protected areas, implement conservation measures, and restore natural resources.

The climate justice we need cannot be the choice of a few but the action of all. We call to strengthen global collaboration, acknowledge the Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE)¹ finance gap and scale up large-scale investments towards net zero.

Enough with criminalizing climate protests, movements, and refugees. It is time to use diplomatic and democratic institutions to protect the social, economic and political integrity of climate refugees and displaced people around the world. It is time to target democratically and environmentally unaccountable business practices that are causing the most harm. It is time, not only to empower young people to exercise their right to introduce change in climate action, but most of all to legitimize it.

How many more years do countries need to recognize that youth are particularly affected by climate change? Their health, well-being and education are at risk. There is an urgent need to strengthen climate-resilient health infrastructure facilities, disaster preparedness, creative and inclusive communication strategies and access to education to combat climate change apathy and inequality in technological research and development capabilities.

Our current structures are failing and will not enable us to achieve our objectives. We call upon Member States to forge a new paradigm in global policy-making that is rooted in the principles of inclusivity and empowerment, particularly for marginalized groups, including women, people with disabilities and indigenous people and youth living in war zones, famine, and poverty.

¹ Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) is a term adopted by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to denote work under Article 6 of the Convention and Article 12 of the Paris Agreement. The over-arching goal of ACE is to empower all members of society to engage in climate action, through the six ACE elements - climate change education and public awareness, training, public participation, public access to information, and international cooperation on these issues.

Change cannot be achieved without complete transformation. The time for discussion is over – it is now time for action and ambitious change. Governments must integrate youth voices into decision-making processes, enabling them to drive bolder climate action commitments, aligned with the Paris Agreement. Governments also have to work towards the establishment of a legally binding framework to assure the achievements of the actions committed to.

This call to action reminds us of the numerous efforts that still need to be made to mitigate the impact of climate change. We, the participants of the 13th UNESCO Youth Forum, further emphasize the crucial role of UNESCO within its scope of action to concretely support these efforts.

We demand that Member States take these steps urgently, as a necessity to survive. We are the future, and we will not accept a future where we are forced to flee our homes, fight for freshwater, or watch our ecosystems collapse.

We call for accountability, transparency, inclusion, and action in addressing the climate crisis and its social impacts. We demand that you listen to our voices and act on our demands.

Together, we can build a more just and sustainable future.

II. Global recommendations

This document synthesizes the evidence-based insights, collective wisdom, innovative ideas, and passionate commitments forged by the participants of the 13th UNESCO Youth Forum. The Forum serves as a testament to the vital role youth play in combating climate change, driving an equitable transition, and safeguarding our shared future. This is more than a gathering; it is a call to action, intended to lead to immediate action but also to resonate long after the discussions end, and the pages turn.

Such action is long overdue. Young people today will face four times more extreme weather events in their lifetime and are more likely to be exposed to related risks such as flooding, heat stress, water scarcity, poverty and hunger². The impacts of climate change are not equally felt among generations, regions and populations. Just 70 countries account for 76% of global carbon emissions³, and the world's wealthiest people, the top 1%, produce 16.9% of emissions.⁴ The repercussions of climate change on the 1.8 billion young people today, the largest youth generation in history, are far-reaching and deeply felt.⁵ The social impacts of climate change on youth are multifaceted, ranging from disrupted livelihoods and compromised access to education, to exacerbated mental health challenges and forced mobilities. Moreover, climate change affects groups of young people differently: 3.6 billion people currently live in areas that are vulnerable to climate emergencies⁶ while women and children are 14 times more likely to die in a climate-related disaster.⁷

At the same time, young people are a vital part of the solution. Indeed, 8 out of 10 young people are taking actions on climate change.⁸ Focusing on “The Social Impacts of Climate Change and the Need to Achieve an Equitable Climate Transition,” the 13th UNESCO Youth Forum is a timely and unique

² IPCC, 2021, *Sixth Assessment Report*, <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/about/frequently-asked-questions/keyfaq3/>

³ United Nations, 2022, *For a livable climate: Net-zero commitments must be backed by credible action*, <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/net-zero-coalition>

⁴ Nature, 2022, *Global carbon inequality over 1990-2019*, <https://tinyurl.com/2525mwwz>

⁵ United Nations, 2023, *Youth in Action*, <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/youth-in-action>

⁶ World Health Organization, 2023, *Climate change*, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health>

⁷ UNFPA, 2021, *Five ways climate change hurts women and girls*, <https://www.unfpa.org/news/five-ways-climate-change-hurts-women-and-girls>

⁸ Plan International, 2023, *Climate change activism*, <https://tinyurl.com/2spkmds>

occasion to identify solutions and responses intended to stimulate hope, unity, and collective action among youth.

This Forum touches upon core international mechanisms such as the Paris Agreement⁹, which aspires to limit global warming and safeguard the planet for future generations. Achieving its objectives, such as a net zero emissions global economy by 2050¹⁰, necessitates not only top-down policies but also grassroots engagement and youth-led initiatives. In particular, the Global Stocktake is an essential mechanism within the Paris Agreement to assess collective progress and spur on increased climate ambition. The far-reaching consequences of climate change permeate every facet of society, including education, culture, the sciences, and communication. Empowering youth participation and adopting young people's multidisciplinary approach to the climate crisis is crucial to achieving a just transition and repairing the many injustices and inequalities scarring our world today.

