

# Stockholm+50 Global Youth Policy Paper:

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**STOCKHOLM +**



A HEALTHY PLANET FOR THE PROSPERITY OF ALL  
- OUR RESPONSIBILITY, OUR OPPORTUNITY

**YOUTH ENGAGEMENT**

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*Bringing together the views and demands of youth  
across the world for a sustainable future*

# Executive Summary

**The youth across the world have come together to express our deep concern regarding the current state of our home - Planet Earth -** and the previous and current mishandling of the perception of the global environment by the people in power. This policy paper outlines our vision for the road ahead and the steps required to achieve it. Coordinated by the Stockholm+50 Youth Task Force, this policy paper is the product of research, discussions, and numerous global youth hybrid consultations ensuring that as many youth voices as possible were heard, to ensure international representation irrespective of country or region.

In keeping with the themes of Stockholm+50, youth have developed key demands that we know to be crucial to achieving these goals. We urge you to read the demands in their entirety, as they reflect the scale of work needed and more importantly the need to act urgently to meet these demands.

**In “Reflecting on the urgent need for actions to achieve a healthy planet and prosperity of all”, we call on governments to:**

- Protect and restore all ecosystems by halting deforestation, banning bottom trawling, unsustainable mining and other environmentally destructive practices - recognising that the best solution to many of our environmental problems lies in letting nature heal itself.
- Introduce large-scale environmental destruction, ecocide, as a crime in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court - as a means to hold governments and corporations accountable for their damage to our common planet.
- Submit strengthened nationally determined contributions (NDCs), financing commitments and long-term strategies in 2022 to halve global GHG emissions by 2030.

**In “Achieving a sustainable and inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic”, we urge governments to:**

- Ensure access to W.A.S.H (water, sanitation and hygiene), COVID-19 vaccines and healthcare for all.
- Align all recovery spending into low-carbon investments, green jobs and future-proof sectors to avoid carbon lock-in of fossil fuels and stranded assets impeding sustainable development.
- Transform the animal-industrial food system, recognizing its significant impact on climate, deforestation, animal lives, and future health risks including those of zoonotic diseases and excessive use of hormones. Transition to regenerative agriculture that strengthens biodiversity and improves carbon sequestration.

# Executive Summary

## In “Accelerating the implementation of the environmental dimension of Sustainable Development in the context of the Decade of Action”, we urge governments to:

- Commit to expanding formal and non-formal education regarding the causes, effects and solutions of the climate crisis, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation to enhance capacity among youth, prepare them for green jobs and build a sustainable future.
- Immediately establish a fossil-fuel non proliferation treaty to phase out fossil fuels and scale up 100% safe, clean and sustainable energy for all in order to reach net-negative emissions by 2050.
- Strengthen the environmental rule of law and ensure that the polluter-pays-principle is applied by integrating all environmental, social, welfare and health costs to harmful activities.

## Finally, in addition to previously established themes for Stockholm+50, we would like to highlight the importance of “Ensuring Inclusive Processes for Decision Making” and urge governments to:

- Adopt participatory and inclusive decision-making processes at every level to ensure the meaningful engagement of all rights holders, highlighting youth and those most strongly affected by the triple planetary crisis.
- Safeguard the peaceful democratic order through the principles of press freedom, free speech, free and fair elections and the protection of all youth activists across the world.
- Increase investments in children and youth through targeted programs, support to civil society organisations, entrepreneurs and marginalised groups - recognizing that investing in children and youth gives a strong leverage towards a sustainable future.

**The current world system is not delivering on its pledges to build a sustainable future.** Time is running out - and we have had enough. It is the final hour to move beyond empty words and broken promises. Stockholm+50 needs to be a turning point towards a better, brighter future for all - redefining our relationship with nature. We call on all governments to deliver strong commitments to Stockholm+50, and to engage in meaningful dialogue and decisions with us, the young people of today, to ensure a better future for the children of tomorrow and ensure intergenerational justice in all policies of the United Nations. The time is now.

