



2024 Youth
Environment
Assembly

#Youth4PeopleAndPlanet

2024 GLOBAL YOUTH DECLARATION ON ENVIRONMENT

Developed By: The Children and Youth Major Group to UNEP



CYMG
CHILDREN AND YOUTH
MAJOR GROUP TO UNEP

Global Youth Declaration on the Environment
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Executive Summary

Children and youth are disproportionately affected by the impacts of the triple planetary environmental crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. This is not just a consequence of the lack of youth perspectives and representation in governance systems, but also the fact that we, and succeeding generations, will inherit a world scarred by the lasting impacts of environmental damage.

The Children and Youth Major Group to UNEP (CYMG), as the mandated youth constituency to UNEP, is committed to youth inclusion in decision-making processes addressing the triple planetary environmental crisis. Through consistent, substantive engagement with UNEP and UNEA, CYMG has developed the resilience and institutional memory to be a long-term strategic partner for UNEP.

Through the Global Youth Declaration, CYMG calls for the development of policies and mandates that are centered around the principle of intergenerational equity, ensuring that long-term perspectives guide policy decisions.

The Declaration calls on UNEP, UNEA, and member states to:

1. Institutionalize the principle of intergenerational equity in environmental governance

- The GYEA should be an institutionalized component of each subsequent session of UNEA, ensuring that there is a direct pathway for youth positions and voices to be represented at the highest levels.
- This representation should be supported financially by dedicated funding mechanisms, allowing the GYEA to commit the resources to meet the constituency's targets in education, position-building, and policy negotiations.

2. Develop systemic policy solutions informed by the best available scientific evidence

- Given the interconnected nature of environmental, social, and economic crises, it is imperative that UNEP and member states consider the systemic nature of the challenges we face and ensure that policy solutions are designed with and for those who are most affected and are guided by the scientific assessments produced by independent science-policy interfaces.

3. Commit to environmental multilateralism

- The global nature of the environmental crises means that band-aid solutions that displace and relocate environmental damage are not true solutions. Instead, member states should ensure that multilateral, inter-governmental agencies, agreements, and conventions have comprehensive mandates and the necessary resources to address environmental challenges holistically and effectively.

SECTION I - PREAMBLE

The Global Youth Declaration on Environment resounds as a resolute call to action, echoing the collective voice of young people across the globe to urgently address the three environmental planetary anthropogenic crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution.

This declaration not only acknowledges the exigency of the three environmental planetary anthropogenic crises but also highlights the importance of collaboration amongst stakeholders from the governments, major groups and stakeholders, financial institutions, academic institutions and grassroots organizations. Together, these entities possess the capacity to formulate and implement policies and programs that propel sustainable development and strengthen environmental resilience. Central to the ethos of the Global Youth Declaration is an unwavering commitment to action that is not only environmentally sustainable but also socially and economically equitable. This highlights the declaration's aspiration to forge a future marked by justice and equity for all.

More than a rallying cry, the Global Youth Declaration on Environment stands as a potent testament to the dedication of young people in confronting the three environmental planetary crises. It establishes our united resolve to call for decisive action from global leaders. This declaration emphasizes the importance of international cooperation and implores member states to take immediate and decisive action. This includes collaboration of stakeholders, including the youth, with UNEP and its member states, whose joint efforts prevail against the three environmental planetary crises, forging a sustainable, just, and resilient world for everyone.

The sobering findings of the Global Biodiversity Outlook 5 attest to our collective failure to meet global biodiversity targets for 2020, with no concrete measures being implemented to reverse, halt or minimize the intensifying biodiversity loss. This anthropocentric, profit-centric system of operation has caused irreversible damage to health and homes of both human and non-human.

We believe that the operations and measures taken by all governments, businesses and civil society are neither adequate to stop the current extent of irreversible damage, nor adequate to indemnify the loss and damage caused to the planet and its inhabitants. The continuation of this scenario without any concrete and immediate steps being taken will beget a crisis of unprecedented magnitude for the current children and youth, who are the future inhabitants of this planet.

