

COP28

YOUTH ASPIRATIONS

Youth Aspirations from Malaysia
on Climate Action



DECEMBER 2023

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The COP28 Youth Aspirations Dialogue, a collaborative effort between the Delegation of the EU to Malaysia and Youth Environment Living Labs (YELL), was held on 28 October 2023, which aims to facilitate a youth-centred discussion about hopeful outcomes from the 28th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28) in Dubai, UAE. The dialogue consisted of two sessions: a Panel Discussion on COP and COP28 Priorities and an Interactive Breakout Session with youth advocates.

The Breakout Session discussed five themes, including Climate Mitigation, Climate Adaptation, Climate Finance, Young and Future Generations, and Action for Climate Empowerment. Input from youth participants were compiled in a Youth Aspirations Zero Draft, and handed over to a representative from the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change and the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Malaysia.

In the lead up to COP28, the Youth Aspirations Zero Draft went through an iteration and validation process, integrating input from young people across Malaysia, through the Local Conference of Youth 2023 (LCOY) Statement led by the Malaysian Youth Delegation (MYD), and key outcomes and youth input from the Asia Pacific Climate Week (APCW) 2023.

This Youth Aspirations Document captures the perspectives and insights of the young people in Malaysia on climate action, reflecting a set of recommendations for the attention of policy- and decision-makers.

1. Climate Mitigation

Mitigation is crucial to sustain ecosystems and a habitable planet by avoiding significant human interference with the Earth's climate. Young people are valuable contributors to climate action and are increasingly taking on a leading role in influencing, advocating, and demanding responsible climate behaviour and stronger climate action. They are agents of change, entrepreneurs, and activists who play a crucial role in raising awareness, advocating for policy changes, and implementing climate-friendly practices. The youth reflected their strong social and environmental awareness and motivation to lead the world towards a climate-resilient future and recommended the following:

1. Support youth-led campaigns advocating for renewable energy adoption, engaging with policymakers, industries, and communities while pushing for the development of renewable energy microgrids in remote and vulnerable areas.
2. Enhance industry transition to renewable energy by offering increased incentives, guided by the principle of just transition, with a focus on long-term goals, evidence-based science, and technological advancements.
3. Ensure transparency in reporting and data for accountability, accompanied by repercussions for greenwashing practices in environmental commitments.
4. Implement a comprehensive framework for a fossil-free future, operationalising just transition and decolonisation, integrating workers from various sectors, including the gig economy, and directing financial resources towards renewable energy, conservation, and climate-resilient infrastructure.
5. Amplify and integrate the voices of children and youth in the Global Stocktake consultation processes, recognizing them as a vulnerable group deserving of social protection and investment.
6. Promote traditional marine livelihoods and local knowledge for community economic resilience and coastal ecosystem preservation, aligning activities with sustainable practices.

2. Climate Adaptation

Given the significant impact of climate change on young people, climate adaptation is a critical issue. Young people are increasingly aware of the challenges and risks presented by the climate crisis, as well as the opportunity to achieve sustainable development. Adolescents and young adults are particularly vulnerable to climate change, as it can affect several dimensions of their present and future lives. Despite this vulnerability, young people also have the potential to contribute to climate change adaptation measures when they are empowered to become agents of change. Amidst growing awareness of the challenges posed by the climate crisis, youth, who are particularly vulnerable to its impacts, expressed their key recommendations. These include:

1. Integrate climate literacy into school curricula and promote the training of trainers for comprehensive environmental and societal education.
2. Build community-based resilience through inclusive engagement, with a focus on diverse communities such as urban and rural areas, marginalised groups, indigenous populations, migrants, refugees, women, youth, and people with disabilities.
3. Invest in early-warning systems for adaptive and shock-responsive measures, prioritising anticipatory action, especially in the social services sector.
4. Promote climate adaptation jobs and career pathways for youth, including initiatives like the Youth Environment Living Labs Conservocation programme.
5. Integrate blue carbon mainstreaming into climate change regulations and establish community-led innovation hubs for locally-driven climate adaptation solutions.
6. Promote comprehensive ecosystem-based adaptation by restoring mangroves, adopting sustainable agriculture, fostering cross-sector collaboration to tackle interconnected challenges (e.g., water scarcity, agriculture, and infrastructure), and advocating for nature-based urban planning in cities with a focus on green spaces and permeable surfaces for climate resilience.

