



**AIMING HIGHER**

# Elevating Meaningful Youth Engagement for Climate Action

MARCH 2022

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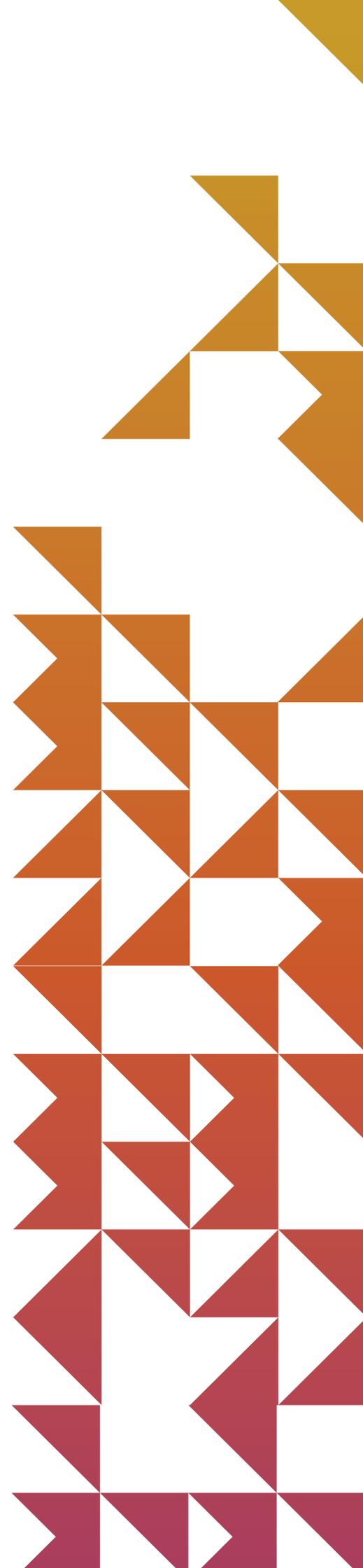
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# Acronyms

<b>ACE</b>	<b>Action for Climate Empowerment</b>
<b>CCG</b>	<b>Climate change governance</b>
<b>COP</b>	<b>Conference of Parties</b>
<b>EBA</b>	<b>Ecosystem Based Adaptation</b>
<b>ILO</b>	<b>International Labour Organization</b>
<b>NDC</b>	<b>Nationally Determined Contribution</b>
<b>NGO</b>	<b>Non-Governmental Organization</b>
<b>SGP</b>	<b>Small Grants Programme</b>
<b>SDGs</b>	<b>Sustainable Development Goals</b>
<b>YALP</b>	<b>Young Adaptation Leaders Program</b>
<b>YAN</b>	<b>Youth Adaptation Network</b>
<b>YAS</b>	<b>Youth Adaptation Solutions</b>
<b>YOUNGO</b>	<b>UNFCCC constituency of Youth Non-Governmental Organizations</b>
<b>Youth-GPS</b>	<b>Youth Global Programme for Sustainable Development and Peace</b>
<b>UNDP</b>	<b>United Nations Development Programme</b>
<b>UNFCCC</b>	<b>United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change</b>
<b>UNICEF</b>	<b>United Nations Children’s Fund</b>



# Foreword

ACHIM STEINER

Administrator, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)



Compared to their grandparents, **it is projected** that a child born in 2021 will live through seven times as many heatwaves, nearly three times as many droughts and twice as many wildfires. Yet these **impacts are not felt equally**, with young people living in developing countries most impacted. As the grip of climate change tightens, young people are leading efforts to change the future by demanding climate action now from their governments. They are not taking ‘no’ for an answer, as they realise that there is no time to lose. That fact is substantiated by the **People’s Climate Vote**, which shows that approximately two in three people aged between 14-18 believe that climate change is now a global emergency. The **latest round of the survey**, which focused on G20 countries, found that under-18s had greater support than adults for some bold climate policies to reduce emissions, such as the conservation of forests and land; rolling-out solar, wind and renewable power; and using climate-friendly farming techniques.

The United Nations (UN) Secretary-General António Guterres, **has highlighted** the acute need for young people to speak out to help ensure that a least 50 percent of climate support is allocated to adaptation and resilience to protect lives and livelihoods; and for developed countries to deliver on their promise to provide \$100 billion annually in climate finance to developing countries. Moreover, the UN is helping to ensure that the voices of young people are heard and acted upon. Look, for instance, to the United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) **Climate Promise** initiative, which is currently assisting 120 countries to enhance their climate pledges under the Paris Agreement, known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Young people are an intrinsic part of this NDC enhancement process across the globe. Consider, for instance, **Nigeria** where approximately 1,000 young people shared their concerns and ideas — from the adoption of climate smart-agriculture practices; to the revision of taxes on renewable energy; to the introduction of climate change in the national education curriculum. Indeed, approximately **80 percent of the latest NDCs** include considerations of young people compared to 40 percent of first-generation NDCs.

Informed by such efforts, this new publication offers ways to further the meaningful engagement of young people on climate action. That includes new ways to involve young people in the shaping of national climate action policies including the NDC enhancements process; how to ensure that young people have the data and analytics they need so that they can play a greater part in crucial climate conversations; as well as new strategies to allow them to get involved in multilateral climate negotiations. Indeed, doing so will also allow young people to make an even greater contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals.

As detailed in our **Strategic Plan 2022-2025**, UNDP itself is committed to promoting the rights of future generations and amplifying young people’s voices in decisions on climate action and the future of their communities through capacity development, youth political participation and support to young innovators. UNDP will also continue to innovate, further developing tools like the Peoples’ Climate Vote to engage more young people on climate action. As UNDP launches the next phase of the Climate Promise, From Pledge to Impact, which will help countries to put their NDCs into action on the ground, this publication aims to advance our collective understanding on how to address young people’s needs, aspirations and concerns when it comes to climate action. Crucially, it implores us to leverage the immense knowledge, creativity, and energy of young people to design and implement the climate solutions that the world now needs.

# Foreword

JAYATHMA WICKRAMANAYAKE

United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth



The impacts of climate change are of great concern to young people around the world. Through various global youth movements, young people are raising their voices to advocate for access to decision-making spaces and for mechanisms to enable them to contribute to the design, implementation, and review of climate policies and programmes at all levels. Yet despite these efforts, a lack of political will and a lack of understanding still remains among governments on how to meaningfully engage youth in developing, implementing, and reporting on climate action plans. Hence, despite the good intentions, young people's engagement often ends up being tokenistic, marginal, unclear, and without adequate resourcing, information, support, and guidance. It is imperative for all stakeholders to recognize the ideas, solutions, and expertise young people bring to the table, so their engagement benefits the process and represents a meaningful and worthwhile experience.

In this spirit, guided by a United Nations (UN) system-wide youth strategy, the UN has agreed on a set of **principles for meaningful youth engagement**. These provide guidance on results-oriented youth engagement where young people are treated as equal stakeholders in policy development and implementation. I am pleased to see these principles actively reflected in this guidance by explicitly recognizing young people's unique role in grassroots movements, as well as national processes that are essential in raising ambition on climate action, such as the implementation and review of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which can only yield progress toward achievement of the Paris Agreement and its long-term goals.

Over the past years, young climate activists have continuously advocated for ambitious climate action from local to global level, across all sectors, generations, and contexts. They have held leaders at all levels accountable for their action and inaction on climate change, and have clearly articulated the price that our and future generations will pay as a consequence. YOUNGO – the official youth constituency of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which contributed to the consultation process for this publication, and countless other lesser-known youth movements who oftentimes have put their safety on the line for the bigger, greater cause, must be heard, recognized, and involved as meaningful and equal stakeholders within all climate change efforts.

At the UN, in line with the vision laid out in the **Youth 2030 Strategy**, the Secretary-General has launched his Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change to bring youth climate movements and voices closer to UN leadership, and to provide advice and inputs in the implementation of his Climate Strategy. With this guidance, I hope there will be more opportunities where partners within the UN system and Member States can find more innovative ways to engage youth directly in decision-making processes particularly at the country and local levels.

I commend UNDP for its role in providing staunch support to youth-led action and meaningful youth engagement across all regions of the world. The Climate Promise initiative witnessed a huge mobilization of young people across the world to work with their governments in achieving their national climate goals. This guidance note, which has been co-designed with young people from diverse backgrounds and nationalities, is timely in that it comes at a crucial moment when increased investments in youth-led climate action and ambition, to solve the complex crisis and emergency we face, is urgently needed.

This guidance note offers best practices and recommendations on how young people, climate change practitioners, governments, and development actors can join forces for youth-inclusive and youth-led partnerships to achieve the Paris Agreement and to ensure that the world we leave to the future generations is clean, green, sustainable, and healthy.

# Foreword

**NISREEN EL SAIM**

Chair of the United Nations Secretary-General's Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change



Throughout 10 years of climate activism and my youth empowerment journey, I have been advocating for meaningful youth participation at various levels of engagement. I have witnessed time and time again how the word “meaningful” gets misinterpreted, twisted, and turned into mere tokenism. Public institutions, government bodies, development practitioners, and private organizations tend to view “youth” as a tick box to be checked, often disregarding the profundity of their influence towards sustainable development.

Youth are an integral sector for society’s progress and I am more than relieved to finally read a report that pinpoints exactly why young people shouldn’t simply be viewed as “members of civil society”. Backed up with heavy research, this guidance provides a clear and concrete approach on how to shift that view, with practical policy recommendations.

The emphasis of meaningfully including youth in the enhancement, implementation, and monitoring of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) is equally significant in the context of this report, as it provides a clear-cut opportunity for youth to provide their narrative on climate issues and includes examples of how to institutionalize mechanisms for youth participation in the NDC process.

I am hopeful that this guidance will provide new perspectives and open doors for valuable youth-adult intergenerational partnerships in the coming future and across the world.

# Executive Summary

**Tackling the climate crisis requires both ambition and inclusivity.** Without it, the world will face insurmountable barriers to overcoming the impacts and, as a result, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). National climate commitments under the Paris Agreement, known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), provide an important opportunity for robust leadership to support climate action that can both raise climate ambition and ensure climate justice.

**Youth are some of the most vulnerable to the lifelong environmental effects caused by climate change.** According to a report from WHO, UNICEF and Lancet, excessive carbon emissions – disproportionately from wealthier countries – threaten the future of all children. If global warming continues unabated, it would have devastating health consequences for children and youth, from sea level rise, heatwaves, diseases, malnutrition, and more (Clark, et al, 2020). **UNDP's Peoples' Climate Vote** – the largest ever survey of public opinion on climate change – revealed that youth under 18 are the most likely to believe climate change is a global emergency (nearly 70 percent) (UNDP and University of Oxford, 2021). Such concerns are having a negative impact on young people's emotional and psychological wellbeing. A 2021 study of 10,000 youth from across the globe found that over 50 percent of young people surveyed felt sad, anxious, angry, powerless, helpless, and/or guilty about climate change while 45 percent said their feelings about climate change negatively affected their daily life and functioning (Marks, et al, 2021).

Recognizing that empowering youth and working together with them presents a historic and transformational opportunity to lay the foundation for a peaceful and sustainable future, UNDP launched its first Youth Global Programme for Sustainable Development and Peace (Youth-GPS) that runs from 2016 to 2022. Under the **Climate Promise**, UNDP's flagship programme supporting 120 countries to enhance their NDCs, youth have played a prominent role, with over 80 countries facilitating youth-inclusive partnerships and youth-led actions.

**While there is increasing global momentum to acknowledge the positive role that youth can play in climate action and SDG implementation, this momentum risks being tokenistic.** Rather, meaningful youth engagement in climate action is needed to prevent 'youth' being reduced to another buzzword or to tick off a box of participants.

**Building on UNDP's work with young people and drawing off extensive consultations and interviews conducted on youth participation, this Guidance was developed to ensure that young people are meaningfully engaged and empowered to participate in, and most importantly lead on, climate action.** Targeting UNDP staff and the broader community of practice that works closely with youth, this guidance illustrates the conceptual foundations of meaningful youth engagement, identifies successful approaches of participation from across the

In this guidance, **meaningful youth participation** describes a broad array of mechanisms of participation to influence climate change governance where youth share power to steer the process and outcome of their participation. This entails their empowerment and involvement, individually or collectively, to express views, narratives and solutions in ways that are compatible with large-scale system transformations needed to achieve climate-neutral and resilient futures, overall contributing towards a sustainable society.

world, and provides recommendations to support meaningful youth engagement in climate action and in NDC processes specifically.

## Unpacking the issue: What is meant by meaningful youth participation in climate action?

*An understanding of who youth are* is a necessary foundation to meaningfully engage this demographic. While there is no universal agreement on who youth are, the United Nations defines ‘youth’ as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years. What is known is that youth comprise a heterogeneous group, diverse in age, gender, religion, socio-economic status and levels of physical, emotional and cognitive maturity. Such varied and multiple identities mean that youth do not experience the world in the same way. Opportunities as much as inequalities are influenced by this intersectionality.

*Youth participation is a human right*, that is, youth are rights-bearing citizens and as such have the right to participate in decision-making that affects them. In development, youth participation is mainly described in relation to its contribution to two objectives: the achievement of the SDGs and positive youth development. Youth participation is regarded as key to achieving the SDGs while youth participation in itself, is seen as contributing to youth wellbeing. In the climate context, meaningful youth participation is a pre-condition for the success of climate action while at the same time, ensuring ambitious and just climate action is an enabling condition for youth wellbeing.

*Youth participation must be integrated within a holistic view of climate change governance (CCG)*. This entails acknowledging that youth participation can target different dimensions of governance – policy, politics and polity – for deeper structural changes. It also entails acknowledging that youth participation can occur across a broad spectrum of levels and stages and across different sets of interactions with government and non-government actors.

*Mechanisms of meaningful youth participation in climate change governance* can be described by the following 5 attributes: 1) The agency roles that youth perform;



2) the dimensions of governance they want to influence; 3) the level of governance to participate in; 4) the stage of decision making they want to participate in; and 5) stakeholder interaction. By understanding the spectrum of these attributes, the aim is to widen the scope of what youth participation is and could be and step away from stereotypes. Importantly, the guidance lays out how to assess meaningful youth participation through a set of indicators that align to critical pathways to meaningful youth participation, which are also described in detail.

## **Taking Action: How to best promote and support meaningful youth participation in climate action and NDC ambition**

In analysing the critical pathways to meaningful youth participation, some key messages emerged:

**Meaningful youth participation is about sharing power in youth-adult partnerships in decision-making.** Efforts need to be channelled to progress beyond information and consultation activities targeting youth, which too often is what is considered as successful youth participation. Young people need to progressively engage and be supported to engage in different dimensions of CCG, to influence politics, policies and polity (institutional structures) as actors that share power with adults in deliberative arenas of decision-making. Securing knowledge and financial resources for this participation is important as is the institutionalization of youth participation mechanisms.

**Meaningful youth participation is enabled by systemic empowerment, which involves addressing adult-centric structures, structural inequality and systemic discrimination.** Policymakers and practitioners need to address systemic conditions that are barriers for youth participation that may be embedded in norms and structures of government and other non-state institutions. This can mean addressing intersectionality by establishing specific strategies for multiple-marginalized youth identities, for example, having specific measures for girls or indigenous youth.

**Meaningful youth participation is about sharing power to influence institutional responses to climate change and securing positive outcomes for youth development and climate ambition and justice.** Meaningful youth participation in CCG needs to be results-oriented. There is a need to ensure greater transparency on the impact/influence of youth inputs. Increasingly, young people advocate for a binding participation process where there is a degree commitment to adopt youth contributions. Although it may be difficult to evaluate or quantify, it is important to assess youth participation with respect to its tangible influence on climate action and its tangible, positive impacts on youth wellbeing.

**Meaningful youth participation occurs when youth narratives are radical in challenging the status quo that created and recreates the climate crisis, and in proposing alternatives for a net-zero carbon and just society.** Although it is important to be inclusive of all youth narratives, progressing towards meaningful participation also calls for assessing the compatibility of such discourses and solutions with science-based targets to avoid climate and planetary tipping points, with strong justice considerations for fair allocations of responsibilities.

**Meaningful youth participation enlarges the space where young people can participate, acknowledging that youth participation should be embedded in all dimensions, all cycles and all levels of governance, and in multi-stakeholder settings.**

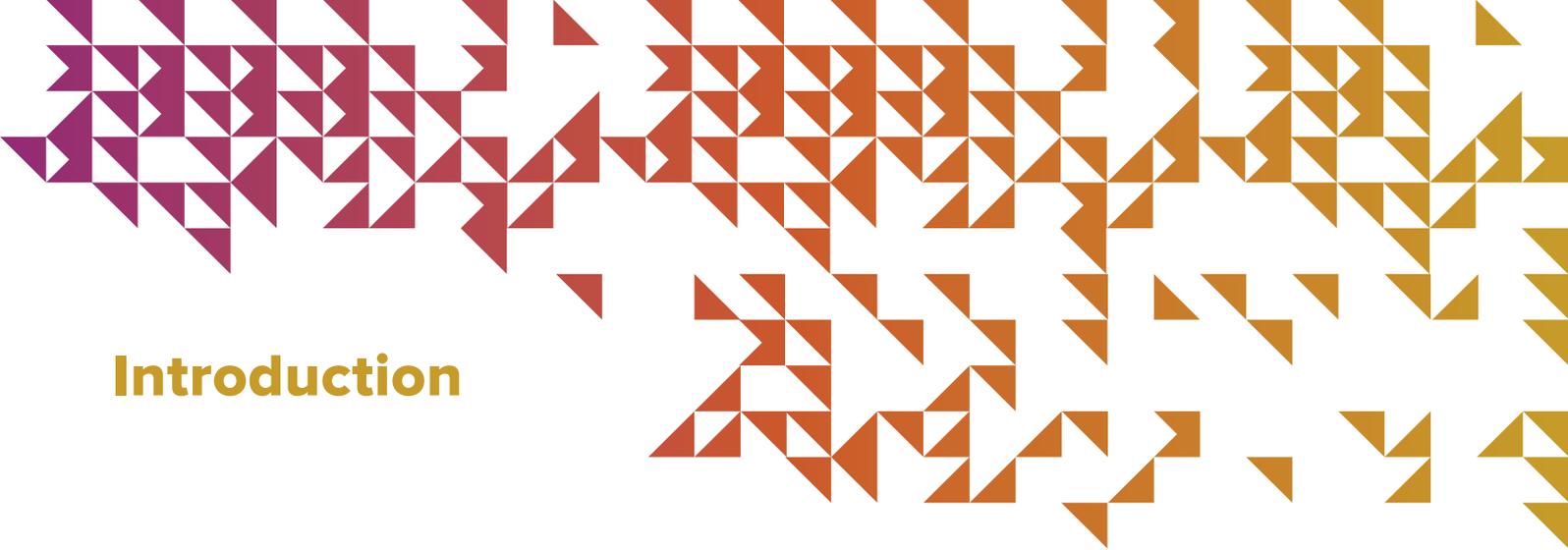
There is a need to experiment with, promote and support novel mechanisms of youth participation in coordination with strengthened long-standing mechanisms. New leadership reflected in different types of youth agency, together with a systemic view of CCG are revealing new opportunities and spaces for young people to participate.

To illustrate pathways and examine their attributes in real world situations, the guidance provides a set of **in-depth examples** that look at youth representatives in the national delegations of Parties negotiating at sessions of the UNFCCC, Youth National Climate Councils, and youth-inclusive climate change law-making processes. The guidance further provides a list of diverse approaches to youth participation from regions and countries across the world, demonstrating the successful work taking place globally to meaningfully engage youth in climate action.