We invite all stakeholders to read this youth declaration, which condenses our perspectives on the major human-induced threats to the health of the planet, the ideal policy solutions and principles that address these threats and what we, as the Children and Youth Major Group, and youth in general seek to do about this. This declaration, which is the outcome of multiple rounds of consultations with youth from various backgrounds and nationalities, seeks also to reflect the demands and expectations of the current and future generations. By sharing our demands, expectations and commitments, we hope to collaborate with all like-minded stakeholders and work towards a world that is healthy and safe for all.

SECTION II - THE PLANETARY ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

1. Climate Change

The world is currently facing a climate emergency which calls for immediate and concrete steps to be taken by the member states and all relevant stakeholders, in prioritizing mitigation and

adaptation actions and reducing the loss and damage caused by climate change. UN agencies and various other independent entities have published and are continuing to publish data that highlights the growing concern for climate change, and its disproportionate impact on vulnerable communities, especially young people. This includes the effects of global warming, which is the primary driver of climate change. To combat the ongoing climate crises, it is important for us to recognise its negative impact and the urgency to act against the same.

It is also crucial to ensure the formulation of policies that are backed by scientific-data and evidence published by scientific panels, especially the IPCC and other globally-recognized independent organizations and agencies. This should be complemented by a strong consideration for policies that are based on indigenous and traditional knowledge or other recognised nature-based solutions. This involves enactment of science-based, community-centered policies into laws which make due consideration for inclusion, justice, effectiveness, and consistent implementation.

It is important to encourage the cooperation of various agencies and stakeholders, including governments, private sector actors, industries, traditional and faith actors, and non-governmental agencies in working towards a carbon-neutral world. In parallel, we stress the importance of building climate resilience in our communities and practices, as a necessary path for reliably reducing the impact of the ongoing climate crisis. This includes adaptation measures in the form of green technology, climate resilient infrastructure and implementation of nature based solutions. Considering the interconnectedness between global warming and climate change, we call on all stakeholders to collectively work towards the reduction of emissions, by implementing the goals agreed upon in instruments such as the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol. The financing, invention and usage of climate resilient methods and technologies has to be prioritized by the member states, and in particular for the benefit of Global South nations, which face more adverse and disproportionate consequences due to climate change.

2. Nature, Ecosystem and Biodiversity Loss

The failure of our natural ecosystems due to exploitative practices has significantly eroded our planet's biodiversity, upon which our sustenance is dependent. The recognition of the role of biodiversity, including its sacredness, in maintaining the delicate balance of our planet is paramount, especially in the context of the far-reaching impacts of the planetary crisis. As climate patterns shift and extreme weather events become more frequent, our ecosystems face unprecedented challenges and the intricate web of life, encompassing diverse species and habitats, is under threat.

As a countermeasure, we call on member states to recognise and legalize the inherent right of the existence of all ecosystems and species. A sustainable, evidence-based approach, without prejudice to the rights of indigenous communities, along with nature-based solutions built on centuries of indigenous knowledge is essential for the conservation of biodiversity. This should be coupled with rights-based and community-centered conservation efforts which emphasize

responsible economic practices with respect to the earth and oceans and recognise the inherent right of existence of all species, as a way forward to implementing change from the bottom-up. Such measures would aid in the halt and reversal of nature, ecosystem and biodiversity loss as envisioned in the Kunming - Montreal Protocol.