1. Solutions for mainstreaming inclusive and effective youth engagement and action

1.1 Effective youth engagement in decision-making and intergenerational collaboration

National Governments, through their relevant institutions, as well as the UNESCO Secretariat, associated networks, and civil society, shall actively engage young people as stakeholders and partners at all levels, from local to international, through different mechanisms within decision-making processes, including, but not limited to (a) a youth quota of at least 30% representation¹¹ within climate policy-making processes, especially involving youth from marginalized communities; (b) fostering intergenerational collaboration and partnerships by co-constructing platforms with young people, to share their knowledge, experiences, solutions and concerns with stakeholders in relation to climate change; (c) providing young people with the necessary and appropriate technical and financial support, along with informational resources to further strengthen their agency in climate policy; (d) fostering effective communication channels to ensure youth perspectives are valued and incorporated into national climate policies and strategies.

1.2 Enhance youth climate action initiatives

National Governments, through their relevant institutions, as well as the UNESCO Secretariat and associated networks, shall collaborate and partner with youth organizations, civil society as well as the private sector, to catalyze and promote grassroots efforts and enhance climate actions and solutions through (a) robust support mechanisms including mentoring, funding, scholarships and tailored capacity-building for young individuals, groups and networks; (b) the establishment, with additional financial support, of a UNESCO Youth Climate Action Camp Event for existing youth climate networks around the world to meet biannually, and foster cross-cultural and cross-sectoral innovative and diverse learning (e.g. through sports, arts, etc.) and the practical implementation of climate projects; (c) amplifying the visibility of youth grassroots efforts and solutions through, but not limited to, information and communication materials, campaigns and participation in events at all levels.

⁹ UNFCCC, *Paris Agreement*, chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf

¹⁰ United Nations, 2023, [For a livable climate- Net-zero commitments must be backed by credible action](#)

¹¹ This is aligned with the Global Youth Movement for Water (GYMW) 30-30-30 youth target: by 2030, youth below the age of 30 will represent 30% of stakeholders engaged in water management and governance mechanisms, consultation, and decision-making processes. We recommend this target is also implemented across the climate transition space.

2. Youth health and well-being for sustainable communities

National Governments, through their relevant institutions, as well as the UNESCO Secretariat and associated networks, in line with UNESCO's 2017 Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers, shall improve youth health and well-being outcomes by (a) fostering and supporting youth-led research and knowledge related to the impact of climate change on youth's mental health, sexual and reproductive health, and well-being; (b) allocating human resources and financial aid, to support and upscale youth-driven innovation and initiatives focused on mental health and well-being, and integrating these into reinforced disaster risk reduction, emergency response, and sustainable recovery strategies and (c) initiating comprehensive awareness and communication campaigns with a focus on, but not limited to well-being, sexual and reproductive rights¹², diseases, eco-anxiety, and other pressing health challenges for youth, caused or exacerbated by climate change.

3. Youth education and skills development for an equitable transition to a green and blue economies

Within the framework of the Greening Education Partnership, synergizing with the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), National Governments, through their relevant educational institutions, as well as the UNESCO Secretariat and associated networks, shall contribute to developing responsible and eco-conscious behavior with all relevant stakeholders, and invest in reskilling and upskilling programmes for young people to create pathways for green and blue economies¹³ by (a) integrating comprehensive climate education into the curricula at all levels; (b) strengthening global citizenship and lifelong learning skills for climate action; (c) co-designing programmes that harness culture and civilization, especially regional and indigenous cultures, and arts education for young people, as a means to reinforce responsive climate actions with and for local communities; (d) developing and implementing green economy transition plans together with young people, particularly those in communities that are dependent on carbon-intensive industries.

4. Ethical digital and technological climate solutions

4.1 Ensure safe, inclusive and accessible digital and technological use for equitable climate action

National Governments, through their relevant institutions, as well as the UNESCO Secretariat and associated networks, other IGOs and NGOs, shall guarantee digital and technological access and safety for youth through (a) investing in sustainable digital infrastructures, remote learning resources, and digital and technological skills development for educators, especially for those located in remote and underserved communities, with a comprehensive knowledge approach including, but not limited to, scientific, technological, cultural, local and indigenous knowledge; (b)

¹² Women deliver, 2021, *The link between climate change and sexual and reproductive health and rights*, <https://womendeliver.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Climate-Change-Report.pdf>

¹³ The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) defines the green economy as one 'that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. Green economy strategies tend to focus on the sectors of energy, transport, sometimes agriculture and forestry, while the blue economy focuses on fisheries sectors and marine and coastal resources. Both incorporate strategies to address climate mitigation and adaptation.

ensuring the safe and ethical use of data and emerging technologies emphasizing the responsible use of AI in climate action, in alignment with UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence; and (c) harnessing digital technologies for climate resilience and sustainable development in UNESCO designated sites, which can be used as laboratories to foster inclusivity.

4.2 Harness the power of digital and technological innovation to empower youth and communities in their climate action

National Governments, through their relevant institutions, as well as the UNESCO Secretariat, other IGOs and NGOs, shall harness the power of digital and technological innovation to address community climate challenges by (a) facilitating the creation of knowledge-sharing platforms and resources that will enable the exchange of climate solutions between youth and local communities; (b) ensuring that climate change related content is available in accessible and inclusive formats including in local languages; and (c) providing platforms with online courses and tools designed to strengthen youth resilience to climate change impacts, particularly for those who are displaced by climate change related events.