**#ThePowerinYOUTH**

# Background and Introduction

**This year, in 2022, we mark 50 years since the first “United Nations Conference on Human Environment,” which was organised in Stockholm, Sweden in 1972.** This anniversary provides an opportunity to reflect on the highlights, successes and lessons learned in the last 50 years and also signifies the urgency of progress and action needed to combat the planetary crisis facing the world today.

Since Stockholm 1972, we have seen massive environmental degradation for the benefit of a small share of humanity. Whilst many have been lifted out of poverty, average life expectancy has increased and more children than ever before have access to education, the inequalities in our world have continued to increase, threatening the future of human development. Simultaneously, greenhouse gas emissions have continued to increase; we have seen a 70% decline in wildlife populations; the extinction rate is 1,000–10,000 times higher than at any other time in the past 10 million years; and 6 of 10 planetary boundaries have already been breached. Polluted air is breathed by roughly 99% of the world’s population and kills 7 million people annually. The future of our planet, of all young people, and of future generations is at stake.

Whilst celebrating progress in some areas, we must recognize that world leaders have failed to achieve what they committed to in Stockholm 1972. The same failure to adequately address the crisis we are currently living in has been manifested again and again, most recently at the COP26. It is therefore imperative that Stockholm+50 becomes not just another meeting, but a turning point to transform our societies towards a better, sustainable future.

As young people, we comprise over 40% of the global population and carry knowledge and competence to combat the triple planetary crisis. Thus, we have a key role to play in developing, implementing and reviewing policies, actions and commitments towards sustainable development. If young people are left out today, there is no hope for future generations.

**The Stockholm+50 Youth Task Force** has been convened by the Children and Youth Major Group of UNEP in cooperation with the National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations (LSU) and support of youth constituent organisations in Kenya, and works alongside a universal Stockholm+50 Youth Working/Focus Group. The Task Force was constituted through a joint nomination and selection process, bringing together representatives of certain youth constituencies linked with the themes of Stockholm+50, and further youth advocates and organisations engaging newly with the UN system, all representing their countries, communities, organisations and constituencies on a voluntary basis.

The development of this policy paper has entailed several self-organised youth consultations, partner meetings, with multiple global, regional, and decentralised consultations being conducted so far, along with part 1 of the Stockholm+50 Youth Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya in February 2022. These consultations have shaped the third iteration of the policy paper and we are proud to present this work to you. We ask that the implementation of our recommendation be done with a participatory approach that engages stakeholders at all levels.

We are standing at a turning point in human history. What we decide at Stockholm+50 will shape the future for generations to come. It is time to turn the tide. Listen to the demands of young people and sign on to this commitment. We look forward to working with you to create a better, more sustainable future for all.

## The Stockholm+50 Youth Task Force



## A. Reflecting on the urgent need for actions to achieve a healthy planet and prosperity of all

### *We call for all governments to:*

1. Recognize the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment in domestic legal systems by integrating it in national constitutions and legislations, and expeditiously vote in favour of recognition to this matter in the UN General Assembly, pursuant to the Human Rights Council Resolution 48/13.
2. Recognize large scale environmental destruction, ecocide, as a punishable crime in domestic laws and in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.
3. With recognition of the current loss of biodiversity and wildlife habitat, immediately halt large-scale deforestation, and implement bans on: bottom trawling, overfishing, unsustainable mining in fragile ecosystems, and other destructive practices which hamper the environment's ability to regenerate and execute vital ecosystem processes.
4. Protect and restore all terrestrial, coastal and marine ecosystems and biosphere reserves using inclusive actions and legislation to ensure support of long-lived stakeholder communities, mainly Indigenous groups who have a right of access and abode to areas which contain these protected ecosystems due to their ability to sustainably live in balance with nature.
5. Set a Nature Positive goal for 2030 with respect to biodiversity, and a goal for chemical pollution and waste, to sit alongside the existing target to limit global warming to 1.5 C, for an inclusive and just transition to a nature-positive economy.
6. Address unsustainable consumption and production systems through a commitment to principles that promote a circular economy such as ensuring the use of life cycle analyses and cradle-to-cradle designs to sustainably manage waste and production systems respectively. In the same breath, recognizing that to achieve "prosperity for all", resources produced and managed by these principles should aid in closing the resource inequality gap.
7. Transform our agri-food systems in line with the recommendations from the World Food Forum Youth Action Compendium by shifting towards more sustainable, small-scale, and regenerative agriculture and plant-based diets while recognizing socio-cultural and economic contexts - making nutritious, safe and sustainable food affordable and accessible to all.
8. Begin to put in place support structures for farmers in case of crop losses due to climate change, investing and training them in resilient agriculture and adaptation measures.
9. Ensure integrated management of resources across sectors and scales, by investing in greater transparency and traceability, as well as harmonised reporting among countries on circular metrics such as recycling rates and resource consumption. Shift actions away from remediation and response towards an anticipatory approach.