3. Pollution

The pollution crisis has a catastrophic effect on human health, the health of all species, and our ecosystem. Various studies have highlighted the impacts of manmade pollution, including the challenges in mobility, depletion of the ozone layer, and the presence of microplastics in most species, including newborn babies. There is a fundamental need to establish efficient, sustainable, inclusive and just mechanisms to manage the production, distribution, consumption and disposal of such substances, and the establishment of penalties in the event of negligence and mishandling of harmful pollutants. Materials known to be hazardous to human health and biota and/or degrade environmental quality must be phased out and eliminated. While moving towards safer chemistry, extended producer responsibility, and circular economy models, concurrently prioritize investigation, remediation and monitoring efforts in communities burdened by legacy pollution, particularly in countries and regions that are most underrepresented in environmental data collection.

An approach which recognises pollution as a global scourge which affects air, water, soil, human health, animal health and beyond is central to the development of policies that aim to reduce the pollutants generated. Apart from individual and community-centered actions around the principles of a circular economy, there is a need to stress on actions on a larger scale, which starts from commitments given by member states in reducing waste and mitigating land, air and water pollution. Commitments to abide by the precautionary principle in postponing or preventing any projects that may have an adverse effect on the environment also helps in reducing man made pollution. In parallel, policies centered around modifying the economic patterns of production of pollutants, especially by the private sector, and consumption patterns of the society towards sustainability, also contribute to controlling levels of pollution.

Strengthening the systems of providing green credits and blue credits inside member states, and between member states will accelerate the process towards net zero emissions. Apart from all preventive measures, strict implementations and penalties for violation of such policies is crucial in working towards reducing environmental pollution. This includes the equitable implementation of the legal principle of polluter-pays. The principles of good neighborliness in addressing transboundary pollution, and extended producer responsibility in addressing the entire life-cycle of plastics is also immaterial. These measures can be complemented by investing in the development and promotion of environmentally sustainable technologies. Furthermore, it also helps in indemnifying the existing consequences of pollution, and mapping the future trends of the same.

4. Inequity of Environmental Impact

In addressing the three anthropogenic planetary crises, it is crucial to recognize and rectify the inequities faced by vulnerable and marginalized communities. Historically, adverse environmental impact has been unequally distributed, with vulnerable and marginalized groups¹ frequently bearing the brunt of pollution and climate change. These inequities are further worsened as they have direct compounding consequences on other inequities like poverty, racism, sexism, casteism, and intergenerational disparities. Fostering a just, sustainable, more equal, and more inclusive future would mean establishing systems today that reduce corruption, recognize rights, and transfer benefits directly to the most vulnerable populations.

The nexus between environmental, economic and social inequities has already been recognised in UNEA Res. 4/18, which highlighted the need for people-centered, innovative solutions, including those emanating from traditional knowledge, norms, values and education, to empower and engage women and youth from underprivileged economic communities, and promote pro-poor growth and environmental sustainability. UNEA Res. 4/17, in this regard, highlights the need for mainstreaming gender participation in all environmental processes.

It must be acknowledged that the impact of environmental crises is particularly severe on those experiencing intersecting structures of oppression, highlighting the need for an intersectional approach to both understanding these impacts and in the design of policy solutions. A solution-oriented approach against environmental inequity requires active meaningful engagement, commitments and collaboration between governmental institutions and the most affected communities. This involves acknowledgment of disproportionate impact, and committing to equitable resource allocation, risk mitigation, and just transition. In doing so, policies and initiatives that are sensitive to the specific needs and traditions of each community can be developed. Equitable representation of grassroots organizations, sustainable and small businesses, and communities with constrained economic privileges is also a key component in improving governance processes at local and international levels.

¹ *Vulnerable communities include women, children and youth, refugees/migrants, persons with disabilities, impoverished people, people in conflict areas, coastal communities, and indigenous people.*

We can enhance our efforts by leveraging existing multi-sectoral networks and partnerships through encouraging community-led environmental monitoring, supporting grassroots activism, and facilitating access to legal and technical expertise for marginalized groups. Through education and capacity-building, we must aim to empower communities to participate in the process of drafting and implementing laws and policies that affect them, to advocate for their rights, and to participate meaningfully in environmental governance.