## **Recommendations for meaningful youth participation in climate action**

Taking into consideration the pathways of meaningful youth participation, key messages, and lessons learned from the many examples of youth participation in climate action that were collected, recommendations are provided. Each recommendation is broken down into actions targeted for climate action in general and actions specifically for NDC revision design, enhancement and implementation. The broader recommendations include:

- Encourage and support the institutionalization of mechanisms of youth participation;
- Promote and support inclusive procedures that ensure representativeness;
- Address barriers related to more systematic and structural inequalities;
- Enable intersectionality to tackle systemic discrimination;
- Ensure availability and access to networking opportunities, reliable information, knowledge and financial resources for youth participation;
- Encourage an increased youth self-perception of empowerment;
- Ensure culturally sensitive participation interventions;
- Promote compatibility with the latest climate and earth science available with a strong climate justice lens
- Promote interconnectedness of climate with other development issues in youth initiatives;
- Support youth participation that disrupts current socio-technical and socio-political structures underlying climate change;
- Support and encourage youth initiatives that introduce alternatives for large-scale system transformations;
- Explore binding youth participation including through quotas;
- Promote transparency of outcomes of youth participation;
- Assess positive impacts in youth empowerment and wellbeing / climate action;
- Promote operationalization of intergenerational equity.



## Introduction

How ambitiously and inclusively the world tackles climate change will determine our success or failure in achieving the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Current national climate targets under the [Paris Agreement](#), known as nationally determined contributions (NDCs), are highly inadequate to achieve global goals for curbing dangerous climate change and not exceeding 1.5°C of global warming. Unprecedented climate action and ambitious leadership are needed more urgently than ever before to raise climate ambition and ensure climate justice. Otherwise, there is a high risk of losing decades of sustainable development gains, setting up the international community to fail in delivering its social contract with youth and future generations to inherit a healthy and prosperous planet.

According to a report from WHO, UNICEF and Lancet, excessive carbon emissions – disproportionately from wealthier countries – threaten the future of all children. If global warming continues unabated, it would have devastating health consequences for children and youth, from sea level rise, heatwaves, diseases, malnutrition, and more (Clark, et al, 2020). Youth are some of the most vulnerable to these lifelong environmental effects caused by climate change.

Pressure on governments has been growing. [UNDP's Peoples' Climate Vote](#) – the largest ever survey of public opinion on climate change – revealed that around two-thirds of the world believes there is a climate crisis, with youth under 18 the most likely to believe climate change is a global emergency (nearly 70 percent) (UNDP and University of Oxford, 2021). These concerns are having a negative impact on young people's emotional and psychological wellbeing. A recent study of 10,000 youth from across the globe found that over 50 percent felt sad, anxious, angry, powerless, helpless, and/or guilty about climate change and 45 percent said their feelings about climate change negatively affected their daily life and functioning (Marks, et al, 2021).

While there is a global momentum to acknowledge the positive youth role in climate action and SDG implementation, such momentum should not result in “youth” being another buzzword or lead to tokenism. Meaningful youth participation is about making young people a real priority of climate policies and policymaking, recognizing their efforts and impact to date, and promoting and enabling their participation in climate politics. It is also about securing their rightful place in climate governance structures across all levels, and empowering and collaborating with them in the implementation of solutions.

Today, there are 1.8 billion young people (10–24) in the world; by 2050, it is set to reach 2 billion (UNDP, 2016). The way we respond to this upcoming demographic change will shape our collective futures. Currently, in some developing countries, young people represent upwards of 80 percent of the population. In this context, the Youth Global Programme for Sustainable Development and Peace (Youth-GPS) 2016–2022 is the United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) first global programmatic offer for youth empowerment for sustainable development and peace. UNDP recognizes that empowering youth and working together with them is a historic and transformational opportunity to lay the foundation for a peaceful and sustainable future.

In line with that spirit, UNDP developed this guidance to help ensure that young people are meaningfully engaged and empowered to participate in UNDP’s Climate Promise, the national NDC enhancement and implementation processes, and in broader climate action. Through UNDP’s ambitious initiative, the **Climate Promise**, 120 countries were supported to enhance their NDCs, the majority doing so ahead of COP26. Post Glasgow, and as the second phase of the Climate Promise begins its roll-out in 2022 – focused on implementation of NDC targets – UNDP continues to work with countries to make their NDCs more technically robust and identify new ways that governments can step up their climate action. A key step in achieving this is facilitating young people to be at the core of climate action and this guidance was developed for that purpose.

Centering youth stems from the recognition that youth have not been properly engaged or accounted for in previous NDCs. Only about 40 percent of all first-generation NDCs contain direct references to children or youth. 60 percent of NDCs address education in a broad sense, but only 24 percent specifically target or consider the education of children and young people, while 23 percent do not mention children or youth or child-relevant terms at all (UNICEF, 2019).

While youth may have been underrepresented in the first round of NDCs, there has been a significant shift in the preparation of second-generation NDCs to undertake targeted consultations with youth groups and to include youth-relevant solutions (UNDP, 2021). With UNDP support, almost 60 percent of Climate Promise countries explicitly targeted youth groups as part of their broader civil society consultations and engagement. As a result, of the submitted NDCs supported under the Climate Promise ahead of COP26:

- around 80 percent include broad consideration of youth/children;
- around 60 percent include targets, measures and policies that are children and/or youth sensitive, and that address youth-specific needs and roles, compared to 8 percent of first-generation NDCs (UNDP, 2021).

To develop this guidance, UNDP undertook in-depth interviews and consultations with youth leaders, youth implementers, and youth-focused organizations. In 2021, 13 in-depth interviews were conducted with youth and around 140 people joined an online consultation on SparkBlue, UNDP’s online consultation platform, to gather ideas and opinions to shape this guidance. Please refer to Annex 1 for a complete list of contributors.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For the UNDP SparkBlue consultation platform, see here: <https://www.sparkblue.org/youth4climate>. For a summary of the consultations, see here: <https://www.sparkblue.org/content/youth-meaningful-participation-turning-point-climate-action-and-ndc-ambition>.



It is our hope that this guidance can help raise further awareness, inspire, and give specific recommendations on how to progress to a climate-neutral and resilient future with and for youth.

The target audience for this guidance is UNDP staff and the broader community of practice that works closely with youth in the intersection of climate action and youth development, or who intend to expand meaningful engagement with youth.

The section, **Unpacking the Issue**, outlines key concepts and an empirical and conceptually robust framework for understanding meaningful youth participation. It also envisions pathways to advance efforts across many dimensions of assessment.

The section, **Taking Action**, describes diverse approaches to meaningful youth participation from around the world. In doing so, it provides holistic and comprehensive policy and programming examples and recommendations for more meaningful engagement in climate action, including targeted recommendations for NDC design, enhancement and implementation.

Finally, in **Aim Higher**, the guidance comes to a close with some overarching conclusions for ensuring meaningful youth participation and leadership in climate action – particularly in the context of the cycles of NDC design, implementation, monitoring, and review.



## UNPACKING THE ISSUE

# What is meant by *meaningful* youth participation in climate action?

## 1.1. Key concepts

### Who are youth/young people?

The definition of ‘youth’ varies from country to country according to the influences of socio-cultural, institutional, economic and political factors. While the United Nations defines ‘youth’ as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, there is no universal agreement, and some definitions consider individuals of ages up to 30 or 35 years to be youth (UNDP, 2016). It must be recognized that youth comprise a heterogeneous group that is diverse in age, gender, religion, socio-economic status and levels of physical, emotional and cognitive maturity.

UNDP’s Youth-GPS acknowledges that young people worldwide face a wide array of development challenges:

*[T]hey are often victims of multiple and interlocked forms of discrimination, frequently involving negative assumptions about age, capability and respect; they face significant barriers to their participation in public life, which leads them to be greatly underrepresented in decision-making and development processes; in most places, they represent a disproportionate number of the unemployed; and at a critical time for their individual development, they are severely impacted by a lack of access to quality and affordable public services, such as health and education (UNDP, 2016).*

It is worth noting that how different groups of youth face such development challenges can vary. For example, while all youth may find barriers to participation in public life, this may be more acute for girls than boys.

### What is the objective of youth participation in development?

Youth participation is a rights-based condition. Young people are full rights-bearing citizens, and as such have the right to participate in decision-making that affects them (Farthing, 2012). In development, youth participation is mainly described in relation to its contribution to two objectives: the achievement of the SDGs and positive youth development. Regarding the former, it is argued that youth participation should be directed to challenge the status quo and create sustainable

societies (Evans and Prillelrensky, 2007). In particular, in the context of the 2030 Agenda, youth participation has been regarded as key to achieving the SDGs (UNDP, 2016). The justification for youth participation has been described through an ‘efficiency argument’, which implies that youth participation produces more informed policy and/or practice (Farthing, 2012). For the latter, it is argued that youth participation contributes to youth wellbeing, i.e., that it is key to develop personal, cognitive and social skills (Evans and Prillelrensky, 2007; UNDP, 2016). Positive youth development suggests that “by engaging in decision-making, young people can learn the social and emotional skills necessary to thrive as adults” (Farthing, 2012).

Climate change, through its adverse impacts and in its role as a risk multiplier, is an existential challenge and threat to the achievement of both the sustainable development and youth development agendas. Thus, ensuring ambitious and just climate action is both an enabling condition for youth wellbeing and a goal of youth participation. Moreover, meaningful youth participation is a pre-condition for the success of climate action and higher ambition.

### **How can meaningful youth participation address climate governance challenges?**

There is no “unified theory of climate governance” (Bäckstrand and Lövbrand, 2016), but many approaches offer a way forward to better coordinate societal action. ‘Governance’ is a concept in political science, sustainability science and other fields that reflects the growing consensus that governments are no longer the only relevant actor in the management of societal issues, especially in the face of planetary ecological crisis (Lange et al., 2013). In a broad sense, climate change governance (CCG) refers to the complex inter-relationships among many stakeholders, including societal coordination, with respect to national and international policies that seek to respond to the challenges of climate change (Chaffin, Gosnell and Cosens, 2014).

There are many governance approaches that offer promising pathways for meaningful youth participation (Table 1) and that form the basis for the framework proposed in Section 1.2 of this guidance. Reflecting on *participation in climate policymaking and programming cycles* improves understanding of the benefits of youth participation



in different temporal stages. Adopting an approach of *hybrid multilateralism* and the characteristics of governance in the ‘pledge and review’ system in the post-Copenhagen era enhances understanding of the need to integrate youth participation with emerging sites of power beyond government. And considering *deliberative democracy* helps us understand how youth participation can strengthen deliberation mechanisms in societies. Finally, it is essential to acknowledge the behaviour of complex adaptive systems in governance in order to understand how youth participation can contribute to the success of systemic interventions. Similarly, it is necessary to understand *climate justice and intergenerational equity* issues so that youth participation does not produce more inequality.

These insights help understand current mechanisms of youth participation. Youth participation must be integrated within a holistic view of CCG. This entails acknowledging that youth participation can target different dimensions of governance – policy, politics and polity – for deeper structural changes. It also entails acknowledging that youth participation can occur across a broad spectrum of levels and stages and across different set of interactions with government and non-government actors. Moreover, these insights suggest that youth participation should be assessed on its effectiveness in addressing climate justice and science-based ambition.

**Table 1. Linking governance and policymaking approaches for defining meaningful youth participation in climate action**

<b>APPROACH: MULTI-DIMENSIONAL GOVERNANCE</b>	
<b>Climate change governance challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopting a multi-dimensional approach that recognizes three dimensions of governance: institutional structures (polity), interaction among actors (politics) and instruments (policy):</li> <li>• The polity dimension is the structural dimension of governance, the institutional setting or ‘rules of the game’ that shape the interaction of actors and policy instruments.</li> <li>• The politics dimension covers the process of governance and refers to the actors and power dynamics involved in exerting influence over goal setting and societal pathways.</li> <li>• The policy dimension encompasses the content of governance. Policies refer to sequenced steps or strategies to achieve a target.</li> </ul>
<b>Implications for meaningful youth participation in climate change governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This distinction between polity, politics and policies helps to recognize the dimension of governance that youth are aiming to influence through different leverages for change. Steering governance towards an objective can then shape efforts to influence polity, politics and policies.</li> </ul>
<b>APPROACH: PARTICIPATION IN CLIMATE POLICYMAKING AND PROGRAMMING</b>	
<b>Climate change governance challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizing the benefits of stakeholder participation throughout the cycle of policymaking and development programmes.</li> </ul>
<b>Implications for meaningful youth participation in climate change governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth can engage throughout the policymaking cycle – at the stages of agenda setting, policy formulation, policy legitimation, policy implementation and evaluation.</li> <li>• Youth can engage in development programmes in the co-design, co-implementation and co-monitoring or assessment.</li> </ul>
<b>APPROACH: GOVERNANCE POST-COPENHAGEN/PLEDGE AND REVIEW ERA AND HYBRID MULTILATERALISM</b>	
<b>Climate change governance challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizing the imperative to close the emissions gap and demand increased ambition of the NDCs.</li> <li>• Recognizing the role of non-state actors in closing the emissions gap through new roles of pledging, implementing and reporting on climate ambition.</li> </ul>
<b>Implications for meaningful youth participation in climate change governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth agendas need to acknowledge climate pledges (NDCs) as a leverage point for change for climate action</li> <li>• Young people need to be connected to new centers of power for non-state stakeholders: civil society organizations, business, local governments and municipalities.</li> </ul>

**APPROACH: GOVERNING COMPLEX ADAPTIVE SYSTEMS**

<b>Climate change governance challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring proper information to avoid the transgression of ‘tipping points’ and to frame a clear narrative of unacceptable risks for climate and earth, e.g., mitigation pathways compatible with 1.5°C.</li> <li>• Addressing interconnectedness is key to achieve integrated sustainable development; thus, it is necessary to address the relationships between climate with other earth system processes.</li> <li>• Addressing cascading effects in systems through a multi-level mechanism of coordination.</li> <li>• Preparing for the unexpected and building adaptive capacity by keeping a balance between institutional stability and flexibility.</li> </ul>
<b>Implications for meaningful youth participation in climate change governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth in the science-policy interface: Youth can frame and inform their narratives with the latest available climate and earth science, which helps communicate science to the broader society and to inform political debate.</li> <li>• There is a need to include youth in deliberative processes for legitimate science-based targets. Similarly, youth can contribute in the efforts to democratize science production in climate-focused citizen science initiatives.</li> <li>• Youth agendas need to integrate climate with other sustainable development issues. These synergies are already observed in the work of young people at the intersection of climate and biodiversity.</li> <li>• Young people need to work at different scales and implement multi-level coordination mechanisms among governments, businesses and other actors operating at national, sub-national, and supra-national regional levels.</li> <li>• Young people should balance the pursuit of institutionalizing participation mechanisms and the experimentation of new arrangements for participation in more informal settings.</li> </ul>

**APPROACH: EMBEDDING DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY IN CLIMATE CHANGE GOVERNANCE**

<b>Climate change governance challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building deliberative capacity by becoming more inclusive of perspectives and arguments and broadening the set of perspectives to account for disadvantaged groups or positions.</li> <li>• Building deliberative capacity by promoting reflexivity in wider social debate to rebalance narratives that coordinate policies.</li> <li>• Incorporating deliberative spaces at different points of the policy cycle, at different levels of governance, and on specific sets of issues.</li> </ul>
<b>Implications for meaningful youth participation in climate change governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth participation in organized discussions within targeted groups (mini-public deliberation) can tap the democratic potential for representativeness and inclusion in CCG.</li> <li>• Youth participation in wider and informal debate (macro-deliberation) can tap the democratic potential for shifting societal discourses and narratives.</li> <li>• Youth participation in deliberative processes can be embedded in formal decision-making procedures, such as citizen assemblies or randomized appointment of citizens in long-standing decision-making bodies.</li> </ul>

**APPROACH: ENSURING CLIMATE JUSTICE AND INTERGENERATIONAL EQUITY**

<b>Climate change governance challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring distributive justice that focuses on how to distribute the responsibilities, risks, cost and benefits of climate mitigation and adaptation among individual countries, both immediately and in the long term.</li> <li>• Ensuring procedural justice that adopts fair and inclusive procedures in decision-making at the international, national and local levels.</li> <li>• Ensuring systemic justice by addressing historical patterns of inequity (pre-existing social, political and economic conditions).</li> <li>• Addressing the temporal dimension of climate change injustice and operationalize intergenerational equity.</li> </ul>
<b>Implications for meaningful youth participation in climate change governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth can advocate for just and ambitious climate targets reflected in a fair share of carbon budgets in countries and cities.</li> <li>• Young people should be included in decision-making, while maintaining diversity and representativeness of all backgrounds, especially the most vulnerable youth populations.</li> <li>• Systemic justice requires dealing with systemic youth development issues that might be hindering youth participation in climate action.</li> <li>• Advocacy should focus on long-term decision-making, and future-oriented policies. From a procedural point of view, this can also involve age-diversified juries, panels, youth quotas in decision-making bodies.</li> </ul>

## **BOX 1. WHAT IS MEANINGFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN CLIMATE ACTION?**

Meaningful youth participation describes a broad array of mechanisms of participation to influence climate change governance where youth share power to steer the process and outcome of their participation. This entails their empowerment and involvement, individually or collectively, to express views, narratives and solutions in ways that are compatible with large-scale system transformations needed to achieve climate-neutral and resilient futures, overall contributing towards a sustainable society.

## **1.2. Framework for meaningful youth participation in climate action**

This section introduces a comprehensive framework to better describe and assess the diversity of mechanisms of meaningful youth participation in climate action. Insights from a literature review were combined and strengthened with youth consultations and interviews. The resulting definition of *meaningful youth participation* in this guidance is described in Box 1.

### **1.2.1. Mechanisms of meaningful youth participation in climate change governance**

Diverse mechanisms of youth participation greatly contribute to steer climate governance into climate-neutral and resilient futures. These mechanisms emerge from different expressions of youth agency (i.e., how youth choose to participate), which interact with different characteristics of CCG where youth are invited or decide to participate.