10. Implement Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), such as by including watershed strategies as the base consideration in urban planning, agricultural, and development decisions so that their impact can be harmonised to ensure that groundwater withdrawals and groundwater recharge are balanced. Establish governance to mitigate socio-economic imbalances and manage demand as well as supply, through comprehensive water conservation measures, greywater reuse, and increased wastewater treatment.

11. Ban the use of harmful chemicals, such as the POPs listed under the Stockholm Convention, and enforce a precautionary, science-based approach for the introduction of any new chemicals to ensure no harmful effects on land, air, water, and living organisms.

12. Transparently prepare and communicate strengthened nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and long-term strategies, with the adequate support from developed countries, in 2022 with clear plans for reducing GHG emissions and reaching net-zero within the coming decades, through an inclusive, stakeholder-driven process aligned with the recommendations of the IPCC.

13. Introduce mandatory greenhouse gas reporting, human rights and environmental due diligence laws for listed corporations, and a legally binding international treaty to cover global trade and supply chains. Such legislation must have a substantial liability and enforcement regime.

14. Accelerate progress towards a proposed United Nations Binding Treaty on Business, Human Rights and Environment.

15. Utilise non-violent and respectful dialogue in negotiations to solve disputes, commit to multilateral cooperation to build peace with respect to geopolitical situations and recognize the detrimental impact of violent conflicts and war on human lives, development, and the environment.

16. Ratify and fulfil agreements under CBD, UNCCD, UNFCCC, CITES, invasive species protocol, UNCLOS, and other international conventions on the environment and sustainable development as a minimum.

17. Ensure that the global plastics treaty is legally binding, including a global target on virgin plastics production, declare a global crisis on plastics to call for urgent action, enforce extended producer responsibility legislations, and prioritise innovation in eco-friendly substitutes for plastic and technology for plastics cleanup. Put in place an immediate action plan to address the challenges caused by the 7th continent of plastics.

18. Ensure that coastal development takes place in a manner using a marine spatial planning framework so all stakeholders are included in the process while prioritising the safeguarding of coastal communities and their livelihoods. Unsustainable marine practices must be addressed immediately with adequate monitoring, protection laws and policies.

19. Call for the establishment of a framework for setting common regulations for chemicals, pollutants and operations on international rivers, lakes, and groundwater resources by regions and nations.