Moreover, by implementing inclusive and transparent mechanisms for impact assessment and policy development with youth involvement, we can ensure that environmental justice is woven into the fabric of our societal advancement.

5. **Overconsumption**

Overconsumption drives the extraction and use of the world's natural resources, exacerbating the planetary environmental crisis. This issue is amplified through the unequal distribution of resources, along with the creation of false-needs, both of which challenge the achievement of sustainable consumption patterns. Notably, unsustainable consumption and production patterns are also at the root of multiple other social, political, economic, and environmental crises which directly impact human well-being. In turn, these unsustainable consumption patterns have adverse effects on land, water and air degradation, especially through the increase in waste products.

We therefore advocate for mindful consumption and production patterns based alongside efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, to promote positive behavioral change, and to effectively protect and efficiently manage the natural resources present in all our ecosystems.

6. **Food Security and Agriculture**

With the world's population set to surpass 8 billion people, the demand for food and the urgency of addressing global food security will only grow. As such, producers are increasingly favoring yield to the detriment of nutritional quality, monoculture to the detriment of biodiversity, and the normalization of large quantities of preventable food loss. Examining the contemporary food system, it is evident that food insecurity is not an unavoidable outcome of population expansion, but rather the byproduct of unsustainable food and agricultural practices. Understanding and acknowledgement of this aspect is essential to beginning the transition to a quality approach to the global agrifood system.

Another player in the push towards food security is the increasing likelihood of extreme weather events including hurricanes, floods, and droughts due to the climate crisis. Unsurprisingly, it is to blame for harvest destruction, biodiversity loss, and the alteration and pollution of entire ecosystems. These catastrophic events severely restrict the quality, quantity, and accessibility of resources and jeopardize the stability of agrifood systems globally.

With these in mind, it is essential to bolster social protection programmes for nutrition and direct resources to regions where the danger of hunger and malnutrition is greatest. A complete collapse in agricultural productivity is possible when extreme weather occurrences get more intense. This

necessitates diversifying the sources of food produced as well as creating a system of observation and feedback to preserve the most susceptible crops. In addition, we must fundamentally alter the way we produce and consume food. We must stop producing crops with an overdependence on chemical fertilizers and other harmful compounds. We must promote traditional ecological knowledge, sustainable and less intensive practices for farming and we need to make a commitment to cutting down on food waste and improving resource distribution globally. Lastly, increasing the monitoring of regional food systems can assist in the prediction of future vulnerabilities and demands allowing proactive adjustments to distribution.

7. Deforestation and land degradation

We call for urgent action to address the twin challenges of deforestation and land degradation, recognizing their critical implications for the health of our planet. The rampant clearing of forests and unsustainable land use practices have far-reaching consequences, from the loss of biodiversity and disruption of ecosystems to the exacerbation of climate change. To counteract these pressing issues, we advocate for comprehensive policies that promote sustainable forestry practices, reforestation initiatives, restoration of degraded land, and the protection of natural habitats. Emphasizing the importance of responsible land management is crucial, as it directly impacts soil health, human health, water resources, and the overall resilience of ecosystems.

8. Peace and Security

The vicious cycle between climate vulnerability, conflict, and violence is well established. An estimated 527 million people among those subjected to global climate hazards reside in fragile and conflict affected settings or have had to migrate. Access to climate adaptation financing in these settings, however, remains insufficient due to the same conditions of social, economic, and political fragility which further exacerbate societies' vulnerability to climate change. It is clear that the urgent need to bolster the climate resilience of these populations will require the strengthening of green conflict sensitivity practices, as well as an emphasis on inclusion, and national and local partnerships as means for reducing project risks and increasing the sustainability and long-term benefits of climate adaptation investments.

Climate financing should further emphasize inclusion, and better rooting investments through national and local partnerships as a means for reducing risks and increasing their sustainability. Where appropriate, climate investments should inscribe themselves in larger social and economic processes of peace and state building as a means of securing their sustainability and local ownership.