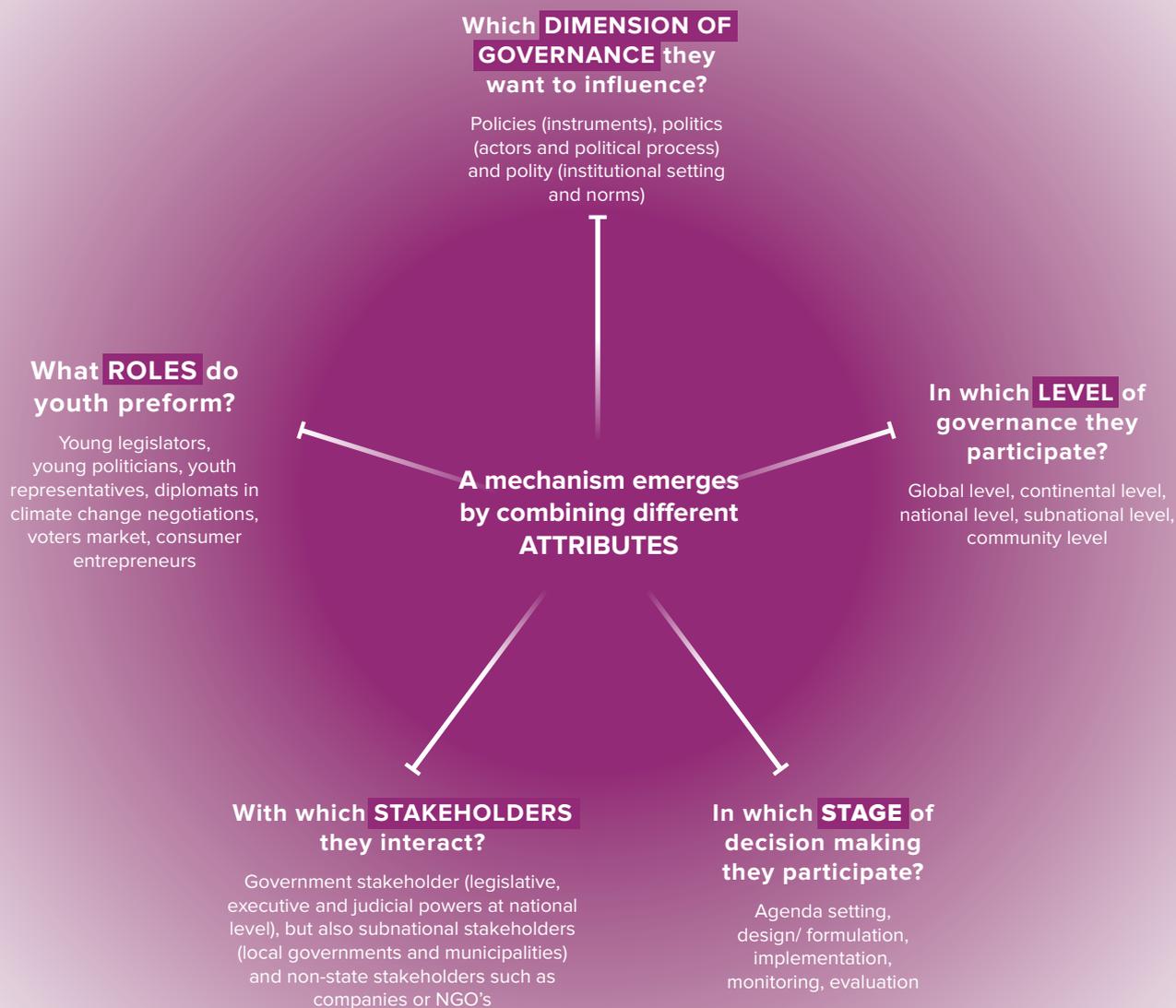
Youth agency is manifested in the societal roles that youth perform individually or collectively and is fundamentally oriented to steer governance towards addressing climate change. The focus of change for youth participation can be different dimensions of governance policies, politics and polity. CCG encompasses the structures and processes of interaction among different governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, at different levels and different stages of decision-making. Thus, youth participation can be further described with respect to these characteristics.

From this combined understanding of youth agency and CCG, five attributes are selected here to describe emerging mechanisms of youth participation in CCG. A mechanism is a pattern that emerges from combining many attributes that holistically describe youth participation. These five attributes (Figure 1) are:

- agency roles that youth perform;
- dimensions of governance they want to influence;
- level of governance to participate in;
- stage of decision-making to participate in; and
- stakeholder interaction.

By describing these attributes, it is hoped to enlarge both the space in CCG where youth participation is possible and where youth's potential roles can be fulfilled. Indeed, youth participation is evolving as youth explore new roles and call for structural and systemic interventions, and as new experiments in climate governance occur. A holistic approach is needed that also reflects these changes. Currently, there is a shift from a narrow-minded, isolated view of youth participation to more structural and systemic perspectives.

Figure 1. Mechanisms of youth meaningful participation



Each attribute reflects the aim to enlarge the space of youth participation in CCG. Next, the full spectrum of each of these attributes is described.

*Young people seek to influence decision making through diverse ways (such as signing and submitting petitions, flash mobs, protests, social media campaigns, graffiti, etc.) that correspond to their own understanding of advocacy and activism. Hence, decision makers struggle to find ways of addressing the needs of the different approaches.*

Joshua Amponsem, Green Africa Youth Organization, Youth Fellow at the Global Centre on Adaptation (GCA), Ghana

*[...] I would define youth meaningful participation in climate action [in a] variety of entry-points. The movement ranges from weekly protests to technological innovation, to participating in United Nations climate talks. This exact variety must be upheld and expanded in order to have more impact.*

Mary Awad, Project Officer, UNDP, Lebanon

## ATTRIBUTE 1

### Agency role(s)

**A stereotyped view of youth agency as only a part of civil society is shifting to acknowledge the diversity of roles that young people perform individually and collectively.** Youth can, in fact, play diverse roles, as outlined below:

#### Government

- **Diplomat and negotiator:** This role is key to ‘push the last mile’ for desired change in policymaking.
- **Elected officials/parliamentarians/governors/mayors, etc.**

#### Market

- **Entrepreneur:** This role is key for policy implementation and innovation that can directly bridge science with action.

#### Third sector

- **Community builder/networker:** This role is key to strengthen the youth movement by facilitating the exchange of information and efforts to institutionalize participation mechanisms.
- **Formal or informal activist:** This role, either as part of a formal organization or informal movement, is key to advocate for radical discourses that influence public and policy debates. The role might not directly influence policy outcome but may help shift the societal narrative and political debate.
- **Researcher:** This role is key to strengthen the science-policy interface. It is recognized that knowledge is power, and that young people need to engage in what is predominantly an adult-led research environment to produce scientific research.
- **Communicator, advocate, or journalist:** This role is key as to raise awareness in public and political debate, and frame issues from a youth perspective. Raising youth voices is key in mini or macro deliberation.

All roles are important and, if supported and framed, trigger the full potential of youth agency. However, it was argued in interviews that there is currently a dichotomy of stereotypical youth roles, such as the diplomat vs. the activist: the young diplomat who compromises ambition to influence policymaking vs. the activist who is radical but cannot influence policy outcomes. This view is reductive, youth agency is expressed in a full spectrum of roles; indeed, one young individual can play overlapping roles, at times the diplomat at climate change negotiations; at other times, the entrepreneur in local communities, etc. Moreover, young people highlighted the importance of connecting different roles towards the same direction of change.

*Youth participation can be deeper in terms of political involvement. Career paths to become a public servant, policymaker, or government official to influence the course of climate action should be a priority action of its own. The link between politics and climate action is robust, and politics influences climate action either negatively or positively. Being a climate leader in a political career is very impactful.*

Mary Awad, Project Officer,  
UNDP, Lebanon

*The NDC could either have a section specifically about how to address youth issues and how to integrate young people in the implementation of the NDC – or it should be encouraged/mandatory to have youth as a cross-cutting issue throughout the NDC, [and accordingly], the topic of youth inclusion and consideration should be brought in wherever relevant. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) could communicate to the parties to include young people in the NDC enhancement process. Governments can create a youth council/advisory group (or similar), [and] channel inputs from young people in the country to the NDC. Regarding NDC implementation, the same (or a different) youth council should provide inputs and advice to the specific programmes or projects, as part of stakeholder engagement.*

Sara Nyberg, PUSH Sweden

## ATTRIBUTE 2

### The governance dimension

**Youth participation in climate action requires greater system change in all dimensions of governance: politics, policy and polity.** Youth steer their participation in CCG in order to contribute to change or transformation. Building on an understanding of dimensions of governance, the object of participation for young people can be policies (instruments), politics (actors and political process) and polity (institutional setting and norms), which implies different levels of leverage, with polity constituting the more structural change. These terms should be understood in a broad sense, beyond government and the nation-state boundaries to all levels, which can be specified by the ‘level of governance’ attribute. Hence, policies could refer to corporate policies, non-governmental organization (NGO) policies, subnational policies; politics could refer to power relations between non-state and state actors; and polity could refer to the broader institutionalized set of structures and norms.

- **Youth in polity:** Youth participation to influence national and international polity is a key leverage point to change adult-centric institutional structures. An example are broader development topics of youth councils. A youth council is a “formal organization that is consulted by governments (mostly municipal) and community organizations on issues of concern to youth” (O’Connor, 2013).
- **Youth in politics:** Youth political participation does not just involve casting votes or joining parties; it can include other activities such as campaigning and contacting public officials (Weiss, 2020). It can be considered anything that is more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of government and/or the actions they take, through for example, protests, strikes or petitions. Youth participation to influence domestic and international climate change politics is not new. However, youth mobilization is becoming more frequent as evidenced by school climate strikes. Youth participation in politics is key to shift narratives that impact general public opinion and decision makers. Youth have provided alternative discourses and adopted the language of justice to reveal the failure and inaction of the establishment and of those who hold power, for example, political leaders and fossil fuel companies (Han and Ahn, 2020).
- **Youth in policy:** Youth participation in policymaking is key to influence not only climate policies such as NDCs, but also to mainstream climate in other sectoral policies such as education, transportation and energy. Additionally, youth participation can influence policies of other non-state stakeholders such as companies.

*In the policymaking process, young people should be consulted from the very beginning, basically before the policy gets framed, because very often the frame is already too narrow for young people's voices to fit in. I see this very often. Young people must come in at the very beginning to set the scene. And then, of course, before the policy, the regulation, the law [...] goes one step ahead; there should again be a youth consultation to specifically check that youth concerns and ideas are incorporated in the final outcomes. So basically, young people are like a sandwich, very present in the beginning [...] and then at the end.*

Marie-Claire Graf, former YOUNGO Global Focal Point and co-founder Sustainability Week International, Switzerland. Interview

*Youth should have a key role in supporting both the implementation and the tracking of the goals set out in the NDC. Indeed, several think tanks have suggested that civil society organizations, including youth, national auditors, researchers and other state and non-state actors, will need to access the information generated by the enhanced transparency framework, a key pillar of the NDC process, and use it for public shaming (or faming), direct lobbying, legal action and other strategies, all aimed at supporting the achievement of the NDC. This is, in my view, the key role young people and their organization should play in the NDC framework, acting as 'auditors' of the NDC implementation.*

Damiano Borgogno, UNDP Climate specialist, SparkBlue consultation

### ATTRIBUTE 3

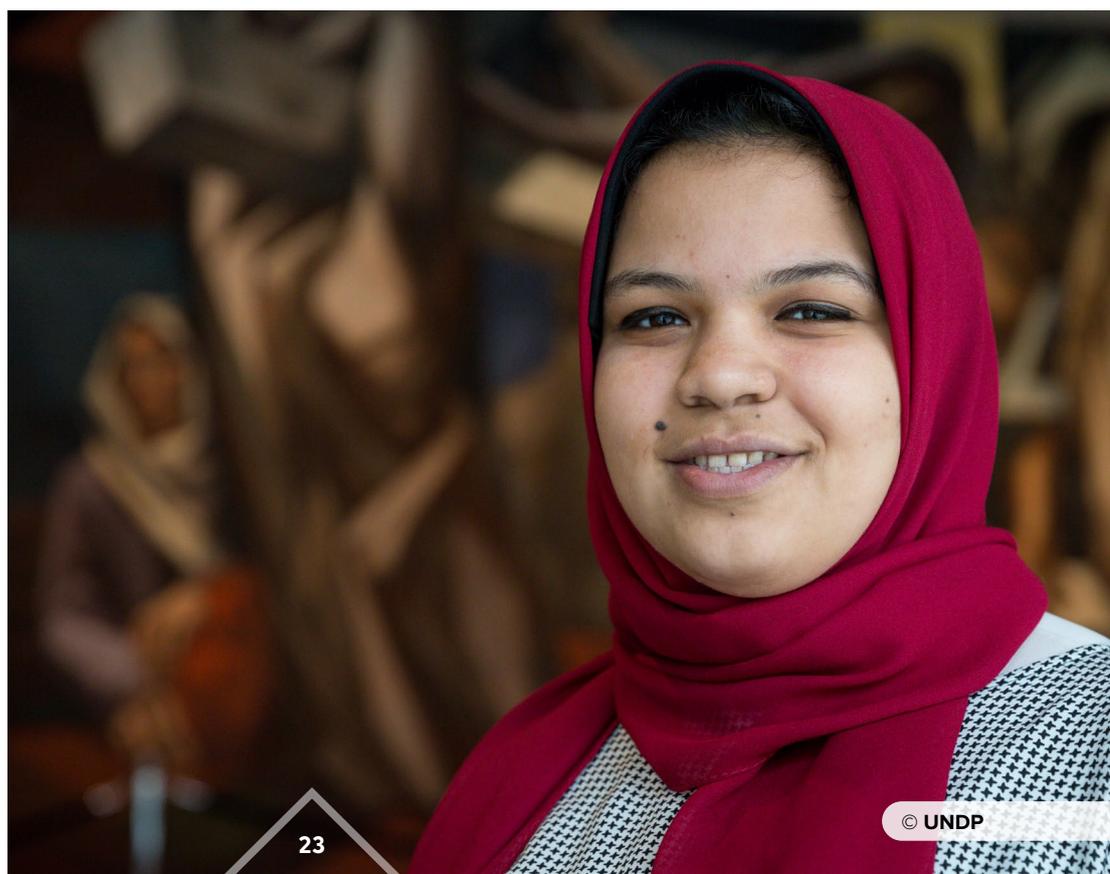
## The governance level

**Youth participation in climate action is observed and required at all levels of governance.** It is necessary to expand the spectrum for youth participation, from community-based to international-oriented action. Thus, youth participation can occur at the global, continental, national, subnational and community levels. Youth participation at any level can have cascading effects across upstream and downstream levels of climate action and dots need to be connected. This applies to any area of CCG. Based on a multi-level governance approach, these terms should be understood in a broad sense. For example, at the international level, it is possible to think beyond the government, i.e., to transnational city network, or a global civil society coalition of climate justice, corporate coalitions of climate leadership, and climate litigation global networks. Moreover, at any level of governance, there can be multi-actor arrangements or also youth-only interaction. This can be specified by stakeholder interaction (Attribute 5).

### ATTRIBUTE 4

## The decision-making stage

**Youth participation in climate action should be integrated in all stages of decision-making cycles.** It is necessary to broaden the temporal spectrum for youth participation across the different stages of the policymaking cycle, including agenda-setting, policy formulation, policy legitimation, policy implementation, and policy monitoring and evaluation. The nature of cyclical processes also applies to law making (from law design to law compliance) and judicial procedures, as well as programming and project cycles (from project design to monitoring).



## Stakeholder interaction

**Youth participation in climate action is observed in different multi-stakeholder settings.** It is necessary to expand the relevant spaces for youth participation in the “pledge and review” era of climate governance. Due to the broad understanding of policymaking in the pledge and review system, there is need to see policymaking through the lens of governance beyond state, thus policymaking is also the rulemaking of corporations and other civil society organizations (CSOs). In this wider sense, youth interaction with government stakeholders (legislative, executive and judicial), and with subnational stakeholders (local governments and municipalities) and non-state stakeholders such as companies and NGOs are taken into consideration. Young people who took part in consultations and interviews showed great efficacy when working with actors such as municipalities or corporate coalitions on climate.

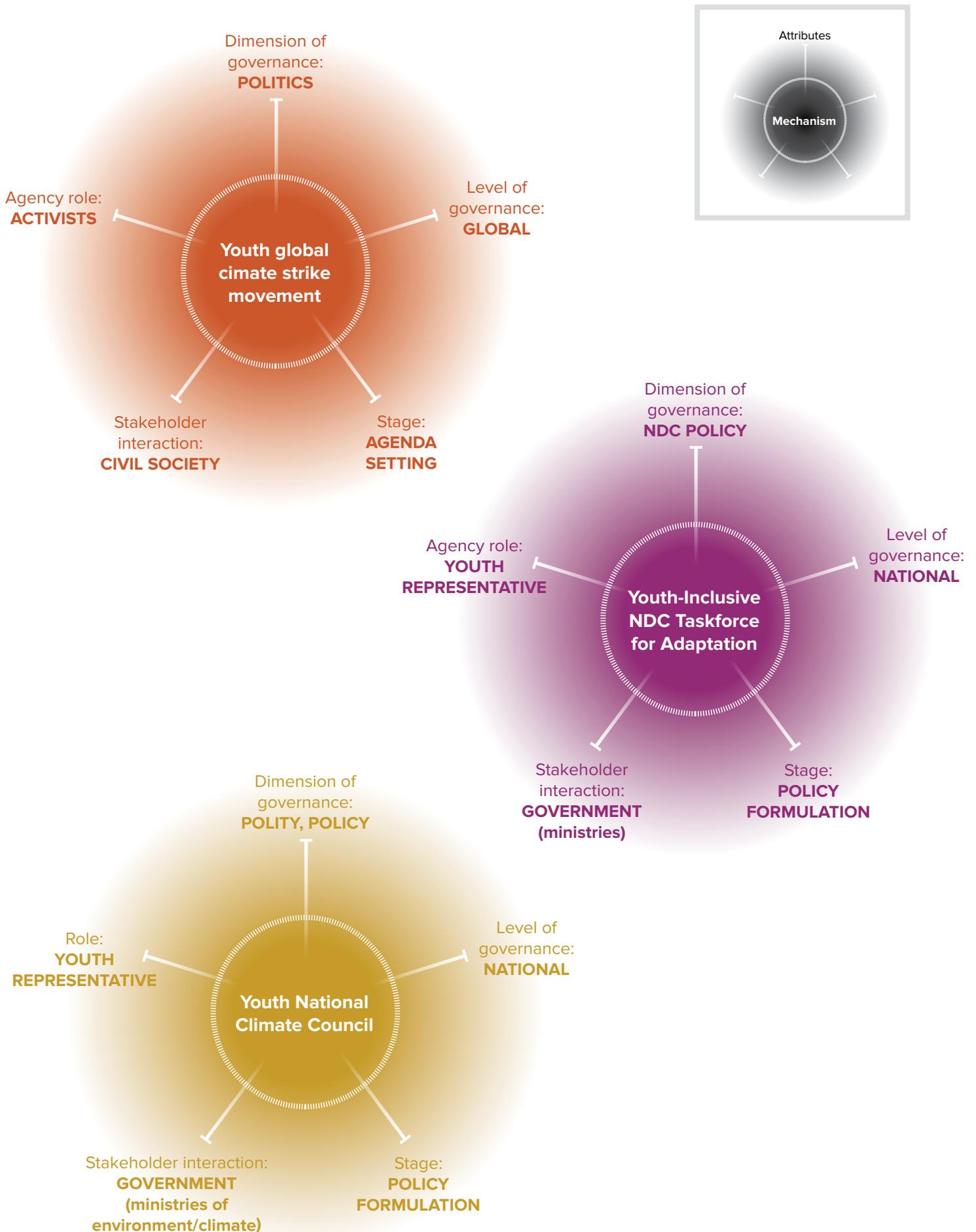
By describing the spectrum of each attribute, the aim is to enlarge the view of what youth participation is and could be and step away from stereotypes. Young people are venturing in new arenas of governance, trying to influence their political-institutional context at all levels, taking on bold goals of civic and political impact, and engaging in novel stages of policymaking.

From the literature review, interviews and virtual consultations conducted in SparkBlue, a diversity of mechanisms emerge from different combinations of attributes. They include:

- Youth national climate council
- Youth global climate strike movement
- Youth-inclusive NDC task force
- Youth-oriented NDC consultation
- Youth assembly in parliament
- Youth wings of political parties
- Youth-led climate litigation
- Youth-inclusive climate law formulation
- Youth-inclusive citizen assembly
- Young delegates for UNFCCC COP
- Youth-inclusive climate change national planning commission
- United Nations Secretary-General's Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change
- Youth participatory action climate research
- Youth climate entrepreneurship programmes
- Youth climate journalist programmes
- Youth-led climate media
- Youth climate citizen observatory
- Youth divestment movement
- Youth climate justice coalitions
- National youth climate networks
- Youth advisory groups/boards for city coalitions

Figure 2 illustrates how the various attributes described above map to three examples of these mechanisms.