## B. Achieving a sustainable and inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic

### *We call for all governments to:*

1. Ensure global justice and fairness in terms of access to vaccines, healthcare to impoverished and under-resourced communities and marginalised groups, creating more resilient global health models, processes, and systems, that invest in protective and restorative measures against future and current health risks including pandemics, diseases, malnutrition, antibiotic resistance, pollution & climate induced disasters.
2. Towards an inclusive recovery, we stress the need for access to vaccines to be facilitated through waiver on implementation, application and enforcement of Sections 1, 4, 5, and 7 of Part II of the TRIPS Agreement, recognizing SARS Covid-19 as a public health emergency of international concern and that there are already, and will be more in years to come, other international health emergencies where the right to life needs to take precedence over intellectual property rights.
3. Adopt a science-based approach in policy-making while also integrating traditional knowledge in response to our triple planetary crisis (pollution, climate change, and biodiversity loss), based on the latest available, peer-reviewed accepted scientific consensus. Acknowledge the role of biodiversity loss and climate change in increasing the risk for future zoonotic diseases and health hazards.
4. Ensure transparent sharing of information and scientific findings within different institutes and between countries to support the role of science in informing sound decision-making.
5. Align all recovery measures with sustainable and environmentally sound investments into green jobs, low-carbon technology and future-proof sectors to avoid carbon lock-in of fossil fuel infrastructure and stranded assets which hinders sustainable development. Integrate sustainability factors into public procurement processes, taking environmental, economic and social factors into account.
6. Transform the animal-industrial supply chain towards sustainability, recognizing its significant impact on greenhouse gas emissions, expanding deforestation and future health risks due to the close proximity of animals and excessive use of antibiotics.
7. Align with the Our Future Agenda: New Deal for a New Generation plan to address the immediate COVID-19 pandemic and the longer-term need for quality education and skills development, secure and meaningful jobs and economic opportunities, and more sustainable ways of living.
8. Ensure constructive implementation measures on a just transition promoting socioeconomic equity during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.
9. Request commitment from large scale businesses, organisations and foundations to help recover post COVID and build inclusive, sustainable and resilient communities worldwide.



10. Implement practices that would foster a regenerative care-based economy that addresses the gendered division of labour and unpaid care work typically placed on the shoulders of women, girls and gender-diverse people which is exacerbated by the global pandemic.

11. Call for governments to respect the right of people with disabilities to freely access public educational institutions via the creation of infrastructure that aids in their learning and movement. Furthermore we call for the provision of emergency aid to protect and assist vulnerable groups in the event of climate related disasters or environmental crimes.

12. Ensure access to WASH - water, sanitation and hygiene, recognising that water is a human right. The pandemic stressed medical systems which were further exacerbated by gaps in inequality of access to sanitation. This led to an exponential spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

13. Address all forms of gender-based violence, violence against children, and human trafficking, exacerbated by migration due to climate change, through multi-sectoral collaboration, anti-discrimination policies, and ensuring social protection with the provision of key services such as sexual and reproductive health, rights, and education.

14. Create and implement strategies to increase digital connectivity, in particular in rural communities, to ensure increased resilience in the context of current and future health crises.

15. Ensure that the recovery in high-impact value chains includes targeted investments in informal waste pickers, MSMEs and women to ensure they can benefit from a transition to more inclusive systems. These investments should aim specifically to remove barriers preventing these groups from fully experiencing the benefits of this transition - such as providing early childhood care to support guardians of young children.



## C. Accelerating the implementation of the environmental dimension of Sustainable Development in the context of the Decade of Action

### *We call for all governments to:*

1. Commit to expanding formal and nonformal education regarding the causes, effects and solutions of the climate crisis, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation to enhance capacity among youth, prepare them for green jobs and build a sustainable future, by integrating these topics in all school and university curricula and ensuring free education that is inclusive for all children, women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, LGBTQI+, seniors, faith groups and, people with disabilities and differently abled, both locally and globally. Integrate decolonializing perspectives within the very aspects of education.
2. Phase out the subsidising, exploration, extraction and utilisation of all fossil fuels to achieve net-negative emissions by 2050, following the principles of a just transition and common but differentiated responsibilities. To facilitate this transition, establish an international fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty to immediately stop all further expansion of fossil production.
3. Rapidly scale up renewable energy production towards a fully sustainable energy system producing safe, clean, secure and accessible energy for all.
4. Recognising that a transition to a circular economy is needed alongside the expansion of renewable energies to solve the triple planetary crisis, create a global initiative at Stockholm +50 that addresses the governance gap on circular economy and commits countries to an accelerated and inclusive circular transition.
5. Amend the global current economic systems in respective member states where businesses and money-making take priority over human wellbeing and environmental protection, as it is not fit-for-purpose to achieve a sustainable future. Measure national and individual wellbeing based on social, physical and mental health, instead of economic growth and resources.
6. Stop all forms of corruption by encouraging open and transparent governance, and creating and implementing policies and oversight mechanisms to tackle corruption, tax evasion and illicit financial flows.
7. Ensure that all environmentally harmful and polluting activities pay the right price by internalising all environmental, social, welfare and health costs, applying a polluter-pays-principle, with an understanding that the precautionary principle takes precedence and needs to be implemented. Furthermore, providing fair compensation to the communities affected, which also ensures biodiversity rehabilitation while encouraging innovative ideas for redressal of environmental issues.

