

First Adopted by the Assembly of the Children and Youth Major Group to UNEP (CYMG) on 09 April 2024

## **Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Ocean Science and Governance Youth Network**

### **1. Background**

The Children and Youth Major Group to UNEP<sup>1</sup> established its Ocean Science and Governance Working Group in 2023 and started engaging with the Secretariat of the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention). With the elevation of ocean issues through UNEA 6, the mandate is given to the constituency to further its engagement with UNEP-administered Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAPs). With further consultations, the Children and Youth Major Group to UNEP established the Ocean Science and Governance Youth Network henceforth referred to as (OSG Youth Network) to address broadly all marine and ocean governance issues and engage, if necessary, in UNEA 6/L.18 resolution processes, which calls on stakeholders, organizations and other bodies to participate in or contribute to henceforth. This is while recognizing the mandate or role of other bodies, youth constituencies, and networks in the necessary intergovernmental processes.

The United Nations Environment Assembly, at its 6th session, adopted a resolution<sup>2</sup> seeking to enhance the United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) role in ocean and seas governance by recognizing its mandate as the chief/ lead organization within the UN System on environmental matters. The resolution requests that the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans administered by UNEP be strengthened by tackling issues it is currently addressing by giving these programmes the necessary support.

The Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAPs) were established in 1974 and have evolved over time, with UNEP now administering over 7 Conventions and action plans. These regional frameworks and action plans have evolved to address marine issues specific to each region, contributing to broader efforts in ocean governance. Core RSCAPS functions include capacity building through education, training, communication and institutional development aimed at conserving and protecting the marine environment.

The UNEP-administered RSCAPs currently address issues related to Marine Litter, Land Based Pollution, Coastal Zone Management, Coral Reefs, and Marine Pollution within the following regions: 1) Caribbean Region 2) Caspian Sea 3) Eastern Africa 4) Eastern Asia Sea 5) Mediterranean 6) North-West Pacific and 7) Western Africa.

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<sup>1</sup> Hereinafter referred to as CYMG

<sup>2</sup> [UNEP/EA.6/Res.15](#) - Strengthening ocean efforts to tackle climate change, marine biodiversity loss and pollution

## 2. Objective

To facilitate the collective engagement of youth in addressing ocean-related issues and to leverage their knowledge, experience, advocacy, skills, and innovative solutions to inform and contribute to ocean-related policies and programs.

## 3. Governance Structure

### 3.1 Engagement of the Network with CYMG Processes and other MEAs:

The network is an organ of the Children and Youth Major Group to UNEP. The network can be invited and requested by the constituency members through the CYMG Global Coordinators to provide updates on the status of the network and its achievements at relevant events<sup>3</sup> organized by CYMG.

The network is declared as the mechanism through which CYMG will mobilize youth individuals and organizations/entities to support UNEP-administered regional seas programme and action plans with the aim of becoming the partner youth constituency for those regional MEAs. The network may engage with other MEAs and entities<sup>4</sup>, whereas invited, in providing technical assistance and substantive support on thematic areas relevant to the regional seas programmes and action plans.

### 3.2 Mandate holders

The youth network will be led by two Co-Chairs with the support of RSCAPs Focal Points and a coordination team made up of administrative functions. The Co-Chairs will serve for a period of two years and will be elected or selected by the membership of the youth network. Support for the selection or election should be requested from the Global Coordinators of the Children and Youth Major Group to UNEP.

**Election or selection will be guided by CYMG PnP to ensure transparency in the process of having the Co-Chairs. Election or Selection can only be done by members of the OSG Youth Network.**

The Co-Chairs will oversee the work of this network. The network is functionally affiliated with CYMG. However, the Co-Chairs are not within the CYMG institutional reporting mechanism. The Co-Chairs may seek support from the CYMG Secretariat and the Global Steering Committee through the Global Coordinators on any substantive and procedural matters.

The mandate holders and the members of the Network are bound to the CYMG's Processes and Procedures (PnP)<sup>5</sup> so that they can also engage in other UNEP processes as CYMG members, including but not limited to the regional forums, thematic meetings, and the sessions of the United Nations Environment Assembly.

### 3.3 Geographical representation in the Coordination Team

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<sup>3</sup> These may include Global Youth Environment Assembly and Regional Youth Environment Forums among others

<sup>4</sup> These may include Multilateral Environmental Agreements and Intergovernmental Programmes or Processes not administered by UNEP

<sup>5</sup> CYMG Processes and Procedures (PnP) document is accessible to:  
[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Zk5s9TnR9eKvnWVPZEQkjO\\_APNtRspiJUR8P-2XpTIU](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Zk5s9TnR9eKvnWVPZEQkjO_APNtRspiJUR8P-2XpTIU)

Each RSCAP should have two Contact Points with the function and responsibility to coordinate, facilitate, consolidate, plan, monitor, and evaluate activities and the network's deliverables pertaining to each respective RSCAP.

