

Terms of Reference for Asia-Pacific Youth Advisory Group on Environmental and Climate Justice

I. Background

The mounting challenges of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss have morphed into an existential crisis that is already having far-reaching impacts for the sustainability of the planet and human beings which are further beset by deepening and entrenched inequalities. The impacts do not only threaten the rights of people around the world, but also result in fewer fundamental rights for future generations. These interconnected challenges are barreling towards a projected failure to fulfill the commitments of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The 2030 Agenda's fulfillment of the pledge to leave no one behind prioritizes a rights-based approach centered on empowerment, inclusion, equity, human agency and human development. The focus on youth empowerment, promotion of their rights and amplification of their voices as well as a sustained engagement with civil society remains critical for progress on the 2030 Agenda to build a just, equitable and inclusive world and to address the disproportionate harms that children and youth will face as a result of the triple planetary crisis.

The Call to Action for Human Rights, launched by the UN Secretary-General, is essential to the attainment of the 2030 Agenda and ensuring that children and youth are not left behind. The renewed push for the realization of the full range of human rights comes at a time when systematic disregard for and violation of human rights has become the norm in shrinking civic spaces. The comprehensive realization of human rights while recognizing intersecting deprivations requires the realization of environmental rights, including the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, for all, including and especially young people.

There is a need to create meaningful, impactful, and inclusive space for young people to enable their constructive participation and amplification of civil society voices in the UN in Asia and the Pacific, particularly to address the challenges and disproportionate harms brought by the climate crisis and environmental degradation. Furthermore, as young environmental activists and defenders who are working to hold decision-makers accountable with demands for concrete solutions and actions remain at risk in the region, their protection requires a greater effort and cooperation from the UN agencies. In recognition of meeting these needs and undertaking these challenges, while centering the rights of young people in climate and environmental action, **UN Human Rights, UNFCCC, and UNDP** will cooperate to establish a **Youth Advisory Group on Environmental and Climate Justice** in the **Asia-Pacific region**. This Youth Advisory Group will be anchored in the Youth Empowerment in Climate Action Platform (YECAP) and will have presence, through UNDP's 24 Country Offices, in 36 countries in Asia-Pacific.

UN Human Rights, UNFCCC and UNDP are the co-conveners of the Youth Advisory Group on Environmental and Climate Justice. The partnership will increase outreach to different networks, draw on existing strengths and work towards the furtherance of common goals at the intersection of environment, climate change and human rights. The Youth Advisory Group will also have observers from existing caucus mechanisms YOUNGO, the UN Major Group on Children and Youth (MGCY), UNEP MGCY, and the Global Youth Biodiversity Network

(GYBN), as well as UN Human Rights' Youth Advisory Board, to encourage cross-learnings and collaboration between the different groups.

II. Rationale

The Youth Advisory Group on Environmental and Climate Justice will provide the opportunity to create a solidarity group that can coordinate the efforts of the sponsoring UN agencies in the Asia-Pacific region to accelerate environmental and climate justice, centering on the rights of young people. The group will play both a consultative and a facilitative role. The UN agencies will also continue to engage with other activists, defenders and civil society actors working on environmental and climate justice at large in different spaces.

Young environmental human rights defenders and climate activists play a critical role in addressing challenges to human rights due to unsustainable and harmful practices with significant impacts for the environment and the climate. Addressing the systemic challenges that have contributed to the crisis requires a sustained effort towards inclusion that starts at the outset. Civil society thus forms a strategic partner in not only movement-building that adheres to the “leave no one behind” approach, but also serves as a dynamic and evolving source of ideas.

Through the Youth Advisory Group, the UN agencies will draw on the experience, expertise and knowledge of young environmental defenders and climate activists who will provide youth perspectives and views on programmes and activities of the leading UN agencies that focus on environmental and climate justice in the region. The young environmental defenders and climate activists who form this group will influence the work of UN Human Rights, UNFCCC, and UNDP on environmental and climate justice, focusing on the protection and fulfillment of environmental rights, climate justice, and the promotion of the environmental rule of law. The Youth Advisory Group may also support further visibility and outreach on the programmes and activities of the four sponsoring UN agencies.