5. Protecting human rights and fostering creativity for a just climate transition

5.1 Harmonizing rights and nature: A human rights-centric path to climate justice and ecosystem stability

National Governments, through their relevant institutions, as well as the UNESCO Secretariat and associated networks, other IGOs and NGOs, shall promote a human rights-centric path to climate justice and ecosystem stability by: (a) educating and building the capacities and capabilities of vulnerable and marginalized youth and children, including but not limited to young women and girls, young disabled individuals, as well as youth and children from displaced populations, indigenous communities, and frontline populations¹⁴; to actively participate in policy and decision-making processes that directly or indirectly impact their communities, in order to ensure human rights protection throughout the climate transition; (b) developing a monitoring, reporting, verification and evaluation framework to assess whether climate related policies and decisions, at all levels, uphold human rights standards, improve social cohesion, address multifaceted intersectional inequities and forms of discrimination, and promote climate justice principles, particularly when applied to address climate risks in war and armed conflicts¹⁵; (c) establishing best practice guidelines for decision makers, at all levels, to meaningfully promote human rights including but not limited to the right to education at times of climate emergencies, and protect environmental defenders and activists, as well as engage with vulnerable, marginalized and displaced populations to co-create climate policies, programmes, research and solutions.

5.2 Strengthening culture-nature linkages while highlighting the power of history and creativity

In alignment with the 2022 Mondiacult Declaration and their commitment to recognizing culture as a public good, National Governments, through their relevant institutions as well as the UNESCO Secretariat and associated networks, with the support of IGOs, NGOs, the private sector, and civil society, shall strengthen community resilience to climate change by (a) including climate mitigation

¹⁴ Frontline populations are those that experience the most immediate and worst impacts of climate change and are most often communities of color, Indigenous, and low-income.

¹⁵ As referenced in the *United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 (UNSCR 2250) youth, peace and security*.

and adaptation, as well as culture, nature and heritage conservation as a target in international policy agreements and strategies following 2030 Agenda; (b) developing and investing in programmes to protect, preserve, and restore cultural, natural, indigenous, tribal and ethnic heritage, respecting free, prior and informed consent and ensuring full and effective participation of communities¹⁶, particularly in areas that have been impacted by, or are at risk of being impacted by climate change; (c) enhancing youth development through targeted assistance programmes that cultivate creativity, self-expression, and story-telling, particularly among those on the frontlines of climate change impacts; and (d) developing resources that focus on traditional and regenerative knowledge and practices that capture sustainable relationships of communities with the Earth, especially to ensure food security.

¹⁶ Indigenous, tribal and ethnic peoples, as well as diaspora and local communities.

ANNEX I

REGIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Europe and North America

Youth from Europe and North America (ENA) recognize our shared responsibility, a substantial portion of our generation has taken proactive steps by implementing lifestyle changes aimed at mitigating our impact on the environment.

Youth find themselves on the frontlines of the socio-economic consequences of climate change¹. We experience this through disproportionate increases in floods, heatwaves, droughts, wildfires, and crop failures due to climate change.² Sea level rise is projected to have severe consequences for people and assets in European coastal areas.³ At the same time, in the United States of America, the most vulnerable populations live on the East and Gulf Coasts, where damaging flooding is predicted to occur 10 times more often in 2050 than it does today.⁴

ENA youth are set to observe and experience the worsening impacts of climate change, exacerbated by a concentration of poverty and worklessness in many regions.⁵ The challenges we confront are multifaceted, encompassing the burdens of rising living costs of which climate change is a key driver of globally as it intensifies related problems such as food shortages, infrastructure damage and supply chain disruption.⁶ Furthermore, we are grappling with the complex repercussions of displacement and irregular migration, as climate change amplifies the displacement of communities. In North America, sea level rise alone is set to displace some 13 million coastal residents by 2100, and millions more will relocate in the aftermath of unbearable climate disasters.⁷ The impact of climate change on health, both mental and physical, is significant. There were an estimated 62,862 heat-related deaths in Europe in 2022, while post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression and learning disorders are just some of the climate-related trauma effects documented in young people.⁸

Recognizing the implications of climate change on the youth of Europe and North America, we are motivated to channel our collective concerns and aspirations into actionable solutions.

1. Inclusive and effective youth engagement and action

We encourage UNESCO and Member States of ENA to (a) provide financial and technical support to up-scale existing climate initiatives that promote youth empowerment in ENA, including a grant scheme aimed at supporting youth-led climate initiatives across ENA; (b) reinforce existing mechanisms and establish new ones where these do not exist, with the aim of ensuring safe and

¹ Forbes, 2021, *Gen Z is emerging as the sustainability generation*, <https://shorturl.at/suOPY>; World Economic Forum, 2022, *Gen Z cares about sustainability more than anyone else – and is starting to make others feel the same*, <https://rb.gy/oqqul>.
² UNDP, 2021, *The Peoples' Climate Vote*, <https://rb.gy/6nv01>.
³ Imperial College London, 2021, *Children will face huge increases in extreme climate events in their lifetimes*, <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/news/230618/children-will-face-huge-increases-extreme/>.
⁴ Ocean & Coastal Management, 2021, *How are European countries planning for sea level rise?*, <https://rb.gy/wl8dw>.
⁵ National Geographic, 2023, *Sea levels are rising at an extraordinary pace. Here's what to know*, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/sea-level-rise-1>.
⁶ British Academy, 2021, *Young people and climate change*, <https://rb.gy/yd46f>.
⁷ National Library of Medicine, 2023, *Comment: A sustainable and equitable response to the cost-of-living crisis is urgently needed*, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9958386/>.
⁸ Bloomberg, 2023, *Tracking the Erratic Path of US Climate Migrants*, <https://t.ly/39guy>.
Nature, 2023, *Climate change anxiety in young people*, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s44220-023-00059-3>.

needs-sensitive collaboration processes between youth and UNESCO, or youth and National Commissions; (c) use reports on youth participation, engagement data and lessons learnt from past practices, to strengthen the meaningful engagement of young people in UNESCO programmes linked directly or indirectly to climate change, and through increasing youth consultations and youth inclusion in project monitoring processes; (d) foster international exchanges and best practices among youth to promote the transnational nature of climate change, through the implementation of a comprehensive leadership programme to empower youth; (e) recognize the expertise and ensure the participation and inclusion of the disabled youth in important social processes and decision-making, with a multidisciplinary lens, by organizing barrier-free events on climate-related topics.