### **3.4 Diverse Representation in the coordination or network**

It is imperative that the coordination team actively pursues diversity in its composition in line with the guiding values outlined in CYMG PnP<sup>6</sup>. Each member should be committed to the principle that individuals from varied backgrounds and communities have the right to assume different positions within the coordination team.

### **3.5 Membership/Composition**

The membership shall include individuals aged 35 and below as well as youth-led and youth-serving organizations/associations/entities as guided by the Children and Youth Major Group PnP.

The membership should be diverse and will encourage individuals with a special focus on ocean science and governance.

As guided by the RSCAPs. In the initial stages, membership will be on a voluntary basis and should comprise youth from the following regions: 1) Caribbean Region, 2) Caspian Sea, 3) Eastern Africa, 4) Eastern Asia Sea, 5) Mediterranean, 6) North-West Pacific and 7) Western Africa.

Youth from other regions where UNEP is not the administrator of their regional seas programme and action plans are also invited to become members of the network. However, engagement might be limited to providing technical support, capacity development, and substantive support to youth from other regions. Members will also engage in broader global environmental processes or ocean and seas governance-related intergovernmental processes.

## **4. Functions**

The Network is tasked with providing youth with the opportunity to engage in the processes of the regional seas conventions, action plans and other relevant entities through:

- **Policy and Advocacy:** Collective and meaningful participation of young people in official, ad-hoc/informal, and formal avenues of policy design, implementation, monitoring, follow-up, and review of the governance of the regional seas conventions, action plans and other relevant entities.
- **Collaboration:** Engage with different stakeholders to help share information, organize events, expand network and partnership, build capacity, and collaborate to engage in multilateral processes.

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<sup>6</sup> The constituency as guided by the CYMG PnP strives to exercise the following values in its work ethic: Participatory and consultative; Universal and equitable; Mission-driven and professional; Innovative, synthesizing old and new; Context conscious; Independent of external control and voluntary in nature; Egalitarian, equitable, respectful, and inclusive; Anti-oppression principles and practice; Consensus-based decision making; Accountable, transparent, open; Evidence-informed and knowledge-inclusive; and Multiculturalism, diversity, inclusion, integrity

- Youth Action: Provide young people with an inclusive platform that encourages them to lead, join, showcase, and share innovative and effective actions aimed at reducing the impact of the environmental crisis on marine and ocean governance issues.
- Meaningful Engagement and Representation: Ensure meaningful engagement in relevant activities and promote active participation in the meetings of the Conventions, Action Plans and Other Entities
- Discussion Avenues: Provision of platforms and opportunities for dialogues, knowledge sharing, and formulating the network’s position on relevant issues with experts and decision-makers, as well as among youth from different groups and backgrounds.
- Research: Engage the network in conducting study and research to inform the group about its positions on matters related to ocean science and governance.
- Technical Outputs: Prepare reports, research papers, interventions/statements, and submissions focused on reports, strategic plans, work programmes and necessary outputs related to ocean governance.
- Knowledge and Capacity Building: Implement capacity building for the network in terms of knowledge, advocacy, and skills related to ocean science and governance.

## 5. Communication

Purpose	Aspect of Communications	Primary Facilitation	Network	Children and Youth Major Group
Communications with UN system entities and other intergovernmental bodies	Request for support, participation, representation and/or collaboration	Co-Chairs	Present reports to the network	Inform CYMG Global Coordinators
Communications with parties or member states	Request for support, participation, representation and/or collaboration	Co-Chairs	Provide updates and request for selections among members	Inform CYMG Global Coordinators
Communications with relevant stakeholders	Request for support, participation, representation and/or collaboration	Co-Chairs	Provide updates and requests for selections among members	Inform CYMG Global Coordinators

NB: It is encouraged to copy relevant focal points to email communications, etc. for transparency and continuation of work in case of any unforeseeable disruptions in the operations of the network.

## 6. Amendment, and Adoption

The ToR Document can be updated/ amended through a deliberate process, using the following steps:

**Provisions:**

1. The Co-Chairs should consult with the network membership to gather inputs on any proposed amendments and/or revisions of this TOR.
2. Co-Chairs should consult with CYMG Global Coordinators for the amendments and/or revisions to be discussed at the appropriate CYMG Assembly Meeting and shall be disseminated further in the CYMG mailing list in-writing.
3. The CYMG Assembly will decide or establish an ad hoc mechanism for the consideration of the proposed amendments and/or revisions as per the CYMG processes and procedures (PnP).
4. The decision(s) on the amendment(s) and/or revision(s) will be made according to the CYMG processes and procedures (PnP).