In recognizing the diverse situations of children and youths in countries severely impacted by the triple planetary crisis, it is furthermore important to acknowledge the unique vulnerabilities and demands of refugee youths and children, who are often the victims of climate-induced conflict.

9. Climate Investing

With the acceleration of these global impacts, the need for the full financial commitment of member states and multinational companies is undeniable. The complexity of our problems lend themselves to require a wealth of knowledge and co-creation to solve. This commitment calls for investment in initiatives and projects that support intergenerational equity.

The “think-first-act-later” approach, which, granted, is beneficial for intentionally and holistically understanding the problems that we face, needs to be reconsidered. Many of the solutions we sought, renewable energy sources, bio-regenerative farming practices, and fully recyclable materials, have since been found and now need two main commitments. Commitment of resources and commitment to behavioral accountability. Climate investing is not just the monetary support of a solution, but the fundamental restructuring of a system to ensure the solution lasts.

Additionally, the lack of accessible and meaningful funding for youth-led projects stifles innovative, creative solutions that often work to solve problems close to the source. It is imperative that paths are made available to youth to allow the development of solutions.

10. Ocean Degradation and Impacts

The world's Oceans are a major food source, more than 3.5 billion people globally. Our oceans are a resource for multinational industries mainly, tuna and sardine fisheries that feed millions only paralleled by coastal communities and indigenous communities that rely on small catches to support their household and livelihood. Not just food but trade of goods/service and transport which shrinks our world and acts like blood vessels which keeps the world stable.

This dependency has acted as a door through which ocean degradation has walked through and laid waste on our oceans. Blue ecosystem loss and degradation through pollution and coastal development, coastal erosion/coastline loss, overfishing, marine biodiversity loss and disturbance of previous untouched environments have ravaged global oceans and seas.

The Ocean and Climate Nexus has also been affected. Global warming has lowered polar ice cap coverage which has produced a knock on effect and now allows for exploitative fisheries to access previously safe breeding and nursery ground for commercially important species. The global conveyor belt which has regulated the Earth's climate for centuries is not at risk due to lowering of polar water temps rising. This will lead to disastrous knock on effects and strengthening of natural disasters such as hurricanes and well as affecting critical ocean processes/ecosystems such as upwellings.

SECTION III - POLICY SOLUTIONS

1. Strengthening Environmental Rule of Law and Implementation

The importance of the environmental rule of law and establishment of efficient implementation systems cannot be negated. All scientific data referenced and policies mandated would be rendered ineffective without the support of the establishment and implementation of just laws.

To strengthen the environmental rule of law, we urge Member States to adopt and enforce robust environmental regulations at national, regional and international levels. These regulations should embody principles of fairness, transparency, accountability, and public participation in environmental decision-making processes.

We should eliminate silos and actively promote synergies across a spectrum of environmental issues, recognizing the interconnected nature of environmental challenges and the need for comprehensive, integrated approaches to address them effectively. This involves fostering collaboration and coordination among United Nations agencies, various sectors, stakeholders, and initiatives to maximize the impact of environmental policies and actions as well as the inclusion of marginalized and underrepresented voices.

We stress on the importance of ensuring access to justice for those affected by environmental impacts, with mechanisms in place to hold accountable states that fail to fulfill their environmental obligations. This includes providing avenues for legal redress and holding parties accountable for their actions.

We also call on member states to demonstrate unwavering commitment to upholding the rights of both current and future generations. This entails enforcing accountability for actors who violate human rights in environmental matters, whether they be governments, corporations, or individuals. By holding perpetrators accountable for their actions, we send a clear message that environmental justice and human rights are non-negotiable principles that must be upheld at all costs.

2. Resource Efficiency and Circularity

As we navigate the transition towards a more circular economy, we must adopt a strategic approach to ensure resource efficiency and sufficiency that is centered on intergenerational equity. The demand for raw materials is set to double by 2060, resulting in huge potential environmental impacts.

