



# Proposals for the 2016 Intermediate Review of Progress on the Doha Work Program

## Executive Summary

The official Youth Constituency to the UNFCCC (known as “YOUNGO”) is pleased to offer this submission for SBI-44, as parties conduct their review of Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) under the Doha Work Program on Article 6 of the Convention. Young people have a crucial role to play in climate action. This submission offers several key recommendations to enhance youth engagement specifically with the work of the UNFCCC.

YOUNGO became a fully recognized constituency in 2011. While this official status has greatly benefited youth engagement with the UNFCCC, there remain critical obstacles to meaningful participation of young people, including the following challenges:

- Few young people have access to the financial resources needed to attend UNFCCC sessions, especially youth from the Global South and indigenous communities (leaving the youth most vulnerable to climate change extremely under-represented in YOUNGO);
- It is very difficult for youth to interact with the process of negotiations, as their observer status limits their access to information and opportunities for expressing their views;
- The physical venue of the COP is not conducive to youth engagement, making it difficult for young people to contribute their ideas and showcase their work and initiatives.

YOUNGO held substantive discussions of these challenges during COP-21, forming a working group which devised the following proposals for action:

1. Create a mechanism to provide financial support for youth to attend sessions of the UNFCCC, with special attention to ensure youth participation from the Global South;
2. Ensure all Parties have at least one official Youth Delegate for their delegations, following the precedent set by countries who already have Youth Delegates;
3. Establish an annual Youth Pavilion for the COP, providing a dedicated space in which to host youth-led and themed events as a contribution to the process as a whole.

Indeed COP-21 already started moving toward the implementation of these proposals. The French government provided funding that enabled 15 Global South youth to reach Paris for COP21, while the Netherlands shared their own Dutch Pavilion with YOUNGO for a day. YOUNGO therefore calls on all Parties to consider this precedent and our recommendations, which we hope to see Parties support during SBI-44 and officially adopt at COP-22.

## **Proposal 1: Financial Support for Youth Participation**

One of the most significant barriers to youth participation in the UNFCCC is a lack of the necessary financial resources to physically attend its sessions. Virtually all youth observers are volunteers and very few youth organizations have access to appreciable funding. Consequently, the only young people who can effectively engage in the process are those who can either personally afford to travel or who can raise travel funding through their social networks; in both cases, this means youth from the Global South are very poorly represented at the annual COP and are almost nonexistent at the intersessional meetings where most of the work occurs.

YOUNGO is adept at using social media and other virtual tools to conduct the majority of its work throughout the year, successfully engaging youth networks around the world; yet there is no substitute for the kind of personal interaction at the heart of the UNFCCC process. It is therefore vital for at least a small contingent of geographically diverse youth to be able to physically attend not only the COP but also key intersessional meetings. Furthermore, explicitly addressing the capacity gap facing youth of the Global South is essential to ensure the process is transparent, accountable, and legitimate from the perspective of YOUNGO.

### Global South Scholarships

One solution is for the host of each COP to allocate a portion of its budget to provide travel scholarships for youth participants. Indeed, the French government funded a proposal from YOUNGO that enabled 15 youth from the Global South to attend COP-21. These funds were held and disbursed through a French youth NGO within YOUNGO, who itself managed a global application and selection process to determine the qualified recipients. During COP-21, these young people engaged with the work of YOUNGO and also shared their stories through a side event in the Blue Zone. They were then able to share their experience with other youth at home.

We very much appreciate the French support we received; it sets a favorable precedent for running a similar process for COP-22, and we call on Parties to formalize this annual scholarship as part of the COP decision from COP-22.

### Funding to Support Youth Capacity

Along with scholarships to support more youth participation in the UNFCCC, funding is also needed to improve the quality of youth participation. For example, since YOUNGO lacks any paid staff, the French proposal included a small compensation for the staff time required to administer the scholarship program. YOUNGO is able to achieve a great deal through volunteers, but once again travel funding is a limiting factor. This is especially true for YOUNGO's two Focal Points who liaise with the Secretariat; doing their job effectively requires attending both COP and intersessional meetings, yet they receive no funding to help make that feasible. Compensation for their travel would benefit everyone in YOUNGO, while also giving all youth an equal opportunity to serve as a Focal Point regardless of their personal finances.

## **Proposal 2: Youth Delegates on All Delegations**

Ensuring that youth are able to be physically present at sessions of the UNFCCC (Proposal 1) is only the first basic step toward their meaningful participation; the young people who are present must also be able to engage closely with Parties in order to have their voice included in the process. The best way to ensure this interaction is through the inclusion of official Youth Delegates on each Party's delegation, thereby enabling the rest of the youth in YOUNGO to have a direct line of access into the process of negotiations.

Several countries – including the Netherlands, Finland, and Norway – already have official Youth Delegates at the UNFCCC. These youth played a crucial role in facilitating YOUNGO's engagement with the ADP negotiations, often serving as the only means of reliable access youth had available. As the process moves into implementation of the Paris Agreement, it is even more important for young people – as vital stakeholders – to have the kind of access afforded by Youth Delegates. Other countries should follow these examples by creating their own Youth Delegate programs, learning from and improving upon what is already done.

Youth Delegates are not only a valuable asset for YOUNGO, but also for the Parties themselves. The most effective way to communicate about the work of the UNFCCC to youth back at home is through other well-informed young people. Likewise, Youth Delegates can help to showcase at an international level the domestic climate initiatives of youth in their countries. Overall, Youth Delegates form a vital bridge between young people and the UNFCCC both inside and outside the process, contributing greatly to the objectives of Article 6 with regard to public participation, awareness, and access to information.

YOUNGO is prepared to work closely with willing Parties to implement the expansion of Youth Delegate programs. We have a pool of experienced current and former Youth Delegates to share best practices, while also having a wealth of training and preparation materials to support the introduction of new delegates entering YOUNGO and the UNFCCC. Undertaking this initiative jointly between YOUNGO and Parties would significantly improve youth engagement in the process.

Such engagement is absolutely crucial to implementation of Article 6. The current state of affairs, where youth must struggle to even be heard at the UNFCCC, causes many of the young people who manage to attend each year to leave the experience feeling neglected and disempowered. This is not only counterproductive to effective action on climate change, but is also undermining the capacity of youth to act as international leaders on climate change. Youth deserve to have a stronger say in the decisions about their future, and the expansion of Youth Delegates at the UNFCCC is a critical step in providing this empowerment of young people.

### **Proposal 3: Hosting a Youth Pavilion at the COP**

Prior to the start of each COP, young people gather for their annual Conference of Youth, where they collaborate, strategize, and hold myriad presentations, workshops, and trainings. Once they enter the COP, however, they lack any such common space in which to gather or hold events, greatly hindering their ability to work effectively and to contribute to the process. Hosting an annual Youth Pavilion at the COP (modeled after the various country pavilions) is a clear means of rectifying this problem in order to enhance youth participation in the UNFCCC.

Besides organizing an entire conference outside the COP, many youth NGOs also sponsor official Side Events inside the venue to address all aspects of climate change. Students will share their research, activists their campaign stories, and youth advocates their policy positions. YOUNGO also holds a meeting every