

## South African Youth Statement to COP26

We, the youth of South Africa, recognise the urgent need for accelerated climate action to build a climate-resilient and prosperous society. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in the Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 °C, has warned that if we do not limit the rise in global temperature to 1.5°C, we will face a catastrophic disaster. To reach this target, or at most realise the 2°C goal set in the Paris Agreement, we require greater climate ambition from all countries.

In taking climate action, we stress the obligation to uphold human rights with special emphasis on promoting intersectional and inclusive climate action.

We applaud South Africa's commitment to realising the goals set out in the Paris Agreement, and are aware of the pivotal role the South African government has within this international forum, calling for climate justice and equity to underpin all actions towards addressing the climate crisis.

In the South African Youth Climate Action Plan, we have identified 5 principles to guide climate action and we believe these principles should be taken up at an international platform as well. The principles include **Intersectionality, Advocacy and Activism for Climate Action, Good Governance, Systemic Change, and Environmental Sustainability.**

Considering the upcoming UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP26), we would like to put forward the following recommendations that align with the goals of COP26:

## 1. Adaptation and resilience

*'Helping people, economies and the environment adapt and prepare for the impacts of climate change.'*

We, as the youth, are cognisant of the ways in which our world has already been changed by the climate crisis, and aware of the necessity to adapt to our changing climate in a sustainable and just manner. We recognise the variable and often disproportionate effects of climate change on African countries, thus emphasise the importance of equitable implementation of global adaptation policies. We need South Africa to support and advocate for countries to agree to utilise a common timeframe of five years for the new NDCs starting in 2030. This would allow for a continuous practice of reflection and adaptation to the fast-moving crisis that is climate change, as well as being reflective of political timelines in many countries

### **Intersectionality and Equity**

We appreciate the Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender, and its Gender Action Plan, and emphasise that gender-responsive climate action contributes to ambition and ensures that climate action is more effective. Accordingly, gender equality is a cross-cutting issue that needs to be mainstreamed throughout UNFCCC processes and feature within the adaptation, mitigation, and climate finance components.

- We advocate for the collection of sector specific gender-related data and analysis in vulnerability and adaptation monitoring systems. Additionally, we support the meaningful participation of women in climate policy-making and inclusive mechanisms for implementing and monitoring of the Paris Agreement.
- We affirm the importance of equity in both global and local climate action. Therefore, we call for equitable sharing of resources such as finances, knowledge, technology to ensure that under-resourced countries are also able to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change.

## **Stakeholder Participation**

We applaud the South African government on their recent strides in increasing youth participation in international Climate Change meetings by adopting a youth delegate to attend COP Conferences. Whilst this is a step in the right direction, we call for an increase in the number of youth delegates to strengthen the voice of the youth from vulnerable countries at international decision-making tables. We, furthermore, stress the need for a shift in the selection process of the official South African Youth Delegate.

- We suggest the creation of a panel, consisting of volunteers from 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.
- 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 the government has for these youth delegates.
- We urge the department to give us an allowance of at least 4 weeks to prepare for stakeholder consultation as, as young people, we find it very difficult to coordinate our ourselves to formulate a stronger and integrated voice if we do not have enough time.
- We are aware that COP27 might be in Africa, we urge the department to ensure that South Africa youth participate in the process leading to COP27 fully and effectively.
- We recognise the need for policies to be simplified and readily accessible for ordinary citizens to easily understand and effectively engage on. In the spirit of the Talanoa Dialogue, we stress the need to include more voices from the marginalised and most vulnerable groups such as women and youth in policy making, considering the clash between National Climate Change Stakeholder meetings and the South African school calendar, and the location of the stakeholder meetings which disadvantage community leaders from rural communities.

## **Capacity Building**

Guided by Article 12 of the Paris Agreement, Article 6 of the UNFCCC and the concluding Doha Work Programme on ACE, we call for the inclusion of youth-friendly, accessible mechanisms to create awareness and educate the members of society on the adverse effects of climate change and capacitate them to create solutions to this global crisis.