We must redefine our resource management strategy, moving beyond the conventional model of securing access to raw materials towards decoupling economic growth from resource consumption. Design for circularity, transformation of consumer-based market approach, and responsible extractive practices, which are established in compliance with human-rights

principles, are three essential components of this. We emphasize the importance of sustainable economic activity that moves past the status quo.

Our approach should be grounded in the principles of fairness and mutual benefit, taking a human-rights centered approach, particularly considering the historical exploitation and plundering of natural resources. To address these power imbalances, we must engage in equitable partnerships that empower local communities, protect the rights of Indigenous People, and ensure that the benefits of resource extraction are shared equitably within and across generations. Local communities should be prioritized and have control over the allocation and distribution of the resource.

We need to invest in green, just, inclusive and sustainable technologies, accompanied with circular economy practices, that reduce the need for virgin materials, promote 9R related principles, and minimize environmental impact. By supporting innovation in alternative materials, technology transfer, boosting resource efficiency, and fostering responsible consumption patterns, we can mitigate the pressures on natural resources and ensure that our path to sustainable economic activity is just and inclusive for current and future generations. However, we should not rely on untested technological innovations to provide last-minute protection from the worst impacts of the environmental crisis, whose mitigation must primarily focus on addressing over-consumption and phasing out fossil fuels. We also need to be critical on the potential of greenwashing on the implementation of these technologies and practices.

We fervently call for the swift development and implementation of a robust action plan centered around the circular economy. Recognizing the urgency of transitioning from the linear model of consumption and production, we urge governments, industries, and communities to collaboratively embrace circular practices. This action plan should prioritize initiatives such as designing products for longevity, fostering recycling infrastructure, incentivizing resource efficiency, and promoting the remanufacturing of goods.

3. Science-Policy Interfaces for Informed Decision-Making on the Environment

The Science-Policy Interface (SPI) has been integral to UNEP's work for the last 50 years, facilitating the generation, synthesis, brokerage, and communication of knowledge. Despite significant advancements in our understanding of the science underlying environmental issues, a notable gap remains between scientific findings and their integration into policy. Bridging this divide is essential to ensure informed decision-making and effective environmental management.

Strengthening SPIs requires not only enhancing the relevance, transparency, and accessibility of scientific information but also promoting inclusivity. This entails actively engaging a diverse array of stakeholders, including marginalized communities, indigenous groups, youth organizations, and grassroots movements, whose perspectives are often overlooked in policy discussions. By incorporating diverse voices and experiences, SPIs can foster more inclusive and equitable environmental policies and strategies.

By fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, adopting transparent and iterative consultation processes, and optimizing knowledge production, SPIs can effectively integrate science, policy, and society for enhanced environmental governance.

We encourage these science-policy panels to further enhance their stakeholder engagement mechanisms ensuring equitable representation of those with different knowledge and experience. This includes providing meaningful opportunities for young people to contribute their perspectives and ideas to scientific assessments and related processes. Recognizing the immense potential of youth to bring innovative ideas, their meaningful engagement promotes inclusive decision-making, facilitates knowledge exchange, translation, and communication, and fosters innovative policy solutions to address pressing environmental challenges.

Furthermore, we advocate for the establishment of a Science-Policy Panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution, grounded in principles of intergenerational inclusivity and equity. We urge Member States to create a Youth Experts Advisory Group within the Interdisciplinary Expert Committee, ensuring equitable representation across regions, genders, technical expertise, and communities, including vulnerable and marginalized groups. This advisory group will amplify the voices of young experts and early-career professionals in addressing contemporary challenges related to chemicals, waste, and pollution.