2. Impact of climate change on youth enjoyment of their cultural heritage and human rights

Member States of ENA with the support of UNESCO should ensure the enjoyment of human rights by youth in all their diversity, and in all circumstances, especially those in situations of displacement, by (a) creating national programmes and supporting youth-led initiatives that allow young people, especially displaced youth, to document and preserve their cultural heritage as a source of unity and resilience to crises, including through digital archives, in particular traditional arts, artefacts, language, stories, and customs; (b) ensuring there is a consistent inclusion and integration of all young people into society, by creating points of contact for individuals whose social networks might have been ruptured due to their displacement, such as creating technological tools that serve to create a “paired buddy” system; (c) supporting research projects that focus on the volume, the experiences and the needs of displaced youth affected by climate change, as well as their hosting communities, to enable evidence-based policy development, (d) establishing a “displaced youth advisory council” to ensure the meaningful participation of displaced youth in decision-making processes at the national level.

3. Youth health and well-being for sustainable and resilient cities and communities

To ensure youth across ENA cope with their climate-induced well-being challenges, Member States, with the support of UNESCO and relevant IGOs and NGOs should (a) raise awareness among decision-makers and communities about the link between health and well-being and the climate crisis, by forging stronger partnerships fostering youth creativity and artistic expression, including the organization of global exhibitions, platforms and dedicated spaces at UNESCO conferences; (b) develop international standards to measure the social impacts of climate change, with a particular emphasis on youth, based on research, knowledge and best practices focusing on the interplay between climate change, mental health, and cultural changes, (c) establish and foster intergenerational collaboration spaces for scientists, policymakers, and youth advocates to address the health, well-being, and cultural identity challenges posed by climate change., (d) promote the use of secure and safe digital mental health platforms that facilitate youth community dialogues, provide mutual support and access to knowledge-based resources for coping with climate anxieties, (e) develop guidelines and open-access resources addressing mental health challenges associated with climate change; (f) provide financial and technical support to the stakeholders in order to strengthen counselling services for accompanying adults and offer specialized youth empowerment, pedagogical, and psychological assistance; (h) assess and evaluate how many disabilities and illnesses are caused by the climate crisis (including those affecting youth mental health) through in-depth research and invest in relevant protective measures.

4. Greening education to enhance youth quality of life

To enhance youth quality of life and green skills, UNESCO should (a) promote environmental literacy and critical thinking outside of educational institutions by developing user-friendly educational materials to help young people understand complex environmental issues, evaluate solutions, and make informed decisions for a sustainable future; (b) allow in all educational programmes the right to choose homeschooling, promoting both health and the environment for young people.

Latin America and the Caribbean

In recognition of the pressing need to combat climate change and empower the youth of the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region, the LAC participants of the 13th UNESCO Youth Forum present the following recommendations derived from extensive consultations and dialogues. These discussions have highlighted the critical importance of inclusive and effective youth engagement, youth health, green education, and human rights as key pillars in the battle against the climate crisis.

According to the U-Report survey conducted by UNICEF⁹, a staggering 65 percent of young activists in Latin America and the Caribbean report that they have never been included in climate and environmental public policy decisions. This statistic underscores the urgency of amplifying youth voices in decision-making processes, especially considering that only 2.6 percent of parliamentarians worldwide are below the age of 30.¹⁰ In the past 50 years, Latin America has been plagued by over 4500 disasters, resulting in more than 600,000 deaths.¹¹

Our shared vision is to create a greener and healthier LAC region, where education, research, and scholarships in climate-related fields are not only accessible but actively promoted for the most impacted youth. The priority is to prepare our communities for the challenges ahead, by enhancing youth engagement, climate-resilient infrastructure, and accessible healthcare services. The survey conducted by UNICEF in 2021 among youth climate activists in the region highlights how education and training should be the main action taken by governments to address climate change.¹² Furthermore, it is imperative to reinforce human rights and fortify regional emergency response systems to ensure the protection and well-being of all affected individuals and communities.

Through close collaboration with Member States, UNESCO, international organizations, and the private sector, we, young advocates at the forefront of positive change, are fully dedicated to actively creating solutions that effectively combat the climate crisis. Our mission is to foster a more sustainable, just, and equitable future, ensuring that no segment of society is left behind in the journey toward climate resilience and adaptation. Thus, the youth from LAC Region present the following recommendations.

⁹ UNICEF, 2021, *Youth from Latin America and the Caribbean call for environmental education and effective participation in decision making*, <https://t.ly/uB99D>

¹⁰ Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021, *Parliaments are getting (slightly) younger according to latest IPU data*, <https://www.ipu.org/youth2021-PR>

¹¹ The Lancet, 2022, *Adolescence in Latin America and the Caribbean*, <https://t.ly/MIMAI>

¹² UNICEF, 2022, *Why is environmental education important for youth?* <https://shorturl.at/dnr79>

1. Meaningful youth engagement in government-led climate trainings and actions

National Governments, through their relevant institutions and with the technical and administrative support from UNESCO, shall promote meaningful youth engagement in the local and national decision-making processes by (a) strengthening young individuals, vulnerable youth and youth-led organizations' skills through local government-led climate trainings to provide not only theoretical knowledge, but also real-time information, technical insights and hands-on experience related to concrete community-level measures and actions, while enhancing collaboration between youth and environmental professionals in climate change initiatives, and (b) engaging youth as active participants and members of policy and institutional bodies, ensuring diversity and inclusion of underrepresented groups.

