

Commonwealth Youth Policy Recommendations to COP30

Preamble

We, the youth of the Commonwealth, recognise that the worsening climate crisis threatens our planet, our future, and the shared values that unite our nations. For the 1.5 billion young people across our 56 member states, this is not a distant crisis but a lived reality. From rising seas swallowing the homes of our peers in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and prolonged droughts and floods destroying livelihoods in Least Developed Countries (LDCs), to biodiversity loss and pollution undermining health and wellbeing in urban and rural communities alike, our generation is already bearing the brunt.

At this critical moment, unity and bold collective action are essential to secure justice for present and future generations. Climate change is not only an environmental emergency, but also a profound challenge to equity, peace, and human dignity. Guided by the Paris Agreement, and the Commonwealth Charter, we affirm that climate action must be rooted in intergenerational equity, participation, and the right of every young person to a safe, sustainable future.

We call for solutions that are country-driven yet globally connected, inclusive and science-based, while drawing on traditional, indigenous, and local knowledge. These solutions must be embedded in socioeconomic and environmental policies, reflecting the principles of the Commonwealth Living Lands Charter, Commonwealth Blue Charter and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Crucially, they must ensure meaningful participation of youth, women, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, and other marginalised groups whose voices are too often excluded.

As Commonwealth youth, we are ready to lead, innovate, and collaborate, but we cannot do it alone. We urge Commonwealth governments, development partners, and the UNFCCC to prioritise ambitious, science-based climate action; institutionalise youth participation in decision-making; and ensure resources, capacity, and opportunities reach the most vulnerable communities. Our solidarity across borders is our strength, and we stand prepared to shape a sustainable and just future for all.

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Overarching Demands

Calls upon Commonwealth Member Countries to institutionalise youth participation in national climate governance and equip young people with skills needed for climate negotiations at international forums.

Encourages Member Countries and UNFCCC bodies to scale up investment in climate education, capacity building, and digital literacy for young people, ensuring that curricula and training are accessible, locally relevant, and grounded in science, traditional knowledge, and innovation.

Urges Commonwealth governments, development partners, and the private sector to provide sustained financial and technical support including skill-building opportunities to youth-led climate initiatives, with a particular focus on adaptation, loss and damage, and just transition solutions in vulnerable and frontline communities.

Requests UNFCCC and Commonwealth institutions to strengthen existing pathways for the meaningful inclusion of youth in climate negotiations and implementation processes through structured capacity-building, training, mentoring, and fellowship programmes.

Thematic Demands

1. Intergenerational equity and locally led climate action

- Parties and development partners must institutionalise the consultation, decision-making, and implementation role of local communities in climate governance, embedding Indigenous Peoples' and local community knowledge alongside science in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), adaptation plans, and biodiversity strategies. This includes legal protection of Indigenous Peoples' and local community land rights and dedicated funding for indigenous and locally led climate solutions.
- Loss and damage finance must prioritise historically marginalised and climate-vulnerable communities in the Global South, with country-driven frameworks that ensure a bottom-up, locally led approach in identifying and financing solutions that respond to the specific needs of affected communities.

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- Parties and regional institutions should legislate for a minimum quota of youth representation in all climate delegations, advisory boards, and UNFCCC processes, ensuring gender balance and inclusion of marginalised youth.
- Youth, women, Indigenous Peoples, rural and marginalised communities must be institutionalised as formal stakeholders in climate governance at all levels, with equal decision-making rights.
- Intergenerational dialogue platforms should be established for youth and elders to co-create climate justice, peace, and security solutions that safeguard cultural heritage and climate identity.

2. Climate finance, local access and debt justice

- Parties and development partners are encouraged to increase direct climate finance flows to local and youth-led initiatives in the Global South, through enhanced direct access mechanisms that promote country ownership and participatory decision-making.
- Adaptation finance should be delivered as direct, unconditional grants to subnational governments, civil society organisations (CSOs), and youth-led start-ups, with gender-responsive budgeting, in line with the Glasgow Climate Pact.
- A Youth Response Window within the Loss and Damage Fund must be operationalised and integrated in the rapid disbursement and direct budget support mechanisms to enhance youth and community-led recovery projects, especially in climate-vulnerable Commonwealth states.
- Multilateral banks and creditors should expand debt-for-climate swaps for vulnerable nations, ring-fencing proceeds for youth-led adaptation, green jobs, and resilience programmes, aligned with the Bridgetown Initiative and Addis Ababa Action Agenda.
- National governments and multilateral banks should expand sovereign green bond issuance to finance renewable energy and nature-based solutions, with stipulated proceeds for youth enterprises, ensuring transparency through annual public reports.