This will lead to increased collaboration and support for youth in civil society-led initiatives on environmental and climate justice wherever strategically possible.

III. Objective and key functions:

The Youth Advisory Group will aim to bring together experienced and dedicated young people working on environmental and climate justice in the Asia-Pacific region. They will work towards strengthening the environmental rule of law by promoting the work of environmental defenders and climate activists through greater protection, visibility and legal empowerment.

The key functions of the Youth Advisory Group on Environmental and Climate Justice will include:

- Representing the voices and concerns of young people in the Asia-Pacific region on environmental and climate justice in the programming of the sponsoring UN agencies
- Connecting and learning from environmental and climate activists from across the world
- Identifying challenges and opportunities for environmental and climate justice in national, sub-regional, and regional contexts

- Collectively developing a workplan
- Reviewing the upcoming Environmental Human Rights Defenders (EHRD) toolkit to adapt it for youth environmental defenders and activists
- Support visibility and outreach on the programmes and activities of the sponsoring UN agencies
- Facilitating and organizing trainings on security and protection for young environmental defenders and climate activists
- Participating in activities on environmental and climate justice led by the involved UN agencies where appropriate

IV. Features of the Youth Advisory Group

Composition

Membership in the Youth Advisory Group on Environmental and Climate Justice will be composed of **20 young people** between the ages of **18-35** for a duration of **12 months, with possible renewal**. The Youth Advisory Group will strive to have members from grassroots, community-based groups, and indigenous peoples' organizations operating in differing spaces and constituencies in climate justice.

The selection of members will aim to ensure a gender and geographical balance. The members will be sought from North East Asia, South East Asia, South Asia, and the Pacific (including Australia and New Zealand), with 5 members from each subregion. **Applications from members of marginalized groups, like women, youth from indigenous communities, youth with disabilities, refugee youth, internally displaced youth or youth from migrant communities, youth from rural (non-urban) areas and any youth belonging to minority communities are encouraged.** To secure the inclusion of members from marginalized communities, some moderation in the criteria specified in section V (Application Process) may be allowed to offset historical and structural marginalization. There will be an open call for applications for membership in the Youth Advisory Group. Additionally, strategic outreach to existing CSOs, alliances and networks in the region working on issues of climate justice, environmental justice, and environmental rights, among others, will also be utilized.

Engagement with the Youth Advisory Group

Members will be expected to dedicate 3 days a month with meetings at one-month intervals. They may elect to meet more often than this by consensus.

V. Application Process:

Who can apply:

The applicants must be:

- Between the ages of 18-35 from the Asia-Pacific region
- Fluent in English and where relevant a local language

- Have at least 2 years of experience working on or engaging in climate justice or environmental justice at the local, national or international levels

Interested candidates should complete the [application form](#) and submit:

1. CV
2. Either a 3-minute video or a 1-page (maximum) letter outlining:
 - Why the applicant wants to be a member of the Youth Advisory Group
 - Their work on climate justice/environmental justice, their skills, and their potential contribution to the Youth Advisory Group
 - Existing affiliation with CSOs/alliances/networks (**if applicable**¹) and their work with local communities on environmental and climate justice
 - Brief vision for the future of environmental and climate justice work in the Asia-Pacific region
 - Their expectations of what they will get from membership in the Youth Advisory Group

Deadline for application:

The applications must be submitted by midnight July 31, 2022 (GMT+7). Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis.

VI. Selection:

Applicants will be screened and members will be selected by a panel of experts from UNEP, UN Human Rights, and UNDP. They will be supported by youth representatives from YOUNGO (Youth Constituency of the UNFCCC), UNEP Major Group for Children and Youth (UNEP-MGCY), Asia Pacific Indigenous Youth Network (APIYN), and Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN).

¹ Existing affiliation with CSOs/networks/alliances is not a requirement. In lieu of this, applicants can also mention their involvement in any forums or spaces on the environment on behalf of their community or any group or demonstrated interest in environment, climate and human rights.