2. Regional youth health emergency response platform and communication strategy

In order to foster adaptation towards climate-resilient infrastructure and to enhance collaboration for increasing healthcare access in high-risk climate vulnerable areas, National Governments, through their relevant institutions and with technical support from UNESCO, shall (a) establish a regional network and platform to connect national young professionals, especially health professionals during major disasters and disease outbreaks related to climate change, facilitate cross-border collaborations between youth, and promote health research and information sharing ; (b) ensure timely and accurate information dissemination to youth, especially those from marginalized communities and groups, before, during and after disasters and disease outbreaks, framed by communication strategies and recommendations; and (c) promote and support research programmes for young health professionals aimed at increasing climate resilience.

3. Greening education to enhance youth quality of life and future economies

3.1 Advancing youth LAC-focused climate research

In order to foster a comprehensive understanding of the region's unique climate challenges through youth-focused climate research, National Governments, through their relevant institutions and with technical and administrative support from UNESCO, UN agencies, NGOs, and the private sector, shall (a) provide financial and technical support to youth-led climate research initiatives tailored to LAC; (b) systematically collect, manage, and disseminate climate change data to young people; (c) create employment and networking opportunities for local young scientists; and (d) provide a platform for LAC youth who engage in citizens science, to share the results of their scientific research through major communication channels, shedding light on the tangible impacts of climate change in the region.

3.2 Establishing climate education scholarships for higher education

To ensure diversity and equitable opportunities for climate education in higher education, National Governments, through their relevant institutions and with technical and administrative support from UNESCO, UN agencies and International Funding Bodies, shall establish scholarships specifically designed to support higher education students interested in focusing on climate change related

studies, with a particular access to young individuals from underrepresented communities, developing countries and Caribbean SIDS.

4. Human rights, cultural heritage and creative diversity for a just climate transition

Recognizing the critical role ecosystems play in climate resilience, and in order to strengthen the engagement of youth from Afro-descendants, indigenous, local and migrant communities in climate response, National Governments, through their relevant institutions and with technical and administrative support from UNESCO and other IGOs, shall (a) develop programmes and initiatives promoting the inclusion of traditional knowledge and cultural values in the development and implementation of adaptation and mitigation strategies and climate policies, thus ensuring inclusive participation in decision-making processes and discussions; (b) conduct research programmes and develop case studies on implementation strategies as a basis for establishing policy frameworks and legal protections that protect indigenous territories, Afro-descendants and migrant communities and (c) organize capacity-building programmes on sustainable agricultural practices that align with the cultural values of rural communities and provide access to climate-resilient agricultural technologies.

Asia and the Pacific

The Asia Pacific is the most diverse region in the world, home to three-quarters of the world's indigenous peoples¹³ and 17 of the 36 global biodiversity hotspots.¹⁴ It is also the world's most climate-vulnerable region to both slow-onset (i.e., sea-level rise) and sudden-onset (i.e., disaster) events,¹⁵ while most countries in the region are insufficiently prepared to face extreme weather and natural disasters.¹⁶

With over 60% of the world's youth population, Asia and the Pacific has the largest number of young people to transition into adulthood.¹⁷ This transition is all the more difficult due to socioeconomic instability and widespread poverty. The region is home to half of the world's poor people, and income inequality has increased for about 85 per cent of the region's population since 2000.¹⁸ Furthermore, Asia and the Pacific includes 13 of the 30 countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and without concerted action, it could see additional 7.5 million people fall into poverty due to climate impacts by 2030.¹⁹ Moreover, 43% of the region's workforce are employed in industries that are vulnerable to a transition to net zero emissions.²⁰ This makes Asia and the Pacific a critical part of the climate transition and reinforces the urgent need to ensure this transition is socially equitable.

¹³ Asian Development Bank, 2023, *Indigenous Peoples*, <https://www.adb.org/who-we-are/safeguards/indigenous-peoples#>

¹⁴ UN Environment programme, 2018, *Scientists warn of dangerous decline in Asia-Pacific's biodiversity*, [Scientists warn of dangerous decline in Asia-Pacific's biodiversity \(unep.org\)](https://www.unep.org/scientists-warn-of-dangerous-decline-in-asia-pacifics-biodiversity)

¹⁵ UNESCO, 2023, *Asia-Pacific regional synthesis Climate change, displacement and the right to education*, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000385187/PDF/385187eng.pdf.multi>

¹⁶ ESCAP, 2023, *Asia and the Pacific unprepared to face climate-induced catastrophes, warns new UN Study*, <https://www.unescap.org/news/asia-and-pacific-unprepared-face-climate-induced-catastrophes-warns-new-un-study>

¹⁷ UN Women, 2023, *A youth network of gender equality champions driving dialogue, action and positive change*, <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/get-involved/30-for-2030#:~:text=Today%2C%20the%20world%20is%20home,aged%2015%20to%2024%20years.>

¹⁸ UNESCAP, 2022, *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2022*, https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/Survey2022_1.pdf

¹⁹ The World Bank, 2023, *Climate and Development in East Asia and Pacific Region*, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eap/brief/climate-and-development-in-east-asia-and-pacific-region>

²⁰ Deloitte, 2023, *Work toward net zero in Asia Pacific*, <https://www2.deloitte.com/nz/en/pages/climate-and-sustainability/articles/work-toward-net-zero-in-asia-pacific.html>

Despite the high vulnerability, the United Nations Development Programme reported in 2021 that Asia and the Pacific is regressing towards achieving the goals for climate action. This is especially concerning when the region accounts for one-third of global greenhouse gas emissions and 60 percent of the world's coal consumption.²¹ By 2030, the region's current Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) commitments are projected to result in a 16% increase in greenhouse gas emissions from 2010 levels, rather than the 45% reduction required by the Paris Agreement, to meet the 1.5-degree pathway.²²

The participants of the 13th UNESCO Youth Forum from Asia and the Pacific examined how climate change and the climate transition impacts their countries and communities, as well as the whole region. The rich discussion resulted in identifying the challenges and corresponding recommendations to address the social impact of climate change.