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- Climate reparations and environmental remediation must be scaled up globally, particularly in regions severely affected by industrial pollution, ensuring full fiscal transparency and accountability.
- Parties must decentralise climate finance flows by reserving funds for youth-led and community-based projects through national trust funds and local financial institutions.
- Governments and civil society must enforce fiscal transparency laws, with youth-inclusive monitoring of climate finance allocation and use.

3. Adaptation, just transition and green economy

- Parties, development partners, and civil society must scale up funding and technical support for community-based adaptation integrating Indigenous Peoples' and local community knowledge, science, and lived experiences.
- Nature-based solutions (mangrove restoration, regenerative agriculture, reforestation) should be prioritised as first-line adaptation and mitigation strategies in NDCs and biodiversity plans.
- Parties, regional institutions, and private sector must develop sector-specific just transition roadmaps that safeguard livelihoods, integrate green skills training, and address equity, in line with International Labour Organization (ILO) guidelines and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8.
- Embed youth priorities in NDCs and National Action Plans (NAPs), covering climate-resilient livelihoods, green jobs, and gender-responsive adaptation.
- A Global Youth Adaptation Micro-Grants Facility should be established to finance rural, coastal, and Indigenous and locally led adaptation projects.
- Development partners should launch a Green Skills Accelerator in the Global South, integrated into national Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and higher education, targeting one million youth to be trained and placed into jobs by 2030, in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and water security.

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- Governments must scale climate-resilient food systems by investing in agroecology, local seed banks, and farmer-led research, aligned with SDG 2.
- Regional institutions must integrate circular economy principles into climate policies, including Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) laws, advocating for a stipulated goal for waste diversion by 2030.
- Governments and private sector should scale climate-resilient infrastructure through Public Private Partnerships (PPPs), including net-zero public buildings and low-carbon transport corridors, prioritising vulnerable cities across Commonwealth Member Countries.
- Investment in fisheries and agriculture data research is urgently required to close gaps in species monitoring, ensuring food security, climate smart agriculture, ecosystem health, and a sustainable blue economy.

4. Innovation, technology and climate solutions

- Governments and private sector should expand digital agriculture and climate-smart incubators for youth in rural areas, bridging the digital divide in line with Article 10 of the Paris Agreement.
- Youth-led innovations in ocean-climate protection and ocean technology must be funded, given the high cost of infrastructure in open-sea operations.
- Governments should invest in AI-driven early warning systems in flood-prone communities, co-managed with youth, to protect lives, livelihoods, and ecosystems.
- National and regional authorities should enforce fleet decarbonisation, incentivising transitions from fuel to electric-powered vessels to reduce emissions and protect marine ecosystems.
- Regional open-data platforms should be established to document, protect, and share Indigenous Peoples' knowledge and youth-led climate innovations equitably, ensuring fair access and data sovereignty.

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- Parties should adopt a Global Climate Education Mandate, integrating climate literacy into all curricula by 2028, supported by teacher training and national benchmarks, aligned with UNESCO's Education for Sustainable Development: A roadmap.
- Education systems must integrate indigenous ecological knowledge and intersectional perspectives (gender-climate, health-climate, peace-climate), co-designed with local communities.
- Governments and development partners should co-finance regional vocational academies for green careers, with annual capacity for at least 50,000 youth in renewable energy, agroecology, and climate data analysis.
- Ministries of Education must embed climate literacy and sustainability across primary and secondary curricula, supported by teacher training and national assessments.
- Development partners and civil society should establish a Climate Leadership Fellowship to build grassroots advocacy capacity, aligned with the Sendai Framework's resilience goals.
- Governments and public broadcasters should allocate annual media budgets to youth-led climate communication in local languages and accessible formats for rural and low-literacy communities.
- Youth-led storytelling, art, cultural heritage, and media initiatives must be funded as integral to Action for Climate Education (ACE) strategies, amplifying Global South narratives in international climate forums.

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