**Figure 2. Examples of mechanisms of meaningful youth participation**



## 1.2.2. How to assess meaningful youth participation in climate action?

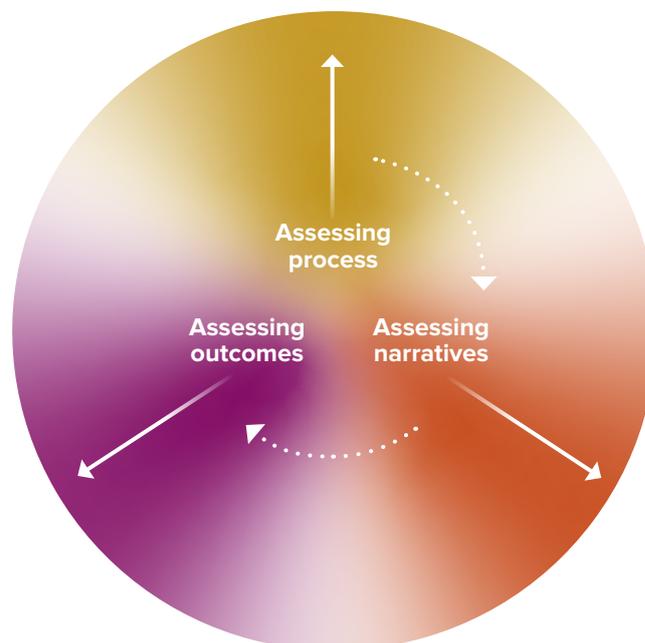
Assessments should consider the specific challenges that youth face in addition to the specific context in which they participate, i.e., CCG.

From these combined considerations, three entry points are recommended here in order to assess meaningful youth participation – the **process** of participation, the **narratives** and/or discourse about the participation, and the **outcomes** or impacts:

- **PROCESS:** Youth participation is considered meaningful when young people share power with adults to define the process of their participation. This involves the presence of an empowering environment for youth where they can express the full potential of their agency. In such an environment, resources are secured, and systemic barriers for youth participation, in all its heterogeneity, are tackled.
- **NARRATIVE:** Meaningful youth participation occurs when youth narratives are radical in challenging the status quo that created and recreates the climate crisis, and in proposing alternatives for a net-zero carbon society that ensures biosphere integrity and socially just development.
- **OUTCOMES:** Meaningful youth participation occurs when youth successfully influence: (i) institutional responses to climate change, and related policy outcomes; and (ii) political processes that shaped these decisions and institutional bodies, and norms and worldviews that define the policies and politics, thus resulting in positive outcomes for youth development and climate ambition and justice.

Each entry point represents a pathway of progress towards more meaningful youth participation and can be used to assess any mechanism of youth participation. A more holistic approach implies moving from process-based to discourse-based to outcome-based assessments (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Approach to assess progress towards meaningful youth participation





Within these three entry points, 16 indicators are proposed to assess the degree of meaningfulness of youth participation (summarized in Table 2 and described further below).

**Table 2. Indicative list of indicators**

ENTRY POINT	INDICATORS FOR ASSESSING <i>MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION</i>
<b>PROCESS</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Involvement of youth in decision-making and securing shared power in adult-youth partnerships</li> <li>2. Institutionalization of youth participation mechanisms</li> <li>3. Inclusive procedures that ensure representativeness</li> <li>4. Fairness in participation to tackle barriers of structural inequality</li> <li>5. Intersectionality to tackle systemic discrimination</li> <li>6. Availability of and access to knowledge and financial resources for participation</li> <li>7. Increased youth self-perception of agency</li> <li>8. Gender sensitive and culturally sensitive youth participation mechanisms</li> </ol>
<b>NARRATIVE</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Compatibility with the latest climate and earth science available with a strong climate justice lens for fair allocations of responsibilities</li> <li>10. Interconnectedness of climate with other development issues</li> <li>11. Disruption of current socio-technical and socio-political structures underlying climate change</li> <li>12. Introduction of alternatives for large-scale system transformations</li> </ol>
<b>OUTCOMES</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13. Binding participation with secured inclusion of youth inputs</li> <li>14. Transparency of outcomes of the process</li> <li>15. Positive impacts on youth wellbeing and on climate</li> <li>16. Operationalization of intergenerational equity</li> </ol>

These indicators should be seen as a pathway for progression towards more meaningful youth participation (Figure 4). They draw from combined insights from a literature review and reflect the opinions of young people interviewed for this guidance and those that took part in the **SparkBlue consultations**. Young people stated what they considered to be low states of youth participation, and what they understood as meaningful. The left side of the spectrum indicates the baseline, while the right side of the spectrum signals the ideal state of youth participation.

Figure 4. Indicators and pathways towards meaningful youth participation



While, section 2.3 of this guidance proposes policy and programming recommendations for advancement of these critical pathways, we explore in depth each of these pathways and their characteristics that support meaningful youth participation below. Relevant quotes from consultations with youth actors are provided alongside the pathways.

***Climate justice is not possible in an adult-centric society. We need to address adult-centrism with the same urgency as that for the climate crisis [...]. It is important to address youth agency, but I like to distinguish youth agency in two aspects: the youth drive to participate, and the power they have to achieve something. Willingness and power are not the same. Agency without power is useless. Most often, ensuring some form of youth representation is the easy solution; we even get distracted with youth representation while continuing to ignore the adult-centric institutions in which we are embedded. We believe that we are making progress, but as long as youth involvement is coupled with spaces where we can't have any influence, we won't make enough progress.***

Diego Padilla, former Youth Liaison for COP21, Peru.  
Interview

***Formalization is important. When young people don't have formal registration, a solid legal existence, this makes things very complicated. We can't have institutional reports, bank accounts to receive donations, or staff to make people legally responsible for the organization actions. This is the tricky part of being a volunteer. It actually makes the spaces more exclusive for youth from rich backgrounds, because they don't have to worry about money. Poor people – they have to worry about being passionate and their livelihoods.***

Chiagozie Udeh, former Chairperson of the Global Executive Board, Plant for Planet Nigeria, 2019 Global South Focal Point for YOUNGO, Nigeria. Interview

### ▶ **It ensures the involvement of youth in decision-making, securing shared power in adult-youth partnerships**

It has been argued that progress from adult- and youth-driven participation to youth-adult partnerships is needed. On the one hand, adult-initiated participation needs to progress from simply giving information or consulting youth, to ensuring their involvement so that they take part in deliberations and discussions pertaining to decision-making. On the other hand, youth-driven participation in activities and organizations governed by youth only also needs to progress from a scenario where adults are insufficiently involved to a more empowering role of adults. Although in youth-driven participation youth can experience ownership over an agenda, lack or minimal adult involvement can lead to a loss of intergenerational memory, and youth–adult segregation that hinders collaboration. In adult-youth partnerships, youth and adults share planning and decision-making responsibilities to achieve goals, leveraging on their respective strengths. Adults create an empowering environment for youth. They need to be involved since there are uneven power dynamics between youth and adults in society. Thus, adults can serve as resources and collaborators, instead of only as experts. Moreover, adults can serve as role models, sources of support, and strengthen social capital. Similarly, in this context, youth can be successful in reaching the full potential of their agency. As partners, they can offer their creativity and a fresh perspective, willingness to try new ideas and a youth-centred understanding.

### ▶ **It ensures institutionalization of youth participation mechanisms**

It has been argued that although increasing opportunities for youth participation are welcomed, there is a need to progress from one-time-only informal mechanisms for youth participation to institutionalized mechanisms. There are two main arguments for this. First, institutionalization of mechanisms allows to progress beyond individual participation opportunities that well-established young leaders can access due to their consolidated network of contacts or recognition, to opportunities for young people in mandated mechanisms with impartial selection criteria. Secondly, institutionalization also refers to the formalization of youth organizations or networks. Two key benefits, young people argue, are that institutionalized mechanisms can secure resources for youth participation and guarantee more representativeness of young people of all backgrounds. Therefore, there is a call to institutionalize youth participation in:

- adult-led decision-making structures, for example, through youth quotas, age-diversified criteria in juries, panels, commissions;
- youth-exclusive spaces for deliberation within adult-led decision-making structures in government, such as youth advisory councils and youth parliament sessions;

***For me, a step towards meaningful youth participation is the institutionalization of certain mechanisms where young people can have dialogues with decision makers. That this goes beyond static dynamics, representation should be rotational, so that many more young people benefit from being part of these spaces.***

Juan José Martin, President of Cverde, former young negotiator, Chile. Interview

***Decision makers should avoid 'youth washing'; sometimes youth are in panels, advisory groups, committees, etc. just for PR [public relations] objectives. There needs to be a political mandate to listen to youth, and this has [to] be accompanied by funds. They (young people) have to be paid.***

Marie-Claire Graf, former YOUNGO Global Focal Point 2020 and co-founder Sustainability Week International, Switzerland. Interview

***In Panama, the UNFCCC Regional Collaboration Centre and the UNDP Country Office supported Leadership Academies for Youth on Climate Change. Since 2018, young people have been trained and later [took part in] the organization of Jóvenes frente al Cambio Climático de Panama, the first proposal driven by Panamanian civil society to face this global phenomenon. The support of the academy has been key to continue working on the issue. They always provide guidance and technical advice. They even support us as panellists in our events and invite us to their events so that we are constantly reinforcing knowledge.***

Beatriz Reyes, Co-founder of Jóvenes Frente al Cambio Climático de Panamá, SparkBlue consultation

- subnational structures, such as youth advisory groups in coalitions of municipalities and cities;
- non-governmental structures, such as youth advisory groups in companies and CSOs; and
- climate-related deliberation and coordination mechanisms within general youth participation mechanisms in place, such as national youth councils and youth ministries and agencies dedicated to youth issues. There are many routes to institutionalization, from introducing new legislation to establishing new norms or institutional policies. This also includes the aim to formalize youth organizations so that they can access resources by meeting legal identity and other requirements.

### ▶ **It helps young people have access to knowledge, financial and other resources for participation**

An empowering environment for youth refers to the availability of and accessibility to needed resources for their successful participation. Young people need access to knowledge resources. They need relevant information about their climate-related topic of participation and to have sufficient understanding of the policy process in which they are engaged. Similarly, they need sufficient financial and material resources to support their advocacy efforts. Finally, they need social power, access to key networks and the opportunity to be heard.





**Some of the most marginalized groups in our world are not represented by national narratives. [...] Particularly in the context of nations established through colonialism, it is imperative to ensure that indigenous communities are actively part of any policy decision-making processes and are still recognized as traditional stewards of the land. [...] Most importantly, the best way to engage marginalized populations is to listen, to ask questions about their lived experiences, and to act upon their recommendations.**

Nadine Clopton, Founder and Director of Global Youth Climate Action Declaration and Global NGO Executive Committee, United States of America, SparkBlue consultation

**In Sierra Leone, [...] the literacy rate for youth (15–24) is only 57.6 percent (67.6 percent men, 48.1 percent women). Of the 21 percent of young people who enrol in junior secondary school, the proxy completion rates are 69.4 percent (men) and 74.3 percent (women). [...] Due to the low level of skills, youth are very eager to enter enterprises such as timber logging, charcoal production, illicit mining, and other forms of livelihoods that provide quick financial gains, but with grave consequences for the climate. Thus, instead of using their enormous energies in participating in climate actions, the reverse is true, namely, using their energy to contribute to drivers of climate change.**

Abdul Sannoh, UNDP Small Grants Programme, Sierra Leone, SparkBlue consultation

**More youth delegates from the Global South must be mandated to participate during the annual United Nations climate change conferences, prioritizing those representing vulnerable and marginalized communities. Adequate support must be given to these delegates so that they can provide assistance in monitoring key outcomes of the week-long negotiations and attend side events that can help enhance their knowledge on key issues, as well as reporting on the outcomes that help shape the local and regional narrative of climate-related issues in their respective areas.**

John Leo Algo, Programme Manager, climate advocate, environmental researcher, citizen journalist, Laudato Si' Philippines, Philippines, SparkBlue consultation

**For meaningful youth participation in climate action, it is necessary first of all that states (countries) have public policies regarding youth issues in order to ensure a youth active participation, not only in climate change, but also in other agendas. By having a well-established legislative framework to address youth issues (a law for youth, for example), we can guarantee participation and advocacy in a holistic way, nationally and internationally.**

Danae Espinoza, Co-Founder of Movimiento de Jóvenes Latinoamericanos y Caribeños frente al Cambio Climático (CLIC), Mexico, SparkBlue consultation

### ► It offers inclusive procedures that ensure representativeness

This refers to progress from generic participation procedures to inclusive procedures that secure representativeness at the national and international levels. Deliberative capacity is enhanced if the system becomes more inclusive of perspectives and arguments, broadening the set of perspectives to account for disadvantaged groups or positions. Inclusive participation arenas also ensure that any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported and valued to fully participate.

### ► It ensures fairness in participation to tackle barriers of structural inequality

This refers to acknowledging, identifying and eliminating barriers of structural inequality that have prevented the full participation of some youth groups. The principle of equity acknowledges that there are historically underserved and underrepresented populations, and that fairness requires tackling these unbalanced conditions to ensure effective opportunities to all groups. Thus, fairness in participation requires working on systemic youth development issues, such as pre-existing social, political and economic conditions that might be hindering youth participation in climate action.

*There is a perception that we always see the same people (in climate change youth groups). Who is not participating? And why? I believe sometimes people don't want to participate in spaces that ignore sexism, racism, homophobia, etc. There are also people with migration backgrounds who don't seem to connect with the mainstream narrative in climate youth movements. Maybe because these movements don't represent everyone. Youth organizations would have to target and invite marginalized groups explicitly. But that costs extra resources. This is also a trade-off with voluntary participation.*

Felix Nasser, Activist at  
Klimaneustart Berlin, Germany.  
Interview

### ▶ **It addresses intersectionality to tackle systemic discrimination**

This refers to progressing from addressing youth as a homogenous entity to targeting specific groups and addressing systemic discrimination. Intersectionality is a useful concept to disentangle complex layers of identity and experiences that intersect in ways that create multiple, marginalized youth identities. Youth may be side-lined in general, but the ways in which this exclusion takes form can vary. Age also intersects with gender, race, economic status, immigration status, national origin and different abilities, among other aspects of identity. Intersectionality is defined as the interaction between these and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements and cultural ideologies, and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power. This intersectionality can shape how young people experience discrimination and inequality as well as their access to opportunities, which all can impact their ability to meaningfully participate.

### ▶ **It increases youth self-perception of agency**

Agency, which is described as a motivational drive or willingness to act and mobilize resources, is deeply affected by self-perception. Young people can assess: their potential impact – if they can make a difference; their competence – if they have the skills to do so; and their autonomy – if they are able to determine what and how they do what they care about. If this assessment is positive, a high self-perception of agency reinforces motivation, driving stronger youth action. To this end, it is important that there is a societal and institutional recognition that young people are relevant actors in the process. It is also key to know how they perceive their own path of empowerment, and whether or not they have a proper environment to strengthen their sense of impact, competence, meaning and choice.

### ▶ **It ensures culturally sensitive youth participation mechanisms**

This refers to a progress from culture-centred approach to culturally sensitive one. Whereas the culture-centred approach is based on commitment to cultural assumptions, the cultural sensitivity approach to participation is responsive to the cultural characteristics, values, beliefs, experiences and norms of the target population, which involves taking into consideration how youth are able to and prefer to participate in a certain cultural context.



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***Why are our political actions not based on science-based targets? We, young people, [...] have grown up with the knowledge that disruptive environmental change is already happening. We understand that we can't negotiate with the climate. One reason for this could be that the consequences of not listening to science are worse for young people than for older generations. We have to live for much longer with an escalating climate crisis. We ask ourselves whether it is still responsible to have children. But of course, listening to climate science not only depends on our perspective as youth or adults, but also very much on our position of power and related lobby interests. So many people want you to think that the climate crisis is not as bad as climate scientists say it is.***

Felix Nasser, activist, Klimaneustart Berlin, Germany. Interview

► **It is compatible with the latest climate and earth science available with a strong climate justice lens for fair allocations of responsibilities**

There is a societal need for proper information to avoid crossing tipping points and to frame a clear narrative of unacceptable risks in the face of scientific proof of a climate and global ecological emergency. Tipping points in the climate system are becoming active, and if crossed, would amplify even more global warming. Moreover, not only is the earth's climate resilience eroding, but so are global ecological systems, as evidenced by the planetary boundaries framework, for example, biodiversity loss and ocean acidification. Therefore, youth narratives and solutions should be informed to the best of their ability by the latest climate and earth science available and justice considerations. Communicating science to the wider society and informing political debate are key. Moreover, youth can also participate in deliberative processes of science-based decision-making and even more so in efforts to democratize science production. Similarly, any consideration of fair allocations of responsibilities should be assessed with a justice lens.

**Efforts towards mandatory climate change education in the formal schooling environment have only recently begun. Our organization is currently involved in developing modules to be used by the Department of Education in integrating climate change into primary and secondary school curricula in the country. We are also developing a Laudato Si'-based school framework that integrates climate and environmental principles, not only in curriculum, but also in the operations of schools and universities. We are also involved in dialogues with the focal point for Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) in the Philippines to develop a National ACE Strategy and to include ACE in the country's second NDC.**

John Leo Algo, Programme Manager, climate advocate, environmental researcher, citizen journalist, Laudato Si' Philippines, Philippines, SparkBlue consultation

**NDCs will not become a reality without meaningful shifts in the green economy, and these shifts won't be achieved if there are not enough qualified specialists to step up. [I propose a] Green Youth Guarantee Mechanism as part of the NDC enhancement process. It will be an inclusive mechanism where representatives of youth, marginalized groups, CSOs, international/multilateral institutions, private sector, academia, and state and local actors work on establishing national frameworks that will provide a pipeline from the educational sphere to the job market for young people. Young people would be able to obtain marketable skills to quickly enter green industries [...] and would satisfy their sense of purpose by pursuing a career that contributes to making our planet a more livable place.**

Vladislav Kaim, Member of the United Nations Secretary-General's Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change, Moldova, SparkBlue consultation

### ► **It addresses interconnectedness of climate with other development issues**

In growing recognition of the interconnectedness of socio-ecological systems, climate should not be treated as a stand-alone topic. Governing interconnectedness is key to achieving integrated sustainable development and thus, there is need to address the relationships of climate with other earth system dynamics, and development issues. Youth agendas need to integrate climate with other sustainable development issues. These synergies have already been observed in the work of young people at the intersections of climate and biodiversity, climate and migration, climate and oceans, climate and agriculture, and climate and urbanism. This integration also links climate-only discourses with specific youth development issues such as climate and education, and employment in the just transition to low-carbon economies.

### ► **It can be driven by radical narratives that disrupt current socio-technical and socio-political structures underlying climate change**

This refers to the ability of youth to challenge power relationships and political interests to promote climate-resilient futures. It is argued that the major challenge in the context of climate change, in addition to engaging youth, is how youth can disrupt and question prevailing norms, lifestyles, decisions, and actions that perpetuate business as usual and that have far-reaching, long-lasting, and in some cases, irreversible global impacts on climate and the biosphere. This spectrum of radical change can range from sparking change from within dominant structures (dutiful dissent) – by taking advantage of windows of opportunity within them – to disruptive actions that oppose the current dominant structures through protests, campaigns, boycotts, political marches, rallies, acts of disobedience and climate demands. Some examples include divestment movements, protests at coal-fired power plants, campaigns that expose anti-climate lobby groups and boycotts of carbon-intensive companies.