1. Enhancing youth climate action through intergenerational and cross-cultural decision-making

APA youth invite their Member States, through their relevant institutions, and with the technical assistance from UNESCO and associated networks, to enable meaningful youth representation and engagement in decision-making processes in the region by: a) providing access to appropriate capacity-strengthening opportunities (such as tools, trainings, mentorship) to reinforce their capacities for climate action leadership and youth-led initiatives; b) ensuring safe climate action dialogue platforms with community elders, policy makers and youth; c) harnessing regional cooperation mechanisms, platforms (such as the ASEAN, APEC, Group of Friends, etc.), and funding mechanisms such as Green Climate Fund, with the objective of amplifying youth voices from diverse communities (differently-abled, members of varied indigenous groups and of SOGIE, etc.) and enhancing solutions that improve social resilience and heritage conservation in the context of climate emergencies; and d) initiating youth-led regional and national reporting on the climate impact on and action from youth in the context of the climate emergency, in order to inform policy-makers and donors.

2. Youth climate crisis response and the green transition

2.1 Supporting Youth Economic Opportunities for an Equitable Climate Transition

APA youth recommend that Member States and the private sector, with technical assistance from UNESCO and associated networks, recognize and address the disparity in economic capacities and resources between youth from the region in taking action towards an equitable climate transition and ensuring diversity and inclusion in human resources policies by a) ensuring collaboration with local businesses, green industries and vocational institutions to create pathways for job placements and internships for marginalized youth communities; b) integrating youth-led initiatives (research, eco-entrepreneurship, and innovation hubs) into national and regional strategies for addressing socio-economic challenges related to climate change.

²¹ The World Bank, 2023, *Climate and Development in East Asia and Pacific Region*, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eap/brief/climate-and-development-in-east-asia-and-pacific-region>
²² ESCAP, 2023, *The race to net zero: accelerating climate action in Asia and the Pacific*, <https://rb.gy/9fx7i>

2.2 Ensuring Youth Effective Crisis Response and Management in Diverse Communities

APA youth invite their Member States, with technical support from UNESCO, to (a) provide young people with up-to-date trainings, including youth-led trainings, on disaster risk mitigation, reduction, emergency response, and sustainable recovery strategies, and; (b) consult young people in the co-creation of policies and activities related to disaster risk reduction and management, while integrating indigenous-led climate adaption and advocacy; and (c) financially and technically supporting the implementation of programmes and activities ensuring livable temporary shelters that are respectful to diverse needs, social background and abilities.

3. Climate education and skills development

APA youth urge Member States, through their relevant educational institutions and associated networks, to ignite green lifestyles in and through education by: a) mainstreaming global citizenship education with focus on climate action in their national curriculum, teacher and professional training, higher education programmes, and lifelong learning initiatives; b) co-creating youth platforms that strengthen access to educational tools to equip learners and educators with green skills to cope with and address the impact of climate change; and d) incentivizing climate action in digital platforms in the form of storytelling, crowdsourcing indigenous knowledge repositories, and networking and innovation competitions, by providing financial incentives and mentoring.

4. Strengthening the nexus between culture, nature and human rights while highlighting the power of history and creativity of youth communities

APA youth urge Member States, with support from UNESCO and associated networks, to harness the power of culture, creativity, history and human rights to protect youth and advance climate justice by a) strengthening existing legal protections and monitoring mechanisms such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; b) supporting the establishment of measures to report and monitor the threats and violence inflicted against young environmental defenders; c) revisiting their national and regional climate roadmaps to include cultural targets; and d) providing financial incentives for sustainability initiatives of local youth organizations that integrate culture and creativity such as, cultural heritage circular projects, creative circular art exhibitions, artisan collaborations, eco-art initiatives, storytelling and performances.

Africa

Although the African continent accounts for only two to four per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, it is disproportionately affected.²³ Africa is warming faster than other continents²⁴, its sea

²³ Kouamé Y.L., 2022, *Réchauffement climatique : comment la jeunesse africaine rappelle l'urgence*, <https://shorturl.at/etxyF>

²⁴ World Economic Forum, 2021, *This is the state of the climate in Africa – and why it urgently matters to us all*, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/10/state-of-the-climate-in-africa/>

levels are rising faster than the global average²⁵, and it is estimated that water stress will affect around 250 million people on the continent and displace up to 700 million people by 2030²⁶.

With 60% of the population under the age of 25, young people are significantly exposed to climate change in Africa.²⁷ Extreme weather events, such as prolonged droughts, floods and heat waves, can disrupt access to education, healthcare and livelihoods. Inadequate infrastructure in many parts of Africa amplifies the consequences, and climate-related vulnerability factors are also on the rise²⁸.

Climate change in Africa is not just an environmental issue, but also a political, social and economic challenge. The impacts of global warming are being felt disproportionately across the continent, affecting ecosystems, agriculture, the economy²⁹ and thousands of people. To reduce these impacts, the region is seeking to implement resilient adaptation and mitigation measures. Nevertheless, two-thirds of young Africans are pushing for bolder political action against climate change or trying to reduce their own carbon footprint.³⁰ Four out of ten young Africans are concerned about climate change, and 80 per cent are dissatisfied with the way their leaders are tackling it.³¹

ware of the social threats posed by the climate crisis and the increased vulnerability of its impacts on young people³²; taking into account the fact that young Africans are expected to represent 42% of the world's youth population by 2030³³; recognizing the international and multilateral agreements aimed at mitigating the impacts of climate change; and taking note of the capacity of young people to meaningfully drive a just climate transition through their innovative ideas, the participants from Africa at the 13th UNESCO Youth Forum jointly make the following recommendations.