- We urge the government to embrace youth-led, youth-focussed initiatives that allow for the existence of voices from the Global South, internationally, where they seem to lack. These programmes must ensure that climate education is instructed in a language and context that is accessible to its participants.
- We further call for the translation and simplification of the PA into all parties' official languages to ensure that they may be understood by all members of the community. We also advocate for more interactive and inclusive training trans-nationally on adaptation and mitigation strategies. Additionally, we call for greater diverse representation in policy and decision-making platforms. The importance of women and youth participation in these activities cannot be ignored. Elevate the voices of youth activists, particularly from Africa, and support with capacity building, skills, and resources to engage communities regarding climate changes and intersecting socio-economic issues.
- We advocate for an ACE-related Action Plan that ensures the implementation of capacity building and ACE-related activities are implemented nationally.

## **Adaptation and mitigation**

Climate action is a matter of urgency. The Paris Agreement must be operationalised. It is a great concern that article 6 remains the only article unfinished to operationalise the Paris Agreement. We urge South Africa to advance the following points:

- Developed countries must prioritise domestic action to reduce emissions and not use carbon mechanisms to continue with business as usual.
- Share of Proceeds (SOP) should be applied to both article 6.2 and 6.4. Applying SOP to both streams creates an additional stream of finance for adaptation that is tied to a mechanism that developed countries have highlighted they are willing to actively engage with.
- Modalities for mechanisms must not allow unsustainable mitigation options to be funded

- Robust social and environmental criteria must be applied to all projects to ensure that they do not create or lead to adverse conditions that impact the livelihoods of local communities or prevent communities from becoming truly climate resilient; for example, depleting or destroying local biodiversity and/or ecosystems. The modalities should also recognise that the use of ‘flexibility’ mechanisms should be minimised, and the focus should be on reducing emissions.
- Private-sector involvement in Art. 6.4. must ensure a balance between mitigation and adaptation and should be subject to strict monitoring and reporting guidelines to ensure that private sector project outcomes:

## 2. Nature

*‘Safeguarding ecosystems, protecting natural habitats and keeping carbon out of the atmosphere.’*

To ensure inclusive climate action is to also prioritize nature, specifically under the context of protecting and restoring ecosystems and natural habitats while reducing carbon emissions. We stress the need for the enhanced implementation of biodiversity conservation initiatives designed through collaboration with marginalised groups and communities, supported by strengthened and cross-sectoral policies, and sufficiently funded to allow for effective monitoring and data capturing, processing, and reporting systems.

We champion the recognition of nature-based solutions as an essential means of protecting and restoring ecosystem services while providing the opportunity to utilise local, indigenous knowledge systems and nature-based tools to combat climate change. As such, we suggest increased, collaborative, and inclusive commitment in the research, finance, and implementation of nature-based solutions.

In line with international agreements and national policies that set out to raise climate ambition, we stress the need to move beyond the discussion of net-zero towards a climate-positive society that restricts the use of fossil fuels and further makes use of innovative, atmospheric carbon extractive technologies. This requires significant investment into diverse technologies and mechanisms that aim to capture carbon at source, as well as processes that limit the development of carbon at source.

Technological development is crucial in improving the quality and collection of both ecological and climate data for conservation, as well as in allowing crucial sectors such as agriculture to develop more sustainably. As such, we urge for the enhanced financing, equitable distribution, and strategic application of conservation and sustainable farming technology.

Furthermore, guided by the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture, we call for increased strides in effective climate action through agriculture which should:

- Promote cost-effective, sustainable farming methods, the use of natural pest management, and further encourage the use of field buffers, large-scale composting, biocontrol, and polyculture.
- Prioritise collaborative stakeholder engagement surrounding agricultural unions and their regulation of farming issues.
- Foster community-owned regenerative agriculture, permaculture, hydroponics, and aquaponics practices.

### **3. Energy transition**

*‘Seizing the massive opportunities of cheaper renewables and storage.’*

We the youth champion the need for an equitable, swift, and just energy transition. We further insist on a just transition from highly centralised energy production dependent on fossil fuels, towards decarbonised and decentralised production of clean, renewable energy. A decarbonised, green, and circular economy cultivates the need to create green employment opportunities, while reducing carbon emissions to ensure a resilient and socially equitable economy.