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*Youth participation has the potential to contribute with paradigm shifts. I had the opportunity to work with adults who are really big experts in their fields, they know so much, but their paradigm, their personal philosophy in relation to climate change, is not the same than young people. More and more we [youth] emphasize an eco-centric worldview or paradigm that is about prioritizing a functioning ecosystem that humans are a part of, and not the only ones. And although it sounds simple, it has deeper implications. There are many adults, experts that although they have been working for years in climate change or biodiversity conservation, they keep having an anthropocentric worldview... maybe without fully realizing it, but you can see this expressed in their language, in the way they prioritize things, they keep prioritizing humans above all. And I believe that reasoning has proved not to have scientific grounding. We have to start thinking from an eco-centric worldview.*

Juan José Martín, President of Cverde, former young negotiator, Chile. Interview

*We are quite radical. We are going directly from the planetary perspective, and of course, the human perspective, but the current leadership really thinks of economic growth [as] a priority. [...] In terms of adaptation, what I'll say is that if you think of a coastal city being flooded, the current business set-up or political [set-up] would say, let's build a dike or anything that solves the problem now. Young people are very radical and are asking for ecosystem-based adaptation (EBA), which doesn't give results right now perhaps, but when they talk about adaptation, they talk about it in the context of EBA and nature-based solutions. We think from a very different narrative [...] We think more in the long term [for example] forestation to stop floods ... this is more beneficial because it is long term.*

Joshua Amponsem, Green Africa Youth Organization, Youth Fellow at the Global Center on Adaptation (GCA), Ghana. Interview

► **It can be driven by narratives that introduce alternatives for large-scale system transformations.**

This refers to the potential of propositional discourses that introduce alternatives to the current dominant structures, from new mindsets and paradigms to solutions and technologies based on them. One of the highest points of leverage for youth narratives is to shift from societal discourses that are identified as adult-centric, anthropocentric and profit-driven, etc. Introducing new paradigms such as ecocentrism, degrowth and circularity can translate into truly innovative solutions at the system change level, such as bio-based innovations, nature-based solutions and not-for-profit entrepreneurship.

***I believe climate litigation is an important mechanism. We achieved concrete things. The court decision ordered the protection of the Colombian Amazon from deforestation [...] [and] many measures for the ministries and municipal authorities [...]. Although after all this time, there hasn't been enough compliance with the court decision, it has had a huge impact on the country's jurisprudence. It has declared the (Colombian) Amazon a subject of rights, protection and restoration.***

Laura Jimenez, plaintiff in a climate change and future generations lawsuit in Colombia, Colombia. Interview

***Far too often I hear adults in power complain that inputs from youth are "unrealistic", "naive" or "not implementable" [...]. Youth often exist outside the discourses and dogmas that rule politics, and for that precise reason have suggestions that are morally right but hard to implement (which doesn't mean they should be discarded). Instead, there needs to be a process of collective learning and back-and-forth. Youth say, "Ban all fossil fuel extraction today" (a reasonable request). Officers respond, "This decision must be made by X, Y, Z – but within our jurisdiction, we can work towards that goal by changing regulation A, divesting our employee pension funds, heightening environmental standards on B."***

Ludwig Bengtsson Sonesson. Youth Delegate for Climate Change at Swedish Youth Council, Sweden, SparkBlue consultation

***There is this momentum: young people are included more and more; [they can even be involved at some] high-level meetings, but there is often a lack of follow-up. I can mention a lot of meetings where they gave us young people room to talk, but I can mention very few follow-ups where the voice of young people was included and actually made a difference... in the United Nations, outside, in governments. And I think this is really sad because youth often self-fund to get to these conferences [...] they get this chance, sometimes a once-in-a-lifetime chance, and then people are not treating us with more than, "this was a nice contribution from a young person"; "we have this youth voice there, boxed checked".***

Marie-Claire Graf, former YOUNGO Global Focal Point 2020 and co-founder Sustainability Week International, Switzerland. Interview.

► **It can be a binding process that ensures that youth inputs are adopted to a certain degree**

There is growing demand for securing the tangible influence of young people over decision-making. A binding process would secure a degree of commitment to adopt or incorporate youth input. Youth inputs can be in the form of, inter alia, narratives, approaches, methods, targets, recommendations and measures, which is the highest degree of shared power over the outcome of participation. In informal settings of participation, it is important to be capable of assessing the degree of influence of youth inputs in policies of different stakeholders. In more institutionalized settings of youth participation, the binding criteria can be reflected in rules of quotas for youth inputs. Youth participation outcomes can thus be reflected in the changes in government policies, legislation, political institutions, and actions taken by political parties or by non-state stakeholders.



**We should introduce new modes of monitoring and report [of youth participation] for the entire monitoring and accountability mechanisms [...]. A dashboard [or] reporting template tracking youth participation within NDC [can] help accurately aggregate the data and answer questions on transparency, understanding and clarity [...] to see what young people are doing across thematic areas in different parts of the world [...]. It also allows developing nations to leapfrog the digital gap and improve technical and electronic-based reporting systems.**

Deon Shekuza, Namibian Youth Delegate to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Youth representative at the National Climate Change Committee of Namibia, SparkBlue consultation

**Far too many 'youth consultations' have no real weight behind them, i.e., they are seen as one way to gather input into a process without being required to use any of it. If institutions allow youth to co-design the process and decide beforehand what will happen to our suggestions, this would ensure more meaningful contributions. For instance, my home city of Malmö just held a youth consultation on the future of the city with 250 participating youth. In this case, a promise from the Council that every proposal will receive a comment indicating whether this was something they would pursue together with a justification for the choice would make the process much more meaningful for all parties.**

Ludwig Bengtsson Sonesson, Youth Delegate for Climate Change at Swedish Youth Council, Sweden, SparkBlue consultation

**It is meaningful to achieve political change. We have to ask ourselves who has more power to lobby? With a strong civil disobedience movement that is rooted in society we say to politicians, we can't continue like this, even if they would want to. We are not trying to get into the institutions, and we are not trying to convince politicians with arguments; we are effectively intervening in their business as usual [...] going to the source of emissions [...] I can make a difference with my body even when I can cross the legal line. [...] [also] We are trying to convince civil society so that we make it impossible for politicians and corporations to continue this way. When we block the mines, they can't work; we don't just damage their production, but this is bad for their image. [...] For youth, it is [equally important] to have the feeling of being part of the movement – achieving something together – we tend to be isolated more and more. We might feel helpless, but then having a movement is the most important thing.**

Lara Eckstein, Ende Gelände, Germany. Interview

### ► **It follows a transparent process that ensures accountability of outcomes of participation**

There is a growing demand for transparency in the procedures and the outcomes of youth participation. With respect to the outcomes of youth participation, it is important to share the rationale for whose inputs were included, and if inputs were not included, then why. Similarly, if adopted, it is important to acknowledge how youth inputs have been incorporated.

### ► **It ensures positive impacts on youth wellbeing and climate action**

This refers to the impact that youth participation has on positive youth development, i.e., personal, cognitive and social skills on the individual or group level deriving from their experience of participation. But it also includes the impact of the policy performance that was the object of youth participation in climate action and youth development. This impact is at times difficult to assess; still, there is need to incorporate indicators to assess impacts. Another consideration is that performance of policies and projects should prioritize outcomes for the most vulnerable and marginalized youth groups.

*In international climate talks, down to local government policy-making, the conversation is rarely guided by 'What must we do now to ensure a sustainable and safe future for upcoming generations?' I believe that the essence of the youth climate movement is to try to shift the direction of the conversation into always asking that question first when combating climate change, and not last.*

Mary Awad, Project Officer,  
UNDP, Lebanon, SparkBlue  
consultation

► **It enables operationalization of intergenerational equity**

This refers to progress from recognizing the intergenerational equity principle to its operationalization in policies and programmes. It is argued that this principle needs to be embedded in international and national law, international and national courts, new national executive and legislative institutions, national constitutions and legislation, as well as policies and programmes. One way to operationalize the principle of intergenerational equity is to advocate for long-term decision-making and foresight methods of participation and future-oriented policies in government and other institutions.





## TAKING ACTION

# How to best promote and support meaningful youth participation in climate action and NDC ambition

The Climate Promise illustrates UNDP's commitment to helping countries raise climate ambition, tackle climate change and development complexity and adopt a whole-of-society approach to NDC enhancement and climate action, with young people at the core. The first generation of NDCs showed us there was still room for improvement: only about 40 percent of first generation NDCs contained direct references to children or youth, 60 percent address education in a broad sense, but only 24 percent specifically target or consider education of children and young people, while 23 percent do not even mention children or youth or child-relevant terms. In turn, the NDC enhancement and implementation process presented an opportunity to define interconnected solutions to governance, youth, gender, health, inequality and climate change challenges. In Climate Promise supported countries, as of October 2021, 58 percent of countries had included youth in their national consultations for NDC revision. This increased participation of youth is showing dividends in terms of NDC commitments. As of October 2021, 82 submitted enhanced NDCs from Climate Promise countries had either fully or partially included targets, measures and policies that are children and/or youth-sensitive, and that address youth-specific needs and roles. The NDC enhancement process has clearly presented a key moment to deliver for youth with youth as partners.

However, even though enhanced NDCs are a core element to achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement, their successful implementation, which will rely on systemic interventions that address the complexity of climate change, is required. Youth participation needs to be supported and strengthened to implement NDCs and to address other climate-related policies, to influence and push for more ambitious and just climate politics, and to transform mindsets, legislations, norms and structures of governance. This chapter provides an overview of key considerations for meaningful youth participation, inspiring examples from youth that are leading the way, and recommendations to facilitate and strengthen meaningful youth participation in climate action.

## 2.1. Key considerations

After exploring the characteristics of the critical pathways to meaningful youth participation in Section 1, some key considerations become clear:

### Key considerations

- ▶ **Meaningful youth participation is about sharing power in youth-adult partnerships in decision-making.**
- ▶ **Meaningful youth participation is enabled by systemic empowerment, which involves addressing adult-centric structures, structural inequality and systemic discrimination.**
- ▶ **Meaningful youth participation is about sharing power to influence institutional responses to climate change and securing positive outcomes for youth development and climate ambition and justice.**
- ▶ **Meaningful youth participation occurs when youth narratives are radical in challenging the status quo that created and recreates the climate crisis, and in proposing alternatives for a net-zero carbon and just society.**
- ▶ **Meaningful youth participation enlarges the space where young people can participate, acknowledging that youth participation should be embedded in all dimensions, all cycles and all levels of governance, and in multi-stakeholder settings.**

These key considerations can be illustrated in the examples presented below.

## 2.2. Success stories

There are a diversity of youth participation mechanisms in NDCs and in broader climate action, particularly to account for new spaces that youth are claiming. It is important to acknowledge that, in the ‘pledge and review era’ of CCG, there is an increasing need to integrate youth participation mechanisms in NDC policy cycles. However, since CCG is more than just policy, there is a need to strengthen youth participation mechanisms that aim to influence the politics of climate change, and the institutional structures and ‘rules of the game’.

Three in-depth cases of meaningful youth participation in climate action are presented here. Some of the indicator categories are used to assess what is meaningful in youth participation in each of these cases.



*With the core team of COY15, we put together a proposal of young delegates. For this role we were selected, one man (me) and one woman. So in COP25, for the first time, we had the role of young negotiators in the Chilean delegation [...]. We regarded our experience as a pilot, and after discussions and talking with more young people, we said that we wanted to make this official. So we started the process to institutionalize this mechanism. We showed the proposal to the Chilean negotiation team and they loved it; they embraced this process, and we started to co-design it. The project started to grow and more organizations joined, such as the European Union, the regional office of UNICEF and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL). And this project went from an idea for Chile to a school for young negotiators for the Latin America and the Caribbean Region.*

Juan José Martín, Chile

#### EXAMPLE 1

### Youth representatives in the national delegations of Parties negotiating at sessions of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

<b>COUNTRIES INVOLVED</b>	Chile, Finland, France, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Peru Switzerland, Sweden, Zimbabwe
<b>AGENCY ROLES</b>	Diplomats, advocates, communicators
<b>DIMENSION OF GOVERNANCE</b>	International policies and polity
<b>LEVEL/SPACE</b>	International climate change negotiations, where parties negotiate the framework and rules of global climate policy
<b>PHASE/STAGE</b>	Policy design at the global level

Young people have participated in various COPs as part of their country negotiation delegations in different ways. COP is one of the supreme decision-making bodies of the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement. Governments meet at COPs to agree on global responses to climate change to advance the implementation of the Paris Agreement. These events are an opportunity for young people to observe negotiations and influence global international climate policies, which currently focus on how the Paris Agreement’s provisions will be implemented across a wide range of issues including transparency, adaptation, emission reductions, the provision of finance, capacity-building and technology.

### Why is this mechanism meaningful?

#### ► Shared power: Towards a mandate to negotiate

Most commonly, young people get a ‘party overflow’ badge allocated for civil society to attend and observe the conference, rather than a formally assigned delegation role representing the government. This means they have different experiences sharing power with negotiators. They can be observers of negotiations or they can be heard at meetings with their delegation; alternatively, they can play a more active role of helping their delegation follow the development of some of the negotiation topics. At times they are even invited to bring their perspectives on specific topics that are more commonly associated with youth, such as education.

In Chile, Juan José Martín, one of the Chilean youth delegates for COP25, argued that one way of sharing power with youth was to give them a mandate to negotiate, which was accompanied with an official party badge, instead of the 'party overflow' badge. This adult-youth partnership was also reflected in the treatment the youth received: youth delegates had the same benefits and resources as the rest of the negotiator team. Also, in the roles they were assigned, they followed themes of negotiation, such as the ACE programme.

In Switzerland, Marie-Claire Graf, formerly of YOUNGO, also had the opportunity to receive a mandate for negotiation on training and capacity-building. She was the lead negotiator on these topics and supported gender and technology transfer as an assistant. It was a paid position with the same logistics arrangements as the other negotiators. She believes that she was able to show that youth can be effective negotiators, and she hopes to create a long-lasting impact for more youth by advocating for the institutionalization of such youth empowerment mechanisms.

#### ► **Institutionalization: Official young delegates programme**

Many countries have had experiences of engaging young people in negotiation teams, but most have not formalized this. However, there is already a growing demand of young people to formalize spots for young delegates with the mandate to negotiate at COPs. To date, in Chile, two former young delegates in the negotiation team have advocated for and succeeded in formalizing two spots (for a young woman and man) as a long-standing mechanism in the Chilean delegation team. This is a great achievement to influence policy (institutional structures) and secure youth representation in international negotiation processes. Other young people based in, for instance, Switzerland and Mexico, are working towards achieving the institutionalization of such youth participation mechanisms.

#### ► **Resources and empowerment**

At times, youth are not provided with preparatory training, while at other times they are invited to preparation meetings organized by their ministries of environment or equivalent. In Chile, a school is being prepared for young negotiators. In order to design the curricula, a regional survey was prepared to gather suggestions and preferences of youth in Latin America; 137 youth from 14 countries answered. These inputs will be taken into account in the design of the course. Some of the topics that will be covered are the history, functions and challenges of the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, the negotiation group and multilateralism in general, with a focus on specific regional challenges.



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*Although forming a Youth Climate Council was a very long process, I would advise anyone trying to advocate for it to not give up. Cooperation with the Government is not easy; you have to go through legal stuff, a lot of procedures, but for me it was worth it. The Polish Government was willing to do something [with respect to the Council], but they needed time. That is what it takes to follow the official procedures [...] I'm still happy that we are part of the journey; today we can advise and be the youth push within the Ministry of Climate; perhaps later we can reach the binding part.*

Katarzyna Smętek, Poland

**EXAMPLE 2**

## Youth National Climate Councils

<b>COUNTRIES INVOLVED</b>	Chile, Denmark, Estonia, Netherlands, Poland, and Brazil (comparable mechanism)
<b>AGENCY ROLES</b>	Diplomats, advocates
<b>DIMENSION OF GOVERNANCE</b>	National climate policies (policy), youth representation in ministry of environment/climate structures (polity)
<b>LEVEL/SPACE</b>	National
<b>PHASE/STAGE</b>	Policy design, policy monitoring

Youth National Climate Councils are an emerging mechanism to advise ministries of the environment or equivalent on domestic climate change policies. Participation in these Councils is through a selection process that ensures representativeness from all youth backgrounds. This mechanism gives youth the opportunity to create formal deliberation mechanisms with a broader youth population, and to discuss and advise on climate-related policies (potentially an opportunity to advise on NDC enhancement). It already provides a good example of how youth are targeting structural institutions such as ministries of the environment to secure long-standing youth representation.

### Why is this mechanism meaningful?

▶ **Shared power: Formal advisers to decision makers**

The role of youth as advisors is an example of shared power. The Danish Youth Climate Council is a non-paid, independent body of ten young people actively involved in the climate agenda, who advise the Minister of Climate on policy issues, with an open mandate to work on any green policy pertaining to any sector. The Council organizes its work and meets officially with the Minister twice a year to discuss proposals. It chooses to work on proposals in thematic sections and, after six months, presented three sets of proposals aiming at: (i) overall emission reduction targets; (ii) the food industry; and (iii) EU policy and strategy. All proposals were presented directly to the Minister and made public through national media channels to ensure transparency and accountability.

Similarly, in Poland, the Youth Climate Council is an independent body consisting of 30 young people that advises the Ministry of Climate on issues such as energy transformation and green jobs. This framework gives youth the opportunity to discuss and advise on the NDC. They have the mandate to unite and discuss legislation and policies to present their feedback to a representative of the Ministry. The Ministry is willing to trust youth with confidential papers for feedback and comments just as they would do with other stakeholders such as scientists. The Council wanted to have more frequent contact with the Government, which agreed to meet once a month. Most importantly, although they are part of the Ministry, they remain an independent body, hence are not obliged to hold the same opinion as the Government. Moreover, involving youth in the design of the Council is another example of shared power. The Ministry was open to accept an initial proposal of the Council and build on it. It organized meetings with 60 young people, who spent the entire day discussing the future of the Council with decision makers.

► **Institutionalized: Youth bodies in the Ministry of the Environment (or equivalent)**

In each of these examples, the appointments of Youth National Climate Councils were granted official recognition only after some form of youth-led advocacy, demonstrating the power that youth have in structurally transforming institutions. Denmark officially formed the world's first Youth Climate Council following a youth-led lobby process initiated at the COP24 in Katowice, Poland. The Danish United Nations youth delegate on climate initiated this advocacy, accompanied by a video journalist from a national media channel, by approaching the Minister of Climate at a side event in Katowice, to ask him to form the world's first Youth Climate Council. In Poland, a youth-led lobby process initiated at the United Nations Youth Climate Summit sparked the interest of the Ministry of the Environment. Conversations and cooperation later continued with the Ministry of Climate, which culminated in the establishment of the Youth Climate Council supported and recognized in official Polish legislation.



*This process was key to visualizing young people’s demands. There was no institution or organization taking care of our demands. We might have had similar comments in science and education aspects in the law, but regarding youth participation in climate change management [...] that contribution was unique to the youth constituency. To incorporate this principle or international approach, which no other actor had requested in all the other [actors’] contributions, it was necessary first because the Paris Agreement recognizes this principle; what we did was to bring it to the [legislation], and second because it is a framework for action. Today, each time the Ministry of the Environment designs a participatory process or has to plan how to implement NDCs, it thinks of these three main approaches: intergenerational, gender, intercultural. In other words, this a binding mechanism in some way that there is a guarantee from the Government to include young people in their processes of climate change management. The Peruvian National Secretary of Youth and the Ministry of Education were sadly not there to guarantee our right to participation in the law-making process, so we as rightful actors had to demand it ourselves, and so we did. We felt empowered through*

### EXAMPLE 3

## Youth-inclusive climate change law-making

<b>COUNTRIES INVOLVED</b>	Argentina, Peru
<b>AGENCY ROLES</b>	Advocacy
<b>DIMENSION OF GOVERNANCE</b>	Climate change law (polity)
<b>LEVEL/SPACE</b>	National
<b>PHASE/STAGE</b>	Design/preparation of legislation

Climate change laws are increasing worldwide. Youth participation in climate change law making is an interesting mechanism to introduce changes in the polity: embedding youth concerns and demands in legislation. For example, in Peru, youth advocated for inclusion, and youth in Argentina were invited to participate, at the formulation stage of their respective climate change laws.

