



SAIIA YOUTH POLICY COMMITTEE STATEMENT ON COP 21

25 NOVEMBER 2015

Introduction

We, the members of the SAIYA Youth Policy Committee (YPC), support the adoption of a legally binding agreement to combat climate change and encourage a global transition to low-carbon societies and economies at COP21. In order to see a successful outcome from the negotiations, we believe that the following areas should be addressed:

Ambition

- As the YPC, we believe that the world is capable of achieving an ambitious “protocol, another legal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force under the Convention applicable to all parties,” and call upon global leaders to work together to achieve this mandate.
- We urge all states to have an ambitious pre-2020 plan of action for the time period between the end of COP21 and the beginning of the binding agreement post-2020.
- We call upon member states to create a clear means of implementation (Mol), so that states are better prepared to reach their goals when the time comes.
- We believe that climate change should not be viewed as an isolated problem that is only focussed on once a year at an international scale. It should be an issue that all members of society are grappling with regularly. For example, climate change should be introduced as a core part of the school curriculum to sustain the interest as well as commitment around it - especially from young people.

Adaptation

- We believe that an adaptation goal must be included in the final Paris agreement, and call upon all member states to make it a priority area.
- We urge the global community to view adaptation not only as a means of survival, but also, together with mitigation, as a means of developing healthy ecosystems that are able to provide us with resources that are essential to our wellbeing.
- We believe that local communities must be involved in adapting to climate change, and emphasise the use of indigenous knowledge. Goals and commitments need to be embedded in our national policies all the way down to local councils and district municipalities where they will be strictly enforced. Initiatives like “reduce, reuse and recycle” must cease to be mere suggestions but rather non-negotiable instructions to society at large. These adaptation strategies need to be contextualised and inclusive of local community based strategies.
- We call upon the global community to consider practical solutions to increase robustness of theoretical adaptation strategies the would include:

1. Adoption of no regret strategies: these are strategies that are able to cope with climate uncertainty. They yield benefits even in one absence of climate change.
2. Reversible (flexible) strategies : aimed at keeping low costs of being wrong about future climate change predictions.
3. Safety margin strategies: these will reduce vulnerability at null or low costs
4. Short/long term strategies: short term strategies adopted by locals should only be labelled as “copying strategies “. They must be seen as complementary to long term climate adaptation strategies.

Mitigation

- We, as the YPC, firmly believe in the simultaneous implementation of adaptation and mitigation strategies (short and long term) at all scales. These strategies must be developed through a bottom up approach and fully supported and funded by developed countries.
- We acknowledge the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR), and urge all member states to create clear and robust mitigation targets.
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) relating to mitigation need to be integrated into climate change make policy.
- We emphasise the need to develop a sense of urgency when addressing mitigation practices. Procrastination of mitigation practices will lead to more complex and dynamic negative impacts, globally. The most vulnerable countries will suffer more.

Finance

- Predictability of climate finance, especially in developing countries, needs to be strongly addressed and reviewed by states.
- Developed countries need to support and fund mitigation and adaptation strategies adopted by developing countries. This should include donors embracing the negative outcomes/failure/delays associated with implementation of these policies on the ground due to uncertainty associated with climate change as a whole.
- Developing countries should also continue to grow and show their capability to transparently manage and allocate funds. This includes evaluation reports linked to mitigation and adaptation practices from local to national scale.
- Developed countries - large contributors to climate change - should be encouraged (or forced if possible, through an agreement) to pay more to climate change funds and these funds should prioritise developing countries in their endeavours to deal with the effects of climate change.

Conclusion

The Youth Policy Committee joins young people and civil society organisations from around the world in calling for serious action on climate change now. We demand accountability, and will hold our leaders responsible for the promises they make. We commit to action in our homes, at our schools and in our communities, and call upon government to involve us as partners in ushering in a new era of global sustainable development.

For more information please contact visit www.saiia.org.za/youth or contact us at youth@saiia.org.za.