3. Climate Finance

Young people have been increasingly influential in advocating for responsible climate behaviour and demanding stronger political will from governments and the private sector. They have presented global youth position statements and played a crucial role in mobilising climate finance and encouraging governments to enhance their commitments. However, a report found that just 2.4 percent of key global climate funds can be classified as supporting child-responsive activities, indicating a significant gap in addressing the distinct and heightened risks that children and youth experience from the climate crisis. Some key recommendations from the youth participants include:

1. Promote diverse financial instruments such as green bonds, climate resilience funds, and localised funding mechanisms, including youth-managed climate funds and ensure inclusive support for local youth organisations dedicated to environmental education, capacity-building, and innovative solutions.
2. Align climate financing in Malaysia to provide both immediate relief for sudden-onset events, like flash floods, and build long-term resilience for vulnerable groups, particularly children and young people.
3. Position Malaysia as a climate finance leader by improving and leveraging existing frameworks, such as the Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD), to assess, adapt, and set targets for climate change.
4. Strengthen carbon markets and regulation of carbon credits, empowering local financial institutions to create a comprehensive and inclusive financial mechanism for the global transition to a sustainable and environmentally responsible future.
5. Advocate for the development of climate-linked insurance programs, providing financial protection for communities facing climate-related risks.
6. Establish local-level training programs to enhance community capacity in accessing and managing climate finance, fostering resilience and sustainable practices.

4. Young and Future Generation

Young people are increasingly aware of the challenges and risks presented by the climate crisis and of the opportunity to achieve sustainable development. Their varied viewpoints enhance conversation and spur action, communicating personal urgency, tangible reality, and the potential for change, fostering a shared determination to act. Young people play a key role in leaving no one behind and raising ambition, and their meaningful engagement is essential to advance an inclusive green recovery and accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. The youth conveyed their aspirations which include:

1. Develop a comprehensive plan addressing the long-term need for quality education, skills development, secure jobs, economic opportunities, and promotion of sustainable lifestyles.
2. Overcome barriers to information by providing youth access to meetings, conferences, and decision-making platforms, utilising social media to make climate information more relatable and understandable.
3. Prioritise the mental health of climate justice advocates, recognising the disproportionate impact on young people despite their limited responsibility for the climate crisis.
4. Increase awareness and knowledge of intersectionality in climate action, fostering cross-collaboration and partnerships between sectors.
5. Highlight the role of agriculturalists and indigenous communities as key contributors to climate solutions, involving them in guideline developments for effective discussions.
6. Advocate for the incorporation of the Youth Stocktake into the Global Stocktake (GST) process and the implementation of monitoring systems to track emissions reductions for accountability and transparency with the latest technologies.

5. Action for Climate Empowerment

Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) is a critical framework that aims to engage and empower all members of society, including young people, in addressing climate change. Young people have been increasingly involved in climate action and actively advocate that their rights be guaranteed in climate change agreements, and prioritising youth in developing Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). However, it is essential to address the challenges that young people, especially those from rural areas in the global south, face in participating in climate action, such as the digital divide and limited resources. Recommended actions from the youth include:

1. Train and support youth climate champions to engage with decision-makers, representing their communities and sharing climate knowledge.
2. Formation of formal platforms for youth input towards policymaking, such as implementing the Children and Youth Climate Change Council.
3. Mobilise an inclusive and representative climate movement in Malaysia, establishing a link from awareness building to concrete climate action.
4. Break down barriers to entry points for climate change advocacy and negotiations, through existing initiatives like the UNICEF Young Leaders Programme and proposed initiation of Young Negotiators Programme led by the government.
5. Emphasise the need to increase funding opportunities for community-based organisations, mobilising grassroots action to contribute significantly to global goals.
6. Amplify education, awareness, and mentorship for young people as a crucial part of capacity building, via community-based climate action workshops, empowering individuals to implement sustainable practices in their daily lives and fostering a sense of collective responsibility.

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