## Why is this mechanism meaningful?

### ► Shared power: Engaging youth in legislation consultations

At the end of 2019, the National Congress in Argentina passed a new Act on Climate Change, and youth organizations were involved in law-building together with representatives from CSOs, academic institutions and youth representatives of the Alliance for Climate and Youth for Climate, who, since the beginning of the year, had campaigned for legislation through meetings with legislators and marches in the streets. During 2020, as part of the activities for Environmental Education Week, a workshop targeting youth groups was held to analyse the Climate Change Act, titled, “Youth and Climate Change: Ideas, questions and proposals”. A total of 167 young activists from organizations committed to the subject attended the workshop. The organizations that participated in the workshop were: Climate Alliance, Youth for the Climate, and Sustainability without Borders. Members of each organization formed different working groups where they sought to reach a consensus on proposals for the implementation of the Act. Roundtables were oriented to address issues such as: experiences and lessons learned within the framework of the National Cabinet on Climate Change; the National Adaptation and Mitigation Plan in a broad sense;

*the process; we learned in-depth about legislation and governance, which we didn't know before at that level. And so we feel that our efforts [have been scaled up] from giving our contributions to the Climate Change Law to the rulebook of how to implement that law, to having a secured youth representative in the National Commission of Climate Change, which was another consequence of the meetings with the Ministry of the Environment in the timeframe of the law participatory process.*

Pierina Egusquiza, Jóvenes Peruanos frente al Cambio Climático, Perú

different specific aspects related to climate change adaptation and mitigation; and the approach of the National Information System on Climate Change.

In Peru, the youth collective *Jóvenes Peruanos frente al Cambio Climático* (JPCC) contributed to the formulation of the Peruvian Climate Law in 2017 by delivering technical reports to advocate for the inclusion of the intergenerational equity principle. These reports highlighted the strong vulnerability of youth to the impacts of climate change as well as normative proposals for the inclusion of youth participation in the national public management strategy on climate change, and a call to strengthen the education section of the law. As part of their strategy, they had meetings with diverse stakeholders and were observers in the meetings of the Parliament commission overseeing the formulation of the climate law. Following the successful participation in the first stage, and after the publication of the Climate Change Law in 2018, youth requested to contribute to the rulebook of the mentioned law, which was coordinated by the Ministry of Environment. After receiving the JPCC proposal, the Ministry agreed to support youth participation. In decentralized dialogues, the Ministry funded the participation of one youth representative for each Peruvian macro-region. Moreover, in Lima, the Ministry of Environment invited JPCC to define the criteria for participation and organize the workshop specifically designed for young people. JPCC contributed to the mapping of youth organizations, extending the invitation through their communication channels, and proposing a methodology adapted to youth needs, e.g., preliminary capacity-building to learn about the technical aspects of the law and use of youth facilitators. One hundred youth took part in this consultation workshop. They contributed suggestions on how to operationalize the intergenerational equity principle and requested a youth representative in the National Commission of Climate Change.

► **Binding outcomes: Mainstreaming the intergenerational equity principle in the law**

In Peru, the JPCC included the intergenerational equity principle in the national climate change law. It was included in the legislative framework on integrating youth participation in national climate change policy. Climate policy would have to address how to include youth in the same way as they would include gender or indigenous groups.

The rulebook of the law was another opportunity to include youth's suggestions on how to put into practice the intergenerational approach. Since there is only a general suggestion in the climate change law to "include participation of non-state actors" in CCG, there is need for more specific language in the rulebook. In the participation chapter of the rulebook, it is stated that government must guarantee participation of youth and have budgets assigned for it. Another provision states that when regional and local governments develop their local climate change plan or strategy, they must guarantee the participation of civil society organizations, women and youth. Finally, although the proposal to include a youth representative in the National Commission of Climate Change was not in the rulebook, the Ministry of the Environment invited JPCC together with other youth organizations to form a task force to work on it and design the selection criteria and the mechanisms for its implementation.

Table 3 provides additional examples of youth participation mechanisms in NDCs and broader climate action for further inspiration.

**Table 3: Other examples of youth participation mechanisms in NDCs and broader climate action**

<b>MECHANISM: YOUTH-LED NDC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN</b>	
<b>Example</b>	Youth collaboration with the Government of Zimbabwe in NDC communication
<b>Description</b>	Youth NGOs focused on climate change, environmental sustainability and sustainable development are implementing green projects and supporting the Government of Zimbabwe in developing an NDC communications strategy for information sharing and awareness raising.
<b>MECHANISM: YOUTH-INCLUSIVE NDC CONSULTATION/ POLICY DIALOGUE</b>	
<b>Example</b>	Youth participation in NDC policy dialogues in Zimbabwe
<b>Description</b>	Zimbabwe organized policy dialogues on NDC enhancement that included youth, which provided a space to mobilize action and share ideas on climate solutions. Zimbabwean youth developed a policy paper that was taken into consideration in the NDC revision process and informs the various actions and commitments they are willing to support in the NDC implementation phase.
<b>MECHANISM: YOUTH-INCLUSIVE NDC TASK FORCE/ COMMITTEE</b>	
<b>Example</b>	A youth representative in the taskforce on employment and NDCs in Zimbabwe and Nigeria
<b>Description</b>	The NDC Support Programme, in collaboration with the International Labour Organizations (ILO), is piloting a project to measure the social and employment impacts of NDC policies in Zimbabwe and Nigeria. Youth representatives have been actively engaged in the process as members of the national taskforce.
<b>Example</b>	A youth representative in the Committee for Adaptation Policy Design (National Adaptation Plan) in the Marshall Islands
<b>Description</b>	The Republic of the Marshall Islands has already started implementing the Kwon-Gesh Climate Pledge at the country level. Youth inclusion is an important cross-cutting area in the NDC Partnership Plan and in the current internal coordination structure for climate and resilience activities. For example, regarding climate change adaptation, the Marshall Islands formalized the regular participation of a youth representative in the weekly meetings of the Adaptation Working Group, responsible for developing the National Adaptation Plan (NAP). Also, supported by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), a youth leadership camp resulted in a youth-led declaration that called for a youth parliament with an open session on climate change.
<b>MECHANISM: YOUTH-SPECIFIC NDC CONSULTATION/ POLICY DIALOGUE</b>	
<b>Example</b>	Youth-led roundtables for NDC in Colombia
<b>Description</b>	Supported by UNDP, three youth organizations, Pacto X El Clima, ClimaLab and the National Network of Young People in the Environment led territorial dialogue roundtables during the process of updating Colombia's NDC. The aim was to: understand young people's perception of climate change in terms of vulnerability, risk, and their vision for their territory; identify differentiated impacts of climate change on women and men; and provide empowerment tools for youth to participate in their region's decision-making. This coalition developed a methodology and participatory tools for facilitating the round tables, and at the end of the exercise, carried out analysis of the data obtained from the dialogues. This work contributed to strengthening their territorial agendas with respect to climate change management, presented different proposals for the regions, and finally provided inputs to the NDC update process.
<b>Example</b>	National Youth Climate Consultation on NDC Enhancement in Nigeria
<b>Description</b>	For the NDC update process in Nigeria, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Nigeria supported and co-organized a youth consultation between the Federal Ministry of Environment and the International Climate Change Development Initiative, a youth-led organization. The consultation had the support of the Environment Minister who was eager to receive youth inputs for the NDC. A 90-minute virtual kick-off event was held, with the Minister, UNDP and youth speakers all making presentations to initiate the consultation, which was structured around the eight priority sectors of the NDC. An editable document of recommendation was placed on Google Drive and remained open for inputs from participants for three weeks after the event, after which the recommendations were officially submitted to the Environment Ministry. Another immediate outcome of the consultation was a proposal by the Ministry to establish a Youth Working Group that will continue to interface with the Ministry on the implementation of the NDC and beyond. The process of establishing the Working Group and defining engagement modalities is underway and, at the request of the Ministry, being led by the youth who facilitated the consultation.

<b>Example</b>	Government NDC consultations and survey for youth in Mexico
<b>Description</b>	A group of young people from different organizations contacted the Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT) of Mexico, which is responsible for NDC enhancement. As a result, some commissions were created to help organize the consultation, which included roundtables and a youth survey.
<b>Example</b>	The “Youth for Climate Promise Project in Viet Nam”: Regional NDC consultations for youth, Report on ‘ <i>Youth for climate action</i> ’, Camp for Climate Action, Learning Hub
<b>Description</b>	Viet Nam championed a substantial youth engagement process, which included regional consultations, the election of five youth leaders, a Camp for Climate Action, and a Learning Hub. Viet Nam organized regional consultations to capture the views, knowledge, bottlenecks and ideas of youth in Northern, Central and Southern Viet Nam. They elected five youth leaders to join a Camp for Climate Action during which a report was developed, ‘ <b>Youth for Climate Action</b> ,’ that represents youth views, and was presented at COP26. Collaboration with the Italian Embassy supported youth to join the Vietnamese delegation at Pre-COP26 in Milan in September 2021. To support continued awareness and engagement, the <b>Youth4Climate Learning Hub</b> was launched which acts as resource for youth on climate change. The Learning Hub was jointly developed between youth and industry experts, the launching event of the Hub was professionally organized and attended by 800 participants.
<b>Example</b>	Government dialogues with youth for NDC implementation and enhancement in Argentina
<b>Description</b>	In 2019, Argentina held different dialogues with representatives of youth organizations and government authorities, which were facilitated by UNDP Argentina towards contributing to the acceleration of NDC implementation and raising NDC ambition. Subsequently, other consultations are planned as part of the NDC enhancement: the objective of these activities will be to build capacities and receive inputs from youth groups in Argentina about climate change topics, measures included in each plan, NDC and Long-term Low GHG Emissions Development Strategies. Additionally, these efforts are expected to enhance youth group awareness raising and act as a multiplier with the many actors involved in this project.

#### MECHANISM: YOUTH GRANTS FOR NDC CONSULTATION PROJECTS

<b>Example</b>	Plant-for-the-Planet initiative’s Youth for NDCs
<b>Description</b>	This project implemented by Plant-for-the-Planet was a call for youth and youth organizations to submit their proposal and/or plan of activities that they would like to conduct in order to consult with national youth and their governments to inform their country’s NDC on the road to COP25. Financial support, technical support and capacity-building were provided for selected organizations for the implementation of their plans.

#### MECHANISM: YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE IN NATIONAL CLIMATE PLANNING TASKFORCE

<b>Example</b>	Youth participation in National Climate Planning Commission in Peru
<b>Description</b>	The youth collective, Jóvenes Peruanos frente al Cambio Climático, advocated for a youth representative on the Climate Change National Commission, which was created in 1993 and reactivated in 2009. It is a space for the Government of Peru and civil society (including academia, NGOs, indigenous communities, the private sector) to negotiate and follow up on climate commitments of the country and in relation to the UNFCCC, and to propose climate policies. As a result of this youth petition, in 2019, the Ministry of Environment started a dialogue with the creation of a Youth Task Force for the definition and the implementation of the roadmap of this youth representation in the Climate Change National Commission.

#### MECHANISM: YOUTH CLIMATE DIALOGUES/ CLIMATE AMBITION FORUM WITH THE GOVERNMENT

<b>Example</b>	The Climate Ambition Forum, Ukraine
<b>Description</b>	A climate dialogue between youth and representatives of national and local authorities was co-designed with youth. Around 70 youth leaders and representatives from local authorities gathered in Kyiv for the Climate Ambition Forum February 2020, where they discussed the most pressing climate-related issues and sought ways to address them. The Forum was held as part of the EU4Climate project, funded by the European Union and implemented by UNDP.

#### MECHANISM: YOUTH-INCLUSIVE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL (SDG) NATIONAL COUNCIL

<b>Example</b>	Youth representatives on SDG Council, Grenada
<b>Description</b>	In Grenada, young students are part of the SDG Council, which reviewed the country’s NDC Partnership Plan and other key climate change and sustainable development documents.

**MECHANISM: YOUTH NATIONAL CLIMATE COUNCIL**

<b>Example</b>	The Global Alliance for Youth Climate Councils
<b>Description</b>	This alliance was created to collectively push for the formation of youth climate councils at the national levels. Fourteen young people launched this initiative at the Youth Climate Summit, 2019. Denmark, Chile, Brazil and Estonia and other countries have taken steps to bridge the gap between youth and policy-makers through independent councils that have direct access to political decision makers at the ministerial level. The details of the councils vary from country to country. However, they all serve as a think tank mechanism formulating concrete climate policy proposals and reports to political decision makers, as well as an access point of youth consultation.
<b>Example</b>	The Danish Youth National Climate Council
<b>Description</b>	Denmark officially formed the world's first Youth Climate Council following a youth-led lobby process initiated at the COP24 in Katowice, Poland. The Council is a non-paid, independent body with an open mandate to work on any green policy pertaining to any sector. The Ministry of Climate set aside funds for bureaucratic support for administrative tasks, press relations and expert counsel when required. The Council organizes its work and meets officially with the Minister twice a year to discuss proposals. The Council chose to work on proposals in thematic sections, and after six months presented three sets of proposals aiming at: (i) overall emission reduction targets; (ii) the food industry; and (iii) EU policy and strategy. The proposals were written with input from Danish civil society actors as well as experts from the private and academic sector. All proposals have been presented directly to the Minister of Climate and made public through national media channels to ensure transparency and accountability.
<b>Example</b>	The Polish Youth National Climate Council
<b>Description</b>	Following a youth-led lobby process initiated at the United Nations Youth Climate Summit, the Polish Youth Climate Council was officially created through the publication of official Polish legislation as an independent body consisting of 30 young people to advise the Ministry of Climate on issues such as energy transformation and green jobs. They have the mandate to convene and discuss legislation and policies to present their feedback to representative of ministry, who will gather with them once a month. This framework potentially gives young people the opportunity to discuss and advise on the NDC.

**MECHANISM: YOUTH ASSEMBLY IN PARLIAMENT**

<b>Example</b>	The first Youth Assembly on Climate Change in the Irish Parliament
<b>Description</b>	More than 150 young people discussed how the Republic of Ireland can tackle global warming as they attended the country's first Youth Assembly on Climate Change. A group of youth, aged 10 to 17 filled the chamber of the Dáil, Ireland's Lower House of Parliament. The children and teens, drawn from all Ireland's 26 counties, matched the number of deputies who are elected to the Dáil.

**MECHANISM: YOUTH-INCLUSIVE CLIMATE LAW-MAKING FORMULATION**

<b>Example</b>	Youth participation in drafting the New Act on Climate change in Argentina
<b>Description</b>	At the end of 2019, the Argentinean National Congress passed a new Act on Climate Change. Youth organizations were involved in drafting the law together with representatives from civil society organizations and academia. During 2020, as part of the activities for Environmental Education Week, a workshop targeting youth groups was held to analyse the Climate Change Act, titled: "Youth and Climate Change: Ideas, questions and proposals". A total of 167 young activists from organizations committed to the subject attended the workshop.
<b>Example</b>	Youth participation in drafting the Peruvian climate change law
<b>Description</b>	The youth collective, Jóvenes Peruanos frente al Cambio Climático, through its national advocacy team contributed to the formulation of the Peruvian Climate Law by delivering technical reports to advocate for the inclusion of an intergenerational equity principle in the Law. Also, they advocated for national youth dialogues to gather more inputs for the rulebook of the referred law. The Ministry of the Environment held these dialogues with 100 youth, mostly from Lima.

**MECHANISM: YOUTH-INCLUSIVE/ YOUTH-LED CLIMATE LITIGATION**

<b>Example</b>	A legal petition for guardianship ( <i>acción de tutela</i> , i.e., constitutional action for the protection of fundamental rights) in Colombia
<b>Description</b>	Twenty-five young plaintiffs worked together with Dejusticia, a legal NGO that served as an adviser to the youth group, to begin a legal petition for guardianship (protection of fundamental rights) to ask the Colombian Government to reduce deforestation due to its contribution to climate change and its effect on young people's future. The Supreme Court of Justice ordered the protection of the Colombian Amazon from deforestation, ruling in favour of the group of 25 young plaintiffs. The Supreme Court ordered the Presidency and the Ministries of Environment and Agriculture to create an "intergenerational pact for the life of the Colombian Amazon" with the participation of the plaintiffs, affected communities, and research and scientific organizations in order to reduce deforestation to zero and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, among other measures. Although there has been little progress and compliance since then, the case set a precedent in Colombian jurisprudence.

**MECHANISM: YOUNG DELEGATES IN UNFCCC NEGOTIATION TEAMS**

<b>Example</b>	Young delegates with the mandate to negotiate in Chile, and a training school for youth negotiators
<b>Description</b>	The mechanisms of involving young people in the official negotiation team of their country at the COP of UNFCCC is well known, but young people have been mostly involved as observers. The mechanism of young negotiators can be further strengthened. Former young delegates in the Chilean negotiation team advocated to reserve two places for young people in the Chilean negotiation team with a negotiation mandate. They also promoted the establishment of a school of young negotiators to train youth from Latin America and the Caribbean region.

**MECHANISM: YOUTH CLIMATE ADVISORY GROUP IN THE UNITED NATIONS**

<b>Example</b>	The United Nations Secretary-General's Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change
<b>Description</b>	The Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change assumes a formal role in advising the United Nations' Secretary-General on ways to encourage world leaders to make climate action plans a part of their recovery response to COVID-19. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres appointed this group of youth climate leaders, aged 18 to 28, to advise him on climate action, including young activists from Brazil, Fiji, France, India, Moldova, Sudan and the United States of America.

**MECHANISM: GREEN JOB TRAINING CENTRES FOR YOUTH**

<b>Example</b>	Youth and Climate Change initiative and Low Carbon Energy Education Centers, Armenia
<b>Description</b>	Under the SGP Innovation Program, Armenia's Youth and Climate Change initiative received funding for enhancing youth employment and entrepreneurship opportunities by creating a network of Low-Carbon Energy Education Centers. The Centers will ensure targeted capacity-building and vocational training of students in technological universities and colleges, and unemployed youth in providing green energy services, with a particular focus on solar system design, installation and maintenance. Qualified young practitioners trained by the Centers will meet the growing demand for green jobs, especially in rural Armenia, where solar energy technologies are rapidly expanding. The project will partner with companies providing green energy services and interact with the employment agencies to link the educated and qualified young specialists with potential employers.

**MECHANISM: YOUTH AWARENESS FOR GREEN SKILLS**

<b>Example</b>	Green Skills for Youth, Armenia
<b>Description</b>	In Armenia, the project "Green Skills for Youth" aims to raise youth's interest in green skills and specializations necessary for sustainable and green development of the country. The main objective of the project is to increase youth's awareness of and competences in climate change issues, mitigation and adaptation measures, energy production and conservation.

**MECHANISM: YOUTH INNOVATION/ ENTREPRENEURSHIP FOR CLIMATE ACTION**

<b>Example</b>	Climate action grants in Uganda
<b>Description</b>	To encourage climate solutions, The Climate Change Challenge Grants Initiative was established. The initiative has awarded grants to women or youth run businesses, civil society organizations, and community-based groups that are implementing climate change mitigation and adaptation technologies. These technologies and services include energy efficient cook stoves, climate smart agricultural practices, tree planting, solar PV for households, and energy efficient cooking technologies including briquettes. The organizations were supported with small grants ranging between US\$ 8,000 and US\$ 10,000 to implement activities and measures that contribute to Uganda's NDC in key sectors including energy, forestry, agriculture, waste management. The initiative is collaboratively being supported by UNDP and the Ugandan Climate Change Department/Ministry of Water and Environment.
<b>Example</b>	GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP), Youth and Climate Innovation Programme
<b>Description</b>	The GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) provides grants of up to \$150,000 directly to local communities including indigenous people, community-based organizations and other non-governmental groups in 125 countries. The country programmes are aligned with the NDC and are contributing to their implementation by investing in scalable local solutions, fostering policy development and contributing to society mobilization. The projects contributing to the NDC are implemented under Climate Change, Biodiversity and Land Degradation focal areas, comprising the majority of the SGP portfolio. In September 2019, SGP launched a Youth and Climate Innovation Programme specifically targeting youth-led civil society organizations and focusing on green jobs and meaningful youth participation. In 2020, 48 percent of all SGP projects were completed with the participation or leadership of youth, with 422 youth organizations participating.