1. Inclusive and effective youth engagement in actions to combat climate change

To promote an inclusive and effective engagement of young people in the fight against climate change, African Member States, through their national governments and appropriate structures, and with technical assistance from UNESCO and international organizations, should (a) support financially and technically the participation of young people in regional climate events, to strengthen the involvement of youth in decision-making on climate policies in each Member State; (b) create, in each Member State, a "climate response counter" as a climate crisis response mechanism, to mobilize funds to finance green initiatives and businesses of young people in the fight against climate change.

²⁵ World Meteorological Organization, 2021, *State of the Climate in Africa*, https://library.wmo.int/index.php?lvl=notice_display&id=21973#.ZCWa6nZBy70

²⁶ World Meteorological Organization, 2022, *Climate change in Africa can destabilize 'countries and entire regions'*, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/09/1126221>

²⁷ UN, 2023, *Les enfants africains subissent de plein fouet les effets du changement climatique*, <https://news.un.org/fr/story/2023/09/1138177>

²⁸ Fonds Monétaire International, 2023, Numéro spécial : *Afrique – Vers une croissance et une résilience plus solide*, <https://shorturl.at/JSTV1>

²⁹ IPCC, 2023, *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*, <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/>

³⁰ UNDP, 2023, *Les Jeunes en Afrique : un Impératif Démographique pour la Paix et la Sécurité*, <https://shorturl.at/rvSW5>

³¹ Euronews, 2023, *Real aid for Africa would mean helping its youth — the biggest casualty of climate change*, <https://shorturl.at/zFHJ8>

³² UN, 2023, *Les enfants africains subissent de plein fouet les effets du changement climatique*, <https://news.un.org/fr/story/2023/09/1138177>

³³ World Economic Forum, 2022, *Why Africa's youth hold the key to its development potential*, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/09/why-africa-youth-key-development-potential/>

2. Youth health and well-being for sustainable and resilient cities and communities

In order to improve and preserve the health and well-being of young people for sustainable and resilient cities and communities, African Member States, with the support of intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and other stakeholders, must mobilize to implement measures to ensure a healthy environment for young people, through (a) preserving biodiversity by supporting the creation and development of more green spaces for the well-being of young people and by promoting agroforestry in areas affected by climate change, in order to improve the resilience of production systems and diversify the sources of income of young farmers; (b) the introduction and support of policies to improve public transport services that are green and more accessible to young people; (c) the introduction of a local or national climate bonus for young people involved in the fight against climate change, with the technical support of specialized state institutions, over a period of three years.

3. Integrating environmental education for a green transition

In order to ensure the integration of environmental education for a green transition, African Member States, through their national governments and appropriate structures, and with the technical assistance of intergovernmental organizations and NGOs, should (a) organize awareness-raising campaigns led by young people, in local languages, in order to promote access by local populations to information on climate change issues; (b) initiate training and capacity-building programmes for out-of-school youth on techniques of resilience and adaptation to climate change, and integrate them into local environmental projects so that they are better equipped and able to develop impactful solutions; (c) provide financial support for the implementation of programmes that aim at promoting and training young people in ecotourism, particularly school drop-outs with a view to helping them find new careers; (d) strengthen research on climate change issues by awarding national research grants to young leaders, researchers and students involved in the fight against climate change.

4. Digital and technological integration for climate solutions

In order to encourage the emergence of climate solutions incorporating new technologies, African Member States, with technical assistance from UNESCO and international organizations, should (a) support the implementation of a hackathon for young people who develop innovative technological solutions for the climate crisis and for the reduction of plastic pollution; (b) set up capacity-building programmes for young digital activists who raise public awareness of the challenges of climate change through digital platforms; (c) establish local databases providing up-to-date information on the effects of climate change and the quantity of plastic waste in national waters.

5. Human rights and an ethical and cultural approach to a just climate transition

In order to promote human rights and the implementation of an ethical and cultural approach for a just climate transition, African Member States, with the technical assistance of UNESCO and international organizations should (a) include the results of ethnographic and participatory research on endogenous knowledge and the concerns of local and indigenous communities in government programmes and policies aimed at combating climate change; (b) ensure that national climate policies

respect human rights, in particular the right to a healthy environment; (c) support local populations in developing management plans and sustainable relocation strategies for areas at risk of flooding, taking into account their cultures, traditions and rights (d) provide financial support for youth initiatives and projects that aim at developing improved drainage systems to combat flooding and at promoting resilient water supply systems.

Arab region

The Arab region is one of the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. This is due to a combination of factors, including its arid climate, limited water resources, and high population density.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Sixth Assessment Report states that the Arab region is experiencing "warming at a rate that is faster than the global average", and "increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, such as heat waves, droughts, and floods".³⁴ Climate change is also significantly impacting the region's water resources, as the "water availability in the Arab region is projected to decrease by up to 20% by the end of the century".¹ These negative impacts are expected to worsen in the coming decades. According to the Arab Human Development Report 2022, "the economic cost of climate change in the Arab region is estimated to be between 2% and 4% of GDP by 2050".