To effectively address pressing environmental issues and keep the environment at the forefront of global processes and decision-making, SPIs should leverage digital technologies, propose innovative solutions, engage with a variety of decision-makers and embrace a more diverse range of stakeholders. Addressing capacity gaps across these pillars will empower decision-makers and stakeholders with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to effectively navigate complex environmental challenges and contribute meaningfully to policy development and implementation.

4. Environmental Health

Climate change, pollution, and environmental degradation threaten not just our ecosystems, but our very health and well-being. Our health is directly threatened by rising temperatures, harsh weather, and changing weather patterns. The effects of air pollution are already being noticed, from respiratory ailments to the growth of vector-borne disorders like malaria. Millions of people lack access to clean water and sanitation, despite it being a fundamental human right. Diseases spread through contaminated water and unsanitary conditions, while air pollution silently harms our hearts and lungs. Our health suffers greatly as a result of the loss of natural areas and the decrease in biodiversity. Climate change further interferes with natural pest control, raises the danger of zoonotic illnesses including COVID-19, and disrupts natural pest control, and weakens ecosystems that support our food and medicine.

Many interventions are possible to promote environmental and human health. Overall, the system and implementation of One Health is an overarching approach to solutions including the investing

in resilient healthcare systems. Furthermore, integrating surveillance and early warning systems across human, animal, and environmental sectors to detect and quickly respond to emerging zoonotic threats to improve biosafety and biosecurity in farms and laboratories. Regulated targeted Vaccination Programs for both humans and animals. Promote sustainable agricultural practices that minimize human-animal contact and habitat destruction, reducing the risk of zoonotic disease emergence. Regulatory reforms are also necessary. Strengthen regulations on antibiotic use in animal agriculture and promote responsible use in human medicine.

Public Awareness Campaigns: Educate the public about the dangers of antibiotic overuse and promote responsible use in both human and animal health. Investing in Wastewater Treatment. for preventing waterborne diseases and prevent the spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria from human and animal sources. Establish strong policies on environmental exposures from chemicals, waste and pollution.

5. **Conflict of Interest**

The discussion and implementation of environmental policies is understood to be a target for lobbying by organizations that prioritize profits over the health of the planet. Therefore, it is necessary to establish sufficient policies that prevent the inclusion of organizations that work against the mission of intergenerational equity and solutions for the triple planetary environmental crisis.

6. **Intergenerational Equity**

Intergenerational equity is a cornerstone of sustainable development, emphasizing our responsibility to bequeath a healthy environment to future generations. It underpins our collective commitment to policies that not only address current environmental challenges but also safeguard the long-term stability of our planet for current and future generations.

To uphold the rights of those who will inherit the Earth, we must prioritize sustainable practices and integrate them into the core of our governance structures. This includes adopting comprehensive environmental protection policies, phasing out fossil fuels in a fast and equitable way, investing in renewable energy sources, and enforcing regulations that limit pollution and resource depletion.

Strategic planning with a focus on resilience and adaptability is essential to ensure that ecosystems remain robust and capable of supporting diverse life forms. By protecting biodiversity, maintaining clean air and water standards, and preserving natural habitats, we can mitigate the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation.

We also have the opportunity to innovate in the field of sustainability by developing technologies and systems aimed at reducing our ecological footprint without relying solely on market-based

approaches. Encouraging a culture of conservation and stewardship among current populations will instill values that promote ecological health for the long term.

Environmental education plays a pivotal role in this mission, as it prepares young people to make informed decisions and take actions that contribute to an enduringly healthy planet. The education on sustainable and conservation methods, spread by both formal and informal education systems is necessary to equip the future generations. By fostering a sense of global citizenship and environmental ethics, we can empower the next generation of leaders to continue working towards sustainability.

Our dedication to intergenerational equity is thus a promise to future generations — a promise that requires action commitment to sustain the natural world and its resources.