8. Ensure all affluent developed countries utilise a fair percentage of GDP towards the benefit of environmental protection and human development beyond their national borders, and integrate the spirit and principles of environmental justice.
9. Put in place measures to strengthen environmental rule of law including enforcement, cooperation among state officials to stop environmental crimes, with an attention towards endangered and vulnerable species, wildlife trafficking and illegal logging.
10. Ensure effective international cooperation to facilitate protection of displaced persons including climate change induced migration to prevent modern slavery and trafficking in persons, with special focus on integration of such displaced communities through implementation of international legal instruments and consider introducing legal measures to protect climate induced cross border migrants.
11. Implement the New Urban Agenda resolution A/RES/71/256 to ensure the creation of green infrastructure and policy which form the basis of sustainable cities and communities. Work with all stakeholders to protect the planet by creating safe, accessible, inclusive and climate-friendly mobility systems.
12. Address the growing impacts of digital technologies on humanity and the environment, by forming a Global Digital Compact, outlining the key principles for an open, free environmentally sustainable and secure digital future for all.



## D. Ensuring Inclusive Processes for Decision Making

### *We call for all governments to:*

1. Adopt participatory and inclusive decision-making processes at every level to ensure the meaningful engagement of all rights holders, highlighting those most strongly and disproportionately affected by the triple planetary crisis, in particular children and youth.
2. Recognize that achieving sustainable and inclusive development through democratic processes needs to take all perspectives and opinions into consideration, via the principles of free speech and press freedom. We also call upon world leaders to recognize the right to free and fair elections in accordance with international human rights.
3. Fulfil their obligations to protect and support young activists. Implement the Human Right Council Resolution 40/11, and commit to ending violence against youth rights, land, and justice defenders, journalists, and other youths who have mobilised to build a better world.
4. Provide meaningful mechanisms for youth involvement in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of key climate and environmental policies, following the principles of meaningful youth involvement, as outlined by the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth Principles and Barriers for Meaningful Youth Participation.
5. Increase investments in children and youth, and support to civil society organisations, young entrepreneurs and marginalised groups, recognising that investing in children and youth gives a leverage towards a sustainable future.
6. Ensure greater inclusivity, participation and collaboration with youth in the development, implementation and evaluation of environmental and sustainability policies. Recognizing the voice, perspectives, knowledge and competence of youth in these issues, call for all governments to bring national youth delegates to engage in all international meetings within the UN conventions.
7. Prioritise indigenous knowledge and scientific perspectives in decision-making spheres, and not only seek, but follow advice from those with expertise on environmental issues when developing all policy.
8. Appoint a fully-funded Special Envoy on Future Generations with a clear mandate to champion future generations and hold the international system accountable for safeguarding their interests.
9. Hold a Summit of the Future in 2023 to re-evaluate our relationship with the future and set targets for enhancing governance of intergenerational global public goods and global commons such as peace, digital spaces, and the atmosphere.

10. Announce a Declaration on Future Generations at the Summit of the Future in 2023 outlining the international system's responsibilities and commitment towards people of the future, to be drafted through an inclusive, democratic process prioritising those with the greatest stake in the future, e.g., young people and indigenous communities.

11. Establish UN Youth Delegates programs in all countries, including youth of different perspectives with prioritisation of underrepresented and Indigenous communities.

12. Act upon bridging the gap of the unemployment rate faced by youth while recognising the value of their work. Unpaid youth labour must be addressed, and minimum livable wages should be implemented. We also call on the UN System to immediately refrain from offering unpaid internships, consultancies and jobs.





**This was completely  
developed and  
designed by youth  
advocates who are  
changing the  
world.**