In such a context, the young people of the region are primarily suffering from the social impact of climate change in terms of:

- Education: Extreme weather events, such as heat waves and sandstorms, are forcing schools to close. Additionally, climate change is leading to water scarcity, which is making it difficult for students to attend school due to illness.
- Economic opportunities: Climate change is also limiting economic opportunities for young people in the region. Reduced crop yields, water scarcity, and extreme weather events are all harming the economies of Arab countries. By 2050, climate-related water scarcity could lead to economic losses equivalent to 14 percent of the region's GDP.³⁵
- Water scarcity: Climate change is reducing water availability through increased evaporation and decreased precipitation.
- Food insecurity: As a result of climate change, reduced crop yields and increased food prices are making it more difficult for people to access food. This is particularly concerning as the Arab region is the world's most food-import-dependent, and it is the only region where malnutrition rates have been rising.³⁶
- Health impacts: Due to climate change, extreme heat waves, air pollution, and the spread of vector-borne diseases are all increasing in the region.
- Migration: Pushed by climate change, people in the region are moving away from areas that are becoming uninhabitable due to water scarcity, drought, and extreme weather events.

³⁴ IPCC, 2023, *Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report, March 2023*, [Sixth Assessment Report — IPCC](#)

³⁵ UNDP, 2023, *Rising to the challenge: Climate action in the Arab region*, <https://t.ly/-v3uP>

³⁶ Ibid.

- Conflict: Climate change is exacerbating conflict in the Arab region. Competition over scarce resources and displacement are all contributing to conflict.³⁷

The youth from Arab States present the following recommendations:

<p>1. Climate finance to enhance youth climate action</p>
<p>To bolster climate finance, drive sustainable investment, support youth-led initiatives, boost financial literacy, foster regional cooperation, and enhance engagement with international partners in the pursuit of climate resilience and mitigation efforts in the Arab region, we invite Members States, private sector, IGOs and NGOs to join efforts in establishing a comprehensive strategic approach that will (a) promote sustainable and green initiatives through the establishment of financial incentives and dedicated climate funds for youth led local businesses, entrepreneurs, innovators and the private sector, to facilitate youth access to capital in addressing grassroot challenges. Enhance financial literacy by integrating climate finance modules into educational curriculums and training programs; (b) proactively engage with international financial institutions such as the World Bank and Green Climate Fund to bridge the gap in accessing funds for large-scale climate projects impacting youth.</p>
<p>2. Climate education and awareness</p>
<p>To enhance climate education and awareness so as to create more informed, engaged, and proactive societies that address climate change effectively in the Arab region, we urge Members States, IGOs, and NGOs, in alignment with UNESCO's field of action, to (a) integrate comprehensive climate change education into national school curricula at all levels; (b) launch impactful media campaigns to inform the public about the social ramifications of climate change and advocate for an equitable transition, while highlighting the crucial role of and engaging with youth as drivers of change in this endeavour and (c) prioritize meaningful youth engagement by actively supporting youth-led initiatives and platforms that champion climate action in the region, to ensure that youth voices are not only heard but also integrated in the development and implantation of national climate policies and decision-making processes.</p>
<p>3. Economic impacts and job transitions</p>
<p>We encourage Member States, with the strategic support of UN Agencies as well as NGOs to (a) promote the growth of green industries and sustainable practices that will create new job opportunities, particularly for those affected by the declining reliance on fossil fuels in the Arab region, while ensuring adapted training for young graduates or young job seekers; (b) launch re-skilling and up-skilling programmes tailored to equip young professionals transitioning to green jobs and industries with the necessary skills relevant to emerging sectors such as renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and water management, building upon the region's existing expertise in oil and gas industries and (c) implement robust social welfare programmes and foster financial incentives for businesses to hire and train young workers from industries adversely affected by the climate transition.</p>

³⁷ IPCC, 2023, op. cit.

4. Digital and technological integration for climate solutions

To integrate technology into climate solutions and nurture the skills necessary for its effective implementation, we encourage Members States, with the support of UNESCO as well as relevant actors engaged in this domain, to (a) leverage digital tools and platforms to help craft effective youth climate solutions in the Arab region; (b) promote the utilization of technology by young people for the collection, analysis, and interpretation of extensive climate data, leading to more accurate forecasting and timely interventions in climate emergencies; and (c) prioritize capacity-building by organizing training sessions to upskill Arab youth in the intersection of technology and climate action.

5. Preservation of cultural heritage

To safeguard the Arab region's cultural heritage in the face of climate threats, we highly encourage UNESCO to develop a comprehensive strategy to assist Member States as well as all stakeholders engaged in the preservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage under three key aspects (a) gradually increase investments in infrastructure and technologies to shield these sites from climate-induced perils such as rising sea levels and wildfires, in order to preserve the cultural heritage for future generations; (b) prioritize digital documentation and archiving of endangered cultural heritage to ensure preserving the memory of such heritage and highlighting its significance, for the benefit of future generations and (c) foster collaboration with and among local communities in preservation efforts, recognizing and honouring their traditional knowledge and practices concerning heritage protection, while ensuring that youth are engaged as transmission bearers of this cultural heritage.

ANNEX II

YOUTH-LED PROJECTS

1. Mountains 4 mental health of youth, Ana Intihar Marulc (Slovenia)
2. Youth-led solutions for climate resilience: mapping water-related risks in peri-urban areas of Mar del Plata, led by Gabriela Calderon (Argentina)
3. Climate change resilience and inclusive futures: empowering persons with disabilities in dealing with the social impact of climate change, led by Nir Bahadur Shrestha (Nepal)
4. STEM for climate action, led by Joy Hayley Munthali (Malawi)
5. Capacity-building to implement a climate education programme at the Petra World Heritage Site, led by Tayma'a Abu Ayyash (Jordan)