<b>Example</b>	Youth Co:Lab, UNDP Asia-Pacific
<b>Description</b>	Youth Co:Lab, co-led by UNDP and Citi Foundation in Asia and the Pacific, supports and empowers youth to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs through social innovation, entrepreneurship and leadership. The project currently supports awareness raising, capacity development, ideation, prototyping and scaling up of youth enterprises to address climate challenges. For example, three examples of youth-led, green social enterprises in Nepal that Youth Co:Lab is supporting are: 1) Himalayan Innovations, which provides solar systems in rural areas of Nepal and organizes training sessions on electronic engineering for local young women; 2) AeroRoots, which sells aeroponic drums that allow people to grow vegetables on their own rooftops; and 3) Spiral Farm House, which is an organic, biodynamic farm aiming at reintroducing ancestral agriculture practices to restore damaged soils. Currently, over 650 start-ups similar to these are supported by the project through an alliance of over 190 partners across the region.

#### MECHANISM: YOUTH-INCLUSIVE INNOVATION/ ENTREPRENEURSHIP FOR CLIMATE ACTION

<b>Example</b>	European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT) Climate-KIC's Climate Launchpad
<b>Description</b>	Climate Launchpad is the world's largest green business ideas competition. Their mission is to unlock the world's cleantech potential that addresses climate change. Climate Launchpad is part of the Entrepreneurship offerings of EIT Climate-KIC.

#### MECHANISM: YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP CHALLENGE FOR ADAPTATION

<b>Example</b>	The Global Center on Adaptation's Youth Adaptation Solutions (YAS) Challenge
<b>Description</b>	The YAS Challenge is a competition and awards programme for young people from every part of the world, which incentivizes them to develop, share and showcase innovative solutions for climate change adaptation. Recognizing the need to involve youth as equal stakeholders in shaping the global response to climate change, the YAS Challenge seeks to unleash their ambition and creativity.

#### MECHANISM: YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAMMES WITH FOCUS IN CLIMATE CHANGE

<b>Example</b>	Youth Leadership Camps on Climate Change (YLCCC) by One UN Climate Change Learning Partnership (UN CC:Learn) Indonesia
<b>Description</b>	The Youth Leadership Camp for Climate Change 2017 initiative is carried out in the second phase of the United Nations CC: Learn Project in Indonesia and contributes to the implementation of the National Climate Change Learning Strategy (2020 session). The participants took part in multiple learning sessions covering different issues, from the international legal framework and the commitments in the NDCs, to the impact of climate change on biodiversity.

<b>Example</b>	Mainstreaming climate change in Youth Leadership Programme (YLP) in the Arab States
<b>Description</b>	The YLP is a regional youth programme implemented by the UNDP in the Arab States region. This programme has been working with youth in 18 different Arab countries since 2015. In 2020, climate action is one of the key themes of YLP. Accordingly, youth participants are receiving training on climate and environment, and are encouraged to be climate-aware and active on multiple levels, both through their personal lives and through activism and social innovation.

<b>Example</b>	Global Center on Adaptation's Young Adaptation Leaders Program (YALP) and education programmes
<b>Description</b>	YALP is a six-month, capacity-building internship programme for the next generation of climate adaptation leaders. YALP includes customized training and experiences, leading its participants on an innovation route, supporting them as they develop adaptation ideas into implementable solutions in the offices of the Global Center on Adaptation and our partners.

#### MECHANISM: YOUTH CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMMES ON SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

<b>Example</b>	Youth Environment Living Labs in Malaysia
<b>Description</b>	UNDP is working in collaboration with UNICEF to launch a Youth Environment Living Labs (YELL) in the aim of building youth capacity to lead on sustainability issues in local communities. It aims to pilot the 'living labs' concept in Malaysian education institutions and local communities, raising awareness on, and promoting better understanding of, sustainability and civic values using an action learning model through simple and innovative projects that address real-life problems.

**MECHANISM: GLOBAL YOUTH SUMMITS/ FORUMS ON CLIMATE ACTION**

<b>Example</b>	The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) Youth Forum
<b>Description</b>	IRENA's inaugural Youth Forum was held in January 2020 in the context of the Agency's tenth Assembly. It was the Agency's first major event for and by youth. Under the theme, "Renewables beyond 2030: The key role of youth in the global energy transformation", young people had the opportunity to exchange ideas among themselves and with government representatives alongside other energy transition thought leaders. In this way, participants were able to initiate concrete contributions to the global energy discourse.
<b>Example</b>	The UN Youth Climate Summit
<b>Description</b>	The UN Youth Climate Summit is a platform for young leaders who are driving climate action to showcase their solutions at the United Nations, and to meaningfully engage with decision-makers on the defining issue of our time. This historic event took place on September 2019 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York prior to the United Nations Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit. One hundred young climate champions were awarded 'Green Tickets' to attend this first-ever United Nations Youth Climate Summit.

**MECHANISM: REGIONAL YOUTH COALITION FOR PUBLIC DEBATE AND COMMUNITY-BASED ACTION SUPPORT**

<b>Example</b>	The Pacific Arts and Climate Change Program
<b>Description</b>	This programme will be implemented by Tuvalu and Kiribati, and the Marshallese youth-led organization Jo-Jikum. The objective of the multi-country project is to amplify the voices of frontline youth and their experiences with climate change, and to support infrastructure and locally based solutions in impacted communities in the atoll nations of Kiribati, Marshall Islands and Tuvalu. The expected outcome is for youth from some of the most vulnerable nations to contribute to the movement on climate change, have their voices heard, contribute to global conversations on climate change, and develop locally sourced climate-resilient strategies to share with their communities.

**MECHANISM: INTERACTIVE CLIMATE ENGAGEMENT PLATFORM FOR YOUTH**

<b>Example</b>	A gamified platform for youth as an interactive climate engagement method in North Macedonia
<b>Description</b>	In North Macedonia, an interactive engagement method is being designed for school and college students. A gamified platform, through a combination of foresight tools and online gamification, hopes to engage Macedonian youth in two activities: (i) educational and analytical educational activities, which involve educating users on climate crises, potential futures and country response using quizzes; and (ii) activities that require the user to report back what he or she has learned. The educational and analytical activities ask users to share videos, photos and stories about their involvement in climate action, co-create future visions for themselves and their communities, and map people they trust as climate activists and leaders.
<b>Example</b>	Mission 1.5's digital platform
<b>Description</b>	UNDP's Mission 1.5 campaign has been educating and reaching people to educate them on climate action (primary level and above educational module) and collected data from the Peoples' Climate Vote with respondents from over 550,000 people under the age of 18. This data helps youth directly inform NDCs and reach policymakers. The campaign is based on a mobile game that educates people about climate policy and provides a platform for them to vote on the solutions they want to see. The votes were compiled and analyzed by researchers at the University of Oxford before being delivered to government leaders and climate policymakers.

**MECHANISM: INTERACTIVE LEARNING PROGRAMME ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

<b>Example</b>	UNDP's Climate Box and guidebook for educators
<b>Description</b>	UNDP's Climate Box, an interactive learning programme on climate change, engaged over 60,000 school children and 3,000 teachers and educators in nine countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Armenia, Belarus, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Recently, in 2020, Serbia was able to join. A team of Serbian experts – climate change professionals, teachers and education experts – translated and adapted UNDP's Climate Box and prepared a detailed guidebook for teachers to help them better integrate learning on climate change into a variety of school subjects, such as biology, geography, physics and chemistry.

**MECHANISM: YOUTH-LED RESEARCH ON YOUTH'S ROLE IN CLIMATE ADAPTATION ACTION**

<b>Example</b>	The Global Commission on Adaptation and YOUNGO's background report on youth and climate adaptation, "Adapt for Our Future"
<b>Description</b>	The Global Commission on Adaptation partnered with YOUNGO, the youth constituency of the UNFCCC, to produce the first-ever background paper on the role of young people in climate adaptation, <a href="#">Adapt for Our Future</a> . The paper discusses a wealth of youth-focused innovations to help people to cope with the impacts of climate change all around the world.

#### MECHANISM: YOUTH-LED RESEARCH ON CLIMATE CHANGE

<b>Example</b>	The Least Developed Countries Universities Consortium on Climate Change
<b>Description</b>	The Least Developed Countries Universities Consortium on Climate Change (LUCCC) strengthens the linkages between universities and governments as they plan for climate adaptation. UNDP's adaptation team works with LUCCC and with countries to strengthen climate education systems and the flow of information (young people's research/work) from universities to government and policymakers.

#### MECHANISM: YOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISM

<b>Example</b>	The Young Environmental Journalist campaign
<b>Description</b>	Seventy-one young talents from Colombia, Kenya, Mongolia and Mozambique participated in the 2019 pilot version of the campaign. The project provided them with a platform to learn about environmental and human rights protection and build strong networks with local, regional and global journalism associations, networks and outlets. The project was implemented under the joint Environmental Governance Programme (EGP) of UNDP and the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency.

#### MECHANISM: YOUTH-LED CLIMATE JOURNALISM

<b>Example</b>	The Climate Tracker Platform for Young Journalists
<b>Description</b>	Since 2015, Climate Tracker has delivered cutting-edge training, innovative media campaigns, and brought incredibly talented teams of young reporters to the United Nations climate negotiations. They delivered in-person training in more than 30 countries, held hundreds of online webinars, and awarded travel scholarships to more than 350 young journalists. They have supported young journalists from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, Costa Rica to Fiji. More than 90 percent of opportunities have been given to youth from developing countries who can make a major impact in their national media. This platform supports first-time writers or more experienced journalists.

#### MECHANISM: YOUTH ADAPTATION NETWORK OF GLOBAL CENTER ON ADAPTATION

<b>Example</b>	The Global Center on Adaptation's Youth Adaptation Network (YAN)
<b>Description</b>	YAN is an umbrella platform to engage, empower and amplify the role of young people in the adaptation agenda. By creating an environment where young people are engaged as equal stakeholders in accelerating climate adaptation actions, and providing them with learning opportunities, YAN will translate knowledge into action and advocate for adaptation to be accelerated at the national and global levels.

#### MECHANISM: YOUTH-LED/ YOUTH-INCLUSIVE GRASSROOTS MOVEMENT FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

<b>Example</b>	The anti-coal disobedience movement Ende Gelände, in Germany
<b>Description</b>	A climate justice movement in Germany emerged from a broad alliance of people from the anti-nuclear and anti-coal movements, the Rhineland and Lausitz climate camps and the Hambacher Forest anti-coal campaign. In view of the urgency of the climate crisis, Ende Gelände considers it necessary and appropriate to go one step further: from public protest to civil disobedience. Their forms of action are openly announced blockades of fossil infrastructure, such as coal and gas. They also plan to be visible in the areas affected by the mining of fossil fuels.

#### MECHANISM: YOUTH-LED CLIMATE STRIKES AND MARCHES

<b>Example</b>	The Friday for Future movement
<b>Description</b>	Fridays for Future is a school strike movement that began in August 2018, after 15-year-old Greta Thunberg and other young activists sat in front of the Swedish Parliament every school day for three weeks to protest against the lack of action on the climate crisis. Since then, protests and demonstrations are taking place globally.

## 2.3. Policy and programming recommendations

This section draws from the information and analysis in previous sections. The recommendations take into consideration the characteristics of meaningful youth participation, key messages, and lessons learned from the many examples of youth participation in climate action that were collected. Recommendations are distinguished between those that are general and those that are NDC specific and have been packaged to provide clear actionable advice to youth and those working with youth.

### Encourage and support the institutionalization of mechanisms of youth participation

<p><b>GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Support current youth advocacy efforts and advocate for, enable and ensure the institutionalization of meaningful youth participation in adult-led decision-making structures. This can be achieved through youth quotas and age-diversified criteria in juries, panels, commissions and other government and multi-stakeholder deliberative forums at all levels.</li> <li>◦ Support current youth advocacy efforts and advocate for, enable and ensure the institutionalization of youth-only arenas of deliberation and decision-making within adult-led decision-making structures in government and subnational structures. Examples at the global level include youth advisory groups in transnational city coalitions; at the national level, youth national climate councils and youth assemblies in parliament; and at the subnational and local levels, youth advisory groups in municipalities. Promote these mechanisms also in non-governmental bodies such as youth advisory groups in companies or civil society climate-oriented coalitions.</li> <li>◦ Advocate for, enable and ensure the institutionalization of climate-related mechanisms within general youth participation mechanisms in place such as national youth councils and youth ministries, and national agencies dedicated to youth issues.</li> <li>◦ Advocate for, enable and ensure the institutionalization of climate-related participation mechanisms within development programmes empowering young people to take part in the representative democracy processes (youth as voters) and deliberative and direct democracy processes (youth as active citizens).</li> </ul>
<p><b>NDC-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Advocate for the institutionalization of youth-inclusive NDC enhancement processes, i.e., from youth-inclusive consultation to youth-inclusive high-level policy dialogues, such as national climate change planning commissions, and formal youth quotas in NDC working groups or task force groups of mitigation, adaptation, etc. Ensure that this participation is formalized in mandated mechanisms in norms, laws, executive resolutions and high-level declarations, among others. Signatory governments of the Kwon Gesh Youth Pledge led by Ireland and the Republic of Marshall Islands (in the United Nations Climate Summit 2019) commit to include young people in the drafting of climate policy (implementing climate adaptation or mitigation measures; communicating or updating nationally determined contributions; submitting or updating national adaptation communications or plans; and communicating long-term greenhouse gas emission development strategies).</li> <li>◦ Advocate for, enable and ensure that NDC design supports the institutionalization of youth participation mechanisms at the national and local levels, for example, by mainstreaming a youth narrative that advocates for the institutionalization of youth participation mechanisms in the NDC whole-of-society approach narrative.</li> <li>◦ Advocate for and ensure that NDC design, implementation and monitoring becomes a topic in youth institutionalized mechanisms of participation such as youth national climate councils.</li> <li>◦ Advocate for and create NDC working groups with topics intersecting climate action and youth development (green jobs, education, etc.).</li> </ul>

## Promote and support inclusive procedures that ensure representativeness

<b>GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Assess how climate policies or institutional responses to climate change and projects impact either disproportionately benefiting or negatively affecting youth or specific segments of youth in order to prioritize which youth are to be included in decision-making.</li><li>◦ Ensure decentralized participation mechanisms and accessibility for different youth backgrounds, e.g., ensure language inclusivity in youth participation mechanisms.</li><li>◦ Ensure representativeness in selection criteria to capture the diversity of social attributes and perspectives of youth of all backgrounds.</li><li>◦ Ensure that the selection process includes a list of criteria to enable that youth from diverse segments of the population participate.</li><li>◦ Specifically ensure the creation of targeted participation mechanisms for marginalized youth groups, for example, girls or indigenous groups.</li></ul>
<b>NDC-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Assess how NDC measures are impacting the involvement of youth or specific cohorts of youth. Prioritize the engagement of the most affected youth groups in NDC enhancement cycles.</li><li>◦ Ensure decentralized participation mechanisms and accessibility to participation processes through traditional and digital channels for NDC consultations, dialogues, working groups, forums and other mechanisms.</li><li>◦ Ensure representativeness in the selection criteria for a whole-of-society approach to civil society engagement and the engagement of youth from diverse backgrounds in NDC consultations, dialogues, working groups, forums and other mechanisms, e.g., randomized selection.</li><li>◦ Secure targeted participation mechanisms for marginalized youth groups, e.g., indigenous groups in NDC consultations, dialogues, working groups, forums and other mechanisms.</li></ul>

## Address barriers related to more systematic and structural inequalities

<b>GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Strengthen global and local data on youth vulnerability to the impacts of climate change, including by collecting age-disaggregated data in general climate vulnerability research or reports. Include impacts of sectoral transitions in youth wellbeing, jobs and education.</li><li>◦ Identify how systemic inequality hinders youth participation in climate action among the global North and South, and within specific national contexts, and make efforts to eliminate barriers, such as lack of education, jobs and access to health.</li><li>◦ Ensure mainstreaming of climate change education and sustainability education in elementary, high school and higher education with a focus on education for civic/ political participation.</li><li>◦ Implement activities to bridge the digital gap of youth in some contexts when participating in online mechanisms.</li><li>◦ Provide economic incentives, i.e., scholarships, grants for youth participation with constraining socio-economic backgrounds.</li><li>◦ Ensure the protection of the human rights of young environmental activists. Specifically guarantee the safety and protection of youth whose narratives radically oppose mainstream power.</li><li>◦ Address specific youth participation strategies for CCG in conflict and post-conflict areas.</li><li>◦ Create partnerships with youth government agencies, youth-led NGOs, movements, and other relevant stakeholders to address systemic inequality that hinders youth participation in CCG.</li></ul>
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<b>NDC-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Guarantee economic support and incentives for participation in the NDC cycle for the most economically disadvantaged youth, i.e., scholarships and grants.</li> <li>◦ Ensure that youth-related NDC measures comprehensively address education, employment, health and other youth-related issues that are hindering youth leadership in climate action.</li> <li>◦ Advocate for and mainstream a youth narrative that brings attention to special linkages of NDC policy with issues related to youth development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Specify all levels of climate change education in capacity- building narrative, from elementary school to higher education.</li> <li>◦ Specify green jobs for young people in employment and just transition narratives.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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### Enable intersectionality to tackle systemic discrimination

<b>GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Explore the specific climate-related vulnerabilities that youth face based on an intersectional analysis and/or criteria (age intersecting with gender, race, legal status, etc.).</li> <li>◦ Address the knowledge gap on systemic discrimination and systemic inequality hindering youth participation in CCG and on how climate crisis intersecting with systemic inequality and discrimination can further impact youth vulnerability.</li> <li>◦ Apply an intersectional analysis for participation process design and development actions, in adult-led institutions that aim to engage youth, and youth-led movements and organizations.</li> <li>◦ Refrain from reducing ‘youth’ to a homogenous target group that can be “mainstreamed” into development programming. and focus on capturing differences within youth (e.g., capturing the gender power relations that intersect with age).</li> <li>◦ Prioritize efforts to raise youth voices that incorporate different marginalized identities and communities’ experiences (via directing traditional and digital media attention, or criteria for public speakers, etc.).</li> <li>◦ Ensure actions to provide emotional support and mentoring to help youth make sense of their own multiple marginalized identities.</li> <li>◦ Raise awareness to help understand privileged youth positions and multiple-marginalized youth positions in climate action.</li> </ul>
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<b>NDC-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Ensure that intersectionality is a principle embedded in mainstreaming youth in NDC design.</li> <li>◦ Apply intersectional analysis for participation process design of NDC consultations, dialogues, working groups, forums or other mechanisms.</li> <li>◦ Ensure differentiated activities for youth with multiple, marginalized identities in youth activities. For example, consider gender differences for climate policies and actions proposed in a particular sector.</li> </ul>
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### Ensure availability and access to knowledge and financial resources for youth participation