While we transition away from fossil fuels and ensure energy security within South Africa, we support community-centred approaches in the development of new renewable energy projects that consider the positive influence on job creation, economic and skills development in local communities.

Furthermore, workers across all economic sectors, and specifically the energy industry, need to be re-skilled and up-skilled with particular emphasis on creating transferable skills. This will require actions to:

- Foster and support investment into renewable energy projects in developing countries.
- Collaborate to develop training frameworks and transition plans for energy workers.
- Enhance funding opportunities for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education and training for unskilled and semi-skilled labourers.
- Support installations of energy and water-efficient appliances and technology in low- to middle-income households to support household-level reduction in consumption.
- Prioritise the development and accessible funding of diverse renewable energy infrastructure to increase renewable energy generation.

#### **4. Accelerating the move to zero-carbon road transport**

*‘By 2040, over half of new car sales worldwide are projected to be electric.’*

The transport sector is currently one of the highest emitting sectors. Transit-oriented development that is anchored by a modal shift towards public transport is integral to creating sustainable transport industries, especially in Global South where a large portion of populations rely on public transport to commute daily. This means ambitions for transition to green transport alternatives must be mainstreamed into spatial development plans of countries to ensure they are aligned to national and international frameworks for fostering net-zero road transport. Guided by the Green Transport Strategy, creation, and promotion of sustainable mobility through information, education and awareness raising on why public transport and non-motorized alternatives are important for curbing emissions and supporting action towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Therefore, we call for:

- Economic and behavioural incentives to be provided for private transport users in order to ensure that there is a modal shift to non-motorized and public transport alternatives
- Collaboration between different stakeholders through vertical integration must be promoted to ensure that shifts to green transport alternatives are expedited.
- Resilience-building in the transport sector through strengthening new and existing transport infrastructure to withstand extreme weather conditions must be considered.
- Acknowledgement that a one-size-fits all mobility strategy will not work. Therefore, research and assessments to establish transport systems that are fit-for-purpose to the context of different countries is important.
- Greater emphasis on countries to create and implement policies that will promote energy efficiency and emission control measures in all transport modes.

- Policies and measures to be put in place to promote a sectoral shift to cleaner fuel alternatives in order to curb emissions.

## 5. Finance

*‘We need to unleash the finance which will make all of this possible and power the shift to a zero-carbon economy.’*

The success of the Paris Agreement is heavily reliant on climate finance. The modalities of climate finance must be those which bind to follow the guidelines for reporting on climate finance under article 9.7 of the PA. We urge that global funds, such as the Green Climate Fund, the Adaptation fund and other funds that aim to serve the PA, be made more accessible to developing countries who are in dire need of the resources.

It is important for parties to reflect on domestic circumstances and emphasise the importance for funds to be provided to stakeholders working to address the effects of climate change at grassroots level, including making provisions for capacity building funding and exploring renewable resources as a source of powering the national grid, amongst many others. We recognise that corruption poses a threat to the effective use of climate finance to promote a just transition and sustainable recovery across the globe. We therefore call for actions that:

- Urge the UNFCCC and member states to provide capacity-building on how to secure finance for climate mitigation and adaptation.
- Provide mechanisms for the monitoring and evaluation of appropriate expenditure regarding climate finance to prevent corruption.
- Developed countries should reaffirm and meet their climate finance commitments, the new and additional. The funds need to be reallocated 50-50 for mitigation and adaptation.



*This statement was created by members of the Climate Change Working Group of the Youth Policy Committee and the Youth Coordinators of the South African Youth Climate Action Plan process. The statement was presented at the virtual National Climate Change Stakeholder Dialogue to Minister Barbara Creecy of the Department of Forestry and Fisheries and Environmental Affairs of the Republic of South Africa on 15 October 2021 held on zoom. For any queries, please do not hesitate to email [youth@saiia.org.za](mailto:youth@saiia.org.za).*

