

Asia Regional Dialogue on Climate Justice for Children, Youth and Future Generations

28 – 30 May 2022

Background

Climate change is one of the greatest threats to human rights in our time. Moreover, some regions and countries disproportionately suffer from climate-induced disasters. In Asia, the repercussions of climate change-induced phenomena such as sea level rise, intensified storms, flooding, droughts, biodiversity loss, ocean acidification and coral bleaching, vulnerability to saltwater intrusion and coastal erosion will have a significant direct effect on the lives and livelihoods of billions of human beings.

While climate change affects all human rights of millions of people worldwide, the negative impacts of climate change are disproportionately felt by different communities and groups. Amongst others, no group is more vulnerable to climate change than present and future generations of children. The adverse impacts of climate change, including the increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters, changing precipitation patterns, food and water shortages, and the increased transmission of communicable diseases, threaten children's enjoyment of their rights to health, life, food, water and sanitation, education, housing, culture, and development, among others. Climate change heightens existing social and economic inequalities, intensifies poverty and reverses progress towards improvement in children's well-being. Climate change also has a disproportionate impact on children with disabilities, children on the move, poor children, children separated from their families, and indigenous children.

Children and young people play an important role in the climate justice movement. Climate litigation by today's children has the potential to safeguard the interests of future generations, and a legal basis for such litigation already exists in many countries. Children and their representatives have already engaged in environmental litigation in a wide range of countries around the world. However, many youth climate activists and young environmental human rights defenders are also facing challenges and threats against their work in fighting for bold climate action and stronger environmental protection.

The United Nations recognizes the key role that children and youth play in tackling climate change and works closely with youth-led and youth-focussed organizations. In 2020, the UN Secretary-General released a "[Call to Action for Human Rights](#)" which is the Secretary-General's transformative vision for human rights. The Call to Action recognises human rights as central to the UN's most pressing issues including [the rights of future generations and, especially, climate justice](#). The heads of UN entities also released [a joint commitment](#) to promote the right of children, youth and future generations to a healthy environment and their meaningful participation in decision-making at all levels, in relation to climate action and climate justice. In addition, The Committee on the Rights of the Child announced in June 2021 its upcoming general comment on children's rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change (General Comment No. 26) to provide authoritative guidance on what governments must do to uphold children's rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the face of climate change and other environmental challenges.

Against this backdrop, the Office of the UN High Commission for Human Rights, the UN Environment Programme, UNDP, and other partner organizations are convening the Asia Regional Dialogue on Climate Justice for Children, Youth and Future Generations to provide a platform for children and young persons to learn, exchange, and discuss strategies for participating in climate action and be a part of the solutions. This event also provides an opportunity for children to engage with the drafting of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child [General Comment No. 26 on children's rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change](#).

Objectives

- Provide space at national and regional levels for children and youth to discuss climate and environmental advocacy strategies
- Provide a platform for youth and children to share their local and national experiences with climate change and advocacy work
- Present the basic principles of children's rights to a healthy environment in the context of climate change
- Provide a platform for children and youth to explain to adults their perspectives and concerns about climate justice
- Provide a platform for youth participants and organizations to share good practices and experience with youth representation in negotiations and decision-making processes at regional and global levels
- Provide orientation on risk assessment for youth advocates
- Provide an opportunity for children to give their input for General Comment 26 on children's rights and the environment, with a special focus on climate change

Format of the event and participation

The Regional Dialogue will be a virtual event, open to children between the ages of 9 and 17 and youth who are between the ages of 18 and 30. It will be held over a period of three days. Sessions for children will be two hours on the afternoons of Days 1 and 2 and the youth-focused sessions will be for three hours in the afternoons of Days 1 and 2. The first two days are dedicated to participation by children and youth and will be held on Saturday and Sunday to avoid conflicts with schooling. During Days 1 and 2, there will be parallel tracks for children and youth. Adults from partner organizations, civil society organizations (CSOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academia, national human rights institutions (NHRIs), and other interested institutions may attend Days 1 and 2 as listeners/ observers. The third day, a Monday, will include participation by adults who work in the field of supporting participation and action by children and youth.

In February 2022, there will be an open, public invitation for individuals and institutions in all Asian countries to express interest in participating in the Regional Dialogue. Those who accept the invitation must participate in online and/or offline preparatory consultations that will be convened by partner organizations to facilitate the participation of children and youth in the Regional Dialogue. In addition to the general public call, there will also be a targeted call to reach specific institutions and individuals working in the field of climate justice for children and youth. Representatives of governments in the region will be invited by UNICEF, UNEP, UNDP and OHCHR.

This Regional Dialogue will follow the Chatham House Rule.

The working language of the Regional Dialogue will be English. Translation into selected regional languages will be available.

Topics / sessions

For children:

- Interactive learning session on climate change and climate justice
- Strategies to be part of the solutions – sharing of results of national discussions
- Launch of the Principles and Policy Guidance on Children’s Rights to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment in the ASEAN Region
- Input for CRC General Comment 26

For youth:

- Strategies to be part of the solutions – sharing of results of national discussions
- Experiences with assessing the risks of youth advocacy and how to ensure that children and youth are protected
- Youth Launch of the Principles and Policy Guidance on Children’s Rights to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment in the ASEAN Region
- Support of Indigenous and women youth advocates
- Youth advocacy and participation at the global level | CBD COP CBD, UNFCCC COP, Stockholm +50, UNEA

For children, youth, and adults

- Lessons from Days 1 and 2 and panel of adults representing selected agencies/institutions/governments responding to the lessons from children and youth
- Access to climate justice for present and future generations of children
- Legal Empowerment to Advance Climate and Environmental Justice for Children in East Asia and the Pacific
- Good practices and experience with youth representation in negotiations and decision-making processes

Organizing Partners

- UN Environment Programme (UNEP)
- Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
- UNICEF
- UN Development Programme (UNDP)
- Asia Pacific Network for Environmental Defenders (APNED)/Center for Environmental Concerns (CEC)
- Child Rights Coalition Asia (CRC Asia)
- Save the Children (StC)
- Terre des Hommes (TdH)
- UNEP Major Group on Children and Youth (UNEP MGCY)