<b>GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Ensure capacity-building, training and education on climate change. in formal institutions (from elementary to higher education) and informal programmes.</li> <li>◦ Provide technical and scientific support on climate action to youth movements, organizations and coalitions.</li> <li>◦ Provide and mobilize funds dedicated to activities to engage youth in policymaking cycles and programming cycles.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Ensure that staff are exclusively dedicated to coordinating and engaging youth and overseeing youth participation processes. For example, ensure that the National Focal Point for Action for Climate Empowerment has secured funding to fulfil his or her role, and create positions such as youth liaisons in participatory processes in the lead-up to COPs.</li> <li>◦ Ensure grants and funds for youth to organize on their own and own their own mechanism and strategies of participation.</li> <li>◦ Ensure grants and funds to support youth movements, projects, organizations, enterprises, coalitions, events, seminars and conferences.</li> </ul>
<b>NDC-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Ensure specific training, information platforms and awareness campaigns on NDCs targeting youth. Support online education and engagement activities across different youth groups.</li> <li>◦ Ensure the provision of technical support on NDC-related information to youth movements, organizations and coalitions.</li> <li>◦ Ensure dedicated funds and staff for the engagement of youth in NDC consultations, dialogues, working groups, forums and other mechanisms, and for continuous coordination and cooperation with youth organizations, movements and networks.</li> <li>◦ Ensure dedicated funds for youth-led initiatives to facilitate their contribution to NDC design, implementation and monitoring.</li> </ul>

### Encourage an increased youth self-perception of empowerment

<b>GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Study and understand in greater depth the motivational construct underlying youth agency in different youth participation mechanisms.</li> <li>◦ Assess youth self-perception of competences to participate meaningfully in CCG and direct action where youth need to gain more competence.</li> <li>◦ Assess youth's perception on key important issues of concern to them with respect to the climate crisis and youth development.</li> <li>◦ Assess the level of agency that youth perceive to have and the level of recognition from other stakeholders in different arenas of participation.</li> </ul>
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### Ensure culturally sensitive participation interventions

<b>GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Progress from a culture-centred approach to a culturally sensitive approach to youth participation.</li> <li>◦ Adapt youth participation mechanisms to the cultural settings of the target audience (responsiveness to cultural characteristics, values, beliefs, experiences, and norms of the target population).</li> <li>◦ Take into consideration how youth prefer to participate in a certain cultural context by securing youth involvement in participation design.</li> </ul>
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### Promote compatibility with the latest climate and earth science available with a strong climate justice lens

<b>GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Ensure that youth have access to the latest climate and earth science available to inform and assess their discourses and action with traditional media and innovative communication mechanisms such as interactive simulation programmes that help to test national and regional emission reduction policies.</li> <li>◦ Enable avenues for dialogue between youth and the scientific community for cross-fertilization so that youth can use science, and scientists can shape their research agenda priorities taking into account their needs.</li> </ul>
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## Promote interconnectedness of climate with other development issues in youth initiatives

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Enable youth to identify linkages in the 2030 Agenda with climate change by acknowledging complex systemic interconnections among the different goals and targets, and among the different planetary processes, through information platforms, guidance, webinars and other informational resources.</li><li>◦ Support youth initiatives and agendas that integrate climate with other sustainable development issues such as climate and biodiversity, with information resources to develop their agendas or initiatives.</li></ul>
NDC-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Obtain regional data, carry out research, and draft reports that showcase the benefits of addressing youth development and its contribution to a climate-proofed national development. Show how youth can be meaningfully engaged at the intersection of leverage points for climate action and national development. For example, find intersections between the biggest leverage points, i.e., sectoral or geographical points for priority mitigation and/or adaptation actions in regions and development challenges.</li><li>◦ Mainstream youth role in NDC measures that have an impact on long-term national development.</li></ul>

## Support youth participation that disrupts current socio-technical and socio-political structures underlying climate change

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Support youth participation that dissents from prevailing norms, lifestyles, decisions and actions that perpetuate the business-as-usual power structures underlying the climate and planetary ecological crisis.</li><li>◦ Support different and diverse youth agency and participation in formal and informal debates: as citizens, bloggers, activists, journalists, and politicians in the public sphere and political debate</li><li>◦ Guarantee respect of human rights of young people who engage in especially disruptive actions that are often expressed in direct protests or campaigns, boycotts, political marches or rallies, and disobedience acts.</li></ul>
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## Support and encourage youth initiatives that introduce alternatives for large-scale system transformations

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Support youth participation in formal and informal debates (macro-deliberation) that aim to shift societal discourses and narratives towards bio-based and eco-centric worldviews as the basis for societal transformations.</li><li>◦ Support youth initiatives that aim to mainstream alternatives for socio-technical transformation but also about socio-political transformation in all sectors, e.g., energy, transportation and building.</li><li>◦ Support youth transitions to green employment via mentorship, capacity-building or platforms that connect them with employers.</li><li>◦ Support and enable innovation hubs, innovation challenges and innovation programmes that engage youth in research on and development of solutions for a low carbon development.</li><li>◦ Establish and promote synergy (support or cooperation) between youth innovative discourses and initiatives, and corporations and government actors that can plant the seed for alternative regimes across different sectors. Young people are generally entrepreneurs who are creating a low- carbon or net-zero economy and other alternative approaches to the economy (i.e., circular, degrowth, sharing) as well as intrapreneurs in current institutions.</li></ul>
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<b>NDC-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Initiate, strengthen or support research linked to policy recommendations on the role of youth in the just transition and sectoral decarbonization pathways, i.e., energy, transport, higher education and green jobs.</li> </ul>
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### Explore binding youth participation including through quotas

<b>GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Consider the establishment of binding participation processes that secure commitment to incorporate youth inputs into a number of recommendations/measures and by incorporating their recommended approaches.</li> <li>◦ Create indicators to assess the degree of influence of youth inputs in policies of different stakeholders.</li> </ul>
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### Promote transparency of outcomes of youth participation

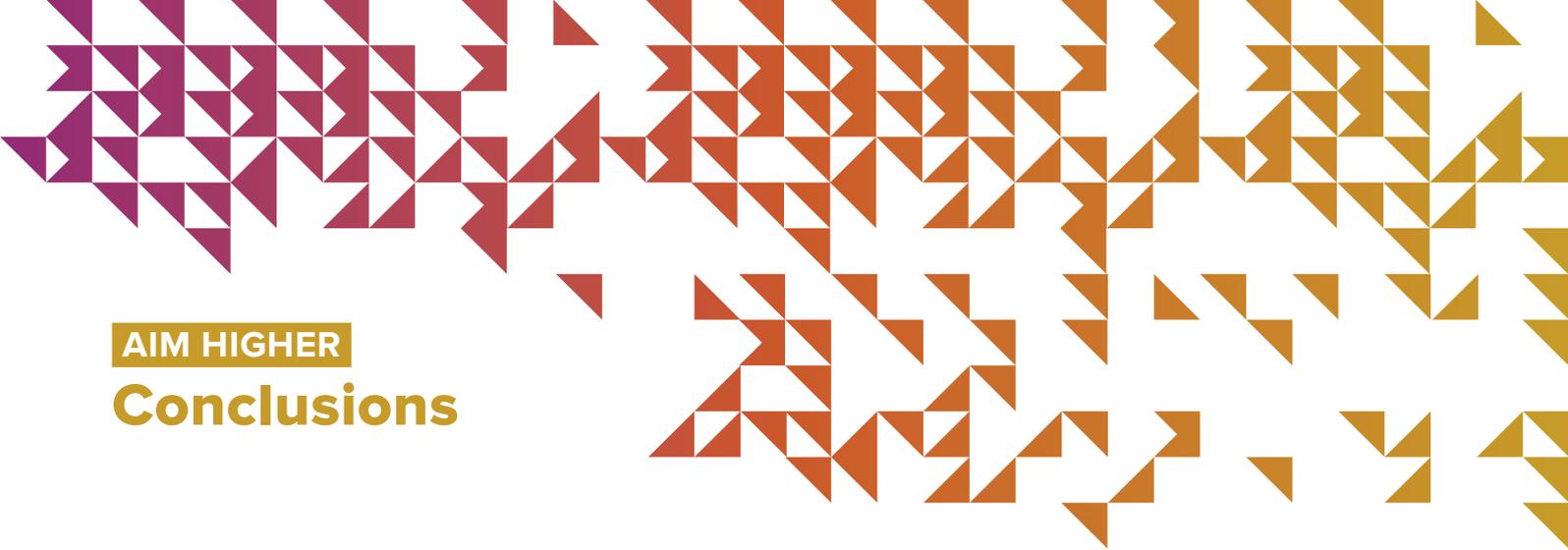
<b>GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Ensure transparent participation procedures that are clear on how youth inputs will be accounted for.</li> <li>◦ Where possible, communicate in a transparent manner the results of youth participation, either disclosing the rationale for not adopting youth inputs or acknowledging how they have influenced or have been incorporated into policy instruments or institutional structures.</li> </ul>
<b>NDC-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Ensure that clarity of language on how youth inputs provided during NDC consultations, dialogues, surveys, etc. will to be taken into account.</li> </ul>

### Assess positive impacts in youth empowerment and wellbeing / climate action

<b>GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Incorporate impact indicators to assess positive impacts on youth wellbeing deriving from youth participation.</li> <li>◦ Incorporate age-disaggregated performance indicators on climate policies.</li> <li>◦ Incorporate indicators to assess the impact of climate policies on the most vulnerable and marginalized youth.</li> <li>◦ Track youth involvement in different mechanisms and generate data or inventories on it across time.</li> </ul>
<b>NDC-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Track youth involvement in NDCs and generate data or inventories on it as well as the impact on youth wellbeing and climate action over time.</li> </ul>

### Promote operationalization of intergenerational equity

<b>GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Ensure that the principle of intergenerational equity is incorporated in international and national laws: in international and national courts, new national executive and legislative institutions, and national constitutions and legislation.</li> <li>◦ On the operative level, secure engagement of youth in long-term decision-making and future-oriented policies in governmental development planning (sectoral scenarios, cities scenarios, etc.) and other long-term planning in NGOs such as companies.</li> </ul>
<b>NDC-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Mainstream the principle of intergenerational equity in the guiding principles section of the NDCs.</li> <li>◦ Apply participatory scenario-building techniques to engage youth in long-term national planning on climate change mitigation and adaptation actions as future-proofed NDC measures.</li> </ul>



AIM HIGHER

## Conclusions

**It is not only important to widen the perspective of where young people can participate, but also to support how they choose to participate.** Youth can enact roles from three society sectors: *government* – young legislators, young politicians, youth representatives, diplomats in climate change negotiations and voters; *market* – consumers, employees and entrepreneurs; and *third sector* – community members and grassroots activists, journalists, members of NGOs, and researchers/scientists. Meaningful youth participation describes a broad array of mechanisms of participation to influence CCG including action that influences policy content, political dynamics, and structures and norms of governmental and non-governmental institutions at multiple levels and across various stages of design/formulation, implementation, monitoring, and accountability. All these variables widen the perspective of where young people can be invited to participate. Similarly, meaningful youth participation describes a diversity of roles of youth agency to depart from the stereotyped view of youth as simple members of civil society only.

**The assessment of meaningful participation is strongly associated with the capacity of youth to deliver narratives and solutions that are compatible with climate ambition and justice, and to steer this process and secure outcomes from their participation.** These include outcomes in climate and youth development and the institutionalization of their mechanisms of participation. Youth agency has been described as enabling or hindering power dynamics of youth and adults. Sharing power in youth-adult partnerships is regarded as an ideal balance. This requires that youth are empowered and become involved, individually or collectively, in expressing views, narratives and solutions in ways that are compatible with large-scale system transformations needed to achieve climate-neutral and -resilient futures. This also requires support of and collaboration with youth, and also acknowledging the legitimacy of their narratives, even when they disrupt the mainstream government or institution narratives concerning the latter's adequacy to meet climate ambition.

## Pathways for meaningful youth participation in NDC cycles and content

**Ensure youth participation in the cycle of NDC enhancement, implementation and monitoring, including activities designed for and with youth.** For example, participation in NDC enhancement can be channeled through targeted surveys, consultations, policy dialogues and forums designed with and for youth. Participation in implementation can be channelled via participatory grants for youth-led projects, innovation programmes, hubs and incentives for employment in green jobs that contribute to NDC implementation. Participation in monitoring of the NDC measures can be channelled via youth observatories and youth-led assessments/reports of policy performance. Although adult-driven activities are valuable, young people should be supported in their proposals to engage across the NDC cycle.

**Each of these stages of the NDC policy cycle should progress towards more meaningful engagement of young people. Thus, it is key to advance to the institutionalization of mechanisms of youth participation in NDC cycles and in other cycles of related national and international policies that influence NDCs.** There are many pathways to achieve this: including youth representatives in NDC working groups/task force groups and advisory youth representatives in high-level climate policy planning to create youth councils within the Ministry of the Environment or equivalent with the mandate to be engaged in NDC cycles; and implementing youth delegate programmes with the mandate to contribute to negotiation teams and lead youth-related topics of negotiation.



**Similarly, although youth participation in NDC policy cycles should be supported with financial and technical support through, *inter alia*, special budgets, dedicated staff to oversee youth-related work, and specific NDC training and resources for young people, there is a need to address other more structural barriers to youth participation.** These barriers have been referred to as ‘structural inequality’ and ‘systemic discrimination’; any initiative addressing youth engagement in NDCs and CCG should specifically address such factors. For instance, starting from the design phase, climate programmes should address issues such as illiteracy, the digital gap, lack of employment, post-traumatic stress due to conflict, and other country-specific socio-economic and socio-political barriers. Similarly, youth participation activities should specifically target vulnerable audiences and in particular address multiple-marginalized youth (due to gender, race, migrant background, etc.). There should be a special focus on raising the voices of these vulnerable youth groups and funding their participation.

**Special efforts should be made to enable and support other mechanisms of youth engagement in law-making, such as youth consultations in law-making,** youth quotas in committees of climate change law design, youth parliamentary assemblies and others. Law-making not only represents an opportunity for youth to guarantee that their needs and aspirations are met, but also to mainstream intergenerational equity principles in norms and ensure that there is a binding compromise to engage youth in national climate change management, including policymaking and programming. Another window of opportunity in the legislative realm is to support youth efforts to ensure accountability of governments and corporations, etc. through legal channels in the form of climate litigation.

**The NDC enhancement process represents an opportunity to secure a youth-inclusive narrative.** The NDC process is an opportunity to mainstream a youth narrative in the section on *guiding principles*, such as the intergenerational equity principle and a positive narrative of youth’s role in national green recovery and just transition policies and programmes. This narrative can be operationalized by aligning youth-related measures with sectoral NDC measures. Such alignment not only could recognize the vulnerability of youth to climate risk and sectoral transformations, but also integrate mitigation and adaptation sectors with youth as agents for the implementation of measures. Finally, there is a need to orient further action with performance and impact indicators that help build evidence and accountability of the efforts made to promote meaningful youth participation in NDC cycles and broader climate action.

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# Annex 1:

## Guidance Contributors and Consultation Participants

To develop this guidance, UNDP undertook in depth interviews and consultations with youth leaders, youth implementers and youth-focused organizations. In 2021, 13 in depth interviews were conducted with youth and around 140 people joined an online consultation on SparkBlue (<https://www.sparkblue.org/youth4climate>), UNDP's online consultation platform, to gather ideas and opinions to shape this guidance. For a summary of the consultations, see here: <https://www.sparkblue.org/content/youth-meaningful-participation-turning-point-climate-action-and-ndc-ambition>.

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### **In depth interviews**

Marie-Claire Graf, former YOUNGO Global Focal Point, Switzerland

Felix Nasser, Activist at Klimaneustart Berlin, Germany

Joshua Amponsem, Green Africa Youth Organization, Youth Fellow at the Global Center on Adaptation (GCA)

Laura Jimenez, Plaintiff in a climate change and future generations lawsuit in Colombia

Diego Padilla, Climate activist, former Youth Liaison for COP21, Peru

Chiagozie Udeh, Global Executive Board, Plant for Planet Nigeria, 2019 Global South Focal Point for YOUNGO, Nigeria

Katarzyna Smętek, Youth delegate at Climate Action Summit 2019, advocate for the Youth National Climate Council in Poland

Juan José Martin, President of Cverde, former Chilean young negotiator at COP25, Chile

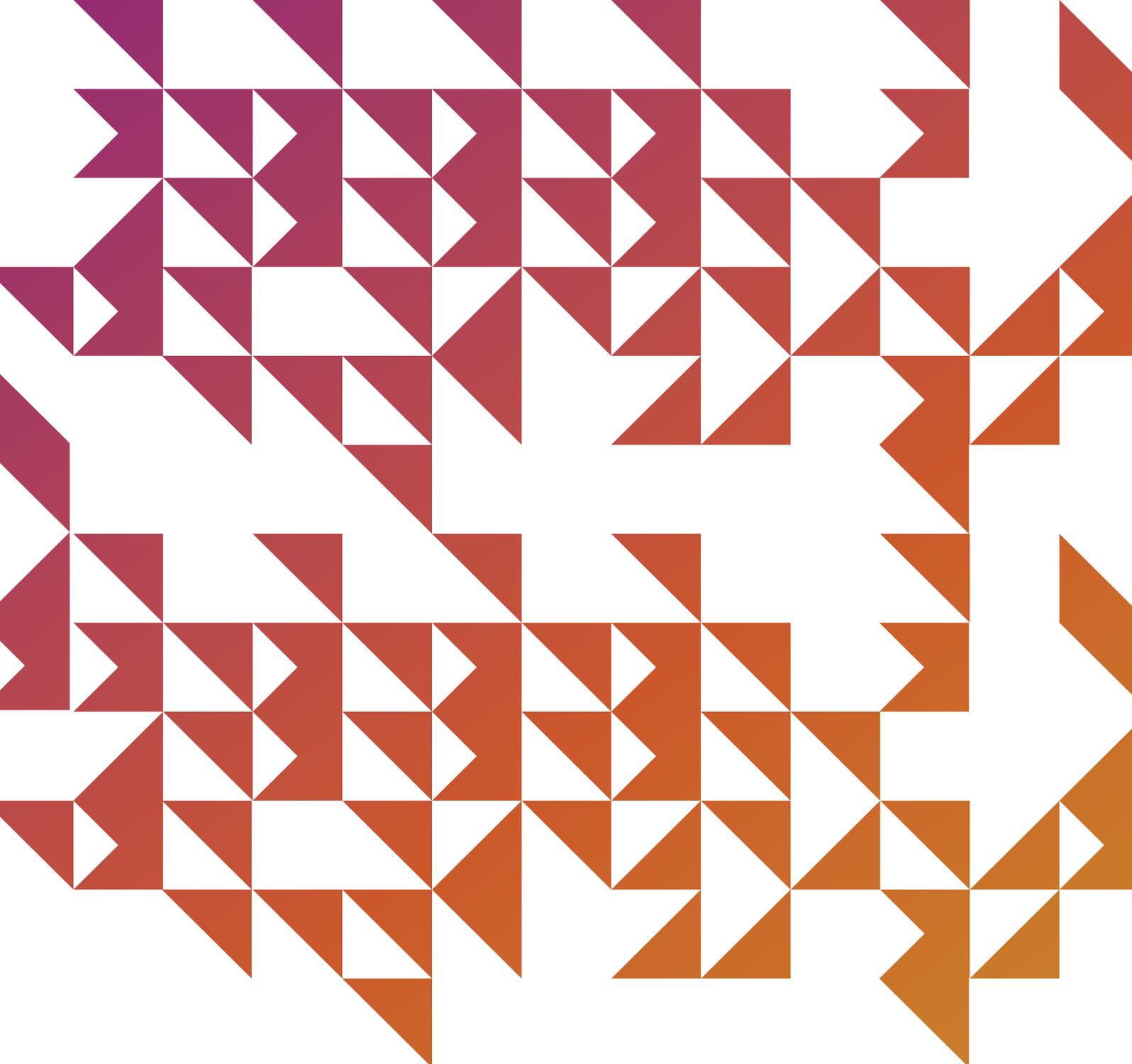
Vladislav Kaim, Member of the United Nations Secretary-General's Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change, Moldova

Pierina Egusquiza, Member of Jovenes Peruanos Frente al Cambio Climatico, Peru

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