SECTION IV - COMMITMENTS AND ASPIRATIONS

We, the children and youth, are the important stakeholders, as we are the inheritors of the planet. We strive to play a crucial role in working towards the conservation of this planet against the three environmental planetary anthropogenic crises. The Children and Youth Major Group, the official youth constituency to UNEP, representing the children and youth from all over the globe, strive to do the following in systematic manner:

1. Advocating for increased role of Children and Youth to achieve inter-generational equity

We advocate for increased representation of children and youth in decision-making processes at various levels, including voting rights. At the same time, we aspire to make our processes and procedures more inclusive, in our current and future initiatives. As a part of the larger stakeholder group affected by all decisions taken by UNEP, we aspire to facilitate youth involvement in engaging with other stakeholders for effective collaboration and partnerships, including but not limited to women, indigenous people, faith leaders and non-governmental organizations. We shall strive to form partnerships with grassroots organizations to strengthen the impact of youth-led initiatives. We also aim to leverage strong civil society networks, alliances, and coalitions to build the capacity of grassroots communities to empower them to actively contribute to environmental conservation efforts. We believe that our commitments to increase the role of children and youth shall aspire youth and foster diverse perspectives between youth and children as decision-makers.

2. Digitalisation and Education

We strongly advocate the need for youth to leverage their digital presence for raising awareness, educating, and mobilizing communities about environmental issues. This includes utilization of artificial intelligence to translate documents, making information accessible to a wider audience. However, at the same time we acknowledge that digitalisation is a means, and not the end goal of our next aspiration, which is education. Besides fostering environmental education with children and youth, we aspire to increase advocacy and awareness amongst the children and youth. In this

regard, we aim to foster knowledge transfer and build connections between experienced professionals and youth changemakers for continuous learning and collaboration.

3. The commitments of CYMG

As a constituency, the Children and Youth Major Group commits to continuing the capacity-building programs to increase the knowledge-base available for the children and youth to understand stakeholder engagement mechanisms in UNEP. This includes periodical analysis of new environmental and sustainability policies, for children and youth to stay informed and engaged, while having more research and development opportunities and engagements. We also commit to the facilitation of youth participation in forums, workshops, and events. Building upon youth participation, we aspire to conduct more youth forums before COPs and MOPs under UNEP.

Lastly, recognizing the cross-cutting nature of CYMG's scope of work, we aspire to explore existing relationships with sister constituencies, and strengthen future collaboration.

SECTION V - DEMANDS FROM UNEP AND MEMBER STATES

In achieving our commitments and aspirations, we duly request the cooperation and support from other stakeholders, member states, and UNEP. Our specific requests and demands are as follows:

1. Increasing Children and Youth Inclusion

Within all our engagements, we request for enhancing youth representations and participation in decision-making processes within UNEP, UNEA, and MEAs. This enhancement can be implemented in multiple forms, including more space for youth participation, reaffirmation and recognition of the work and position of our constituency.

In this momentum, we also request UNEP to recognize, institutionalize, and support the Global Youth Environment Assembly as the principal children and youth forum for UNEA. Furthermore, we'd like to request Member States and UNEP to recognize this Declaration.

Our constituency is committed to the establishment of strong youth engagement in all levels of discussion in MEAs and panels under the aegis of UNEP, and we request the cooperation and support of UNEP towards the same.

2. Capacity Building

The foundation of inclusion is the equipment of knowledge through capacity building activities. We request member states and UNEP in collaboration for ensuring clarity and accessibility in communication of delivering such knowledge.

We also request support for youth engagement at the regional level through the role in intergovernmental meetings, such as within ASEAN, EU, *etc.* Finally, we also request UNEP and member states to aid in enhancing capacity-building for young people, specifically from Developing Countries and LDCs.

While acknowledging UNEP and member states' strategic position in tackling multiple environmental issues, we humbly request UNEP and Member States to consider and implement the concerns and demands highlighted throughout this Declaration. The Children and Youth Major Group this way, shall remain dedicated towards its commitments in the upcoming year.