

## **South African Youth Position to COP 23**

Guided by the UNICEF Generation 2030 Report, we urge the South African government to acknowledge the importance of harnessing the growing youth demographic in creating a climate resilient society. The youth applaud and support strides made by Civil Society Organisations with regards to climate change, and endorse the South African Climate Action Network (SACAN) statement on COP 23. We stress the need to act on climate change prior to the 2020 implementation of the Paris Agreement. In light of the upcoming UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP 23), and with cognizance of the pivotal role the South African government continues to play on the international platform, the youth would, thus, like to put forward the following recommendations:

### **Stakeholder Participation:**

We applaud government on their recent strides in increasing youth participation through interaction with youth-based organisation such as SAIIA, and the inclusion of young people in areas of policy engagement. Acknowledging the budgetary constraints and internal capacity challenges faced by the South African government, we believe that annually selecting and supporting two South African youth delegates to attend COP meetings should be a priority for government. In an attempt to lighten the burden on government, we call on a shift in the processes used to allow for youth participation. We suggest the creation of a panel, consisting of volunteers from of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and leaders in academia for the reviewing process of potential youth applicants, as to allow for a more transparent and inclusive selection process. Furthermore, whilst this inclusion is critical for climate change negotiations, it must be recognised that simply allowing for young people to attend such meetings is insufficient. This needs to be paired with training and exposure to the climate change discourse and negotiation processes. As such, we recommend the implementation of clear and decisive policies and collaborations with different youth-based entities, to train selected young people and put forward clear expectations that government has for these youth delegates. We call on government to consider a system where the outgoing youth delegate is paired with the incoming youth delegate to transfer skills and knowledge gained from their previous experiences to ensure continuity of a South African position which can easily be adopted and understood by youth delegates. In addition to the selected youth representatives, we further encourage the South African government to consider increasing the number of party badges given to young people in line with practices of other member states witnessed at previous COPs.

### **Capacity Building:**

Guided by Articles 11 and 12 on capacity building, we call on the inclusion of youth-friendly, accessible mechanisms to educate young people on the adverse effects of climate change and capacitate them to create solutions to this global crisis. We urge government to support initiatives, even if simply in-kind, that exist outside of key policy windows, to create a culture of

continuity with regards to climate change. The need for increased Global South participation cannot be ignored. We commend the Global South Scholarship led by YOUNGO and suggest that such initiatives be fully supported by the South African government. We urge the government to advocate for this on a global level to further strengthen this youth-led, youth-focused initiative to allow for the existence of voices from the Global South, internationally, where they seem to lack.

### **Transparency:**

We acknowledge the capacity constraints in including all interested young people in the COP negotiations, and as such, call on the strengthening of virtual participation through continued online streaming of the negotiations. We urge government to advocate that these streaming facilities include not only the main plenary sessions, but allow for the streaming of side events and key closed-door negotiations. We further recommend the integration of key social media platforms, specifically Twitter, to allow for interaction between young people at home and those at the Conference. The use of Twitter Q&A's can act as a platform for increased civil society engagement, regardless of geographical location. In favour of inclusivity, we appeal to government to consider hosting a public viewing, during the Conference, where young people can watch and comment on the negotiations.

### **Finance:**

We applaud the creation of the Global Climate Fund (GCF) and the Adaptation Fund but draw attention to the extensive focus placed on rural development and adaptation which excludes discourse surrounding urban settings. The increased levels of urbanisation, specifically in Africa, calls for the inclusion of urban areas in the discourse surrounding the GCF and Adaptation Fund. Furthermore, knowledge regarding the GCF and the Adaptation Fund needs to be accessible and more approachable to NGOs who stand to benefit from the funds. An increase in the understanding of what constitutes as adaptation projects is required to allow for the inclusion of non-traditional avenues of work in conjunction to climate change, such as research institutes.

### **Loss and Damage:**

We urge the establishment of a loss and damage fund related to countries experiencing loss and damage as a result of natural disasters related to climate change at this COP meeting. We stress the importance of considering these effects on small island developing states (SIDS), who face the possible disappearance of their territory due to increasing sea levels. Ahead of COP 23, loss and damage from climate change remains a key area to be discussed and measured for progress. Many vulnerable communities around the world, specifically SIDS, face irreversible impacts which need urgent attention. The COP 23 South African delegation should consider developing a clearer understanding of how loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change affects particularly vulnerable communities. Government should further promote a solid risk management approach (assessment, reduction, transfer,

retention) by strengthening the position of South Africa and other African nations within the five-year Warsaw International Mechanism work plan on Loss and Damage by launching the clearing house on risk transfer. Finally, we encourage government to enhance data and research on the risks of slow onset events and their impacts, and identify ways forward on approaches to address slow onset events associated with the adverse effects of climate change with specific focus on potential impacts on livelihood and non-economic typologies.

### **Adaptation:**

Bearing in mind that adaptation and mitigation work hand in hand, we commend the projects started with the aid of the Adaptation Fund that have assisted vulnerable South Africans to adapt to the effects climate change. We however believe that the South African government needs to further study the effects of climate change on the most vulnerable groups, such as disabled people and women, and how best we can assist them to adapt to climate change. We appeal to the South African delegation to advocate for safe and viable solutions for the most vulnerable groups to adapt to climate change at an international level. We further reiterate the suggestion made by SACAN for parties to establish a process to initiate the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA).

### **Mitigation:**

We urge the government to create a binding resolution towards taxing companies that emit extensive amounts of carbon emissions into the atmosphere. This tax could be used to fund the REIPPPP to further upscale mitigation efforts. We encourage more skills training exchange programmes for Engineering and Science graduates on renewable technology advancements and the intersecting climate change challenges and opportunities within those fields. We encourage further funding into research and development on finding more sustainable methods of energy use. A transformation of the South African energy sector is needed, ultimately we encourage moving away from coal to renewable energy as a key climate mitigation strategy.

*Compiled by the members of the Youth Policy Committee and the South African Youth Climate Change Coalition.*

*Presented to the Department of Environmental Affairs at the National Stakeholders Meeting at the Premier Hotel, Pretoria, on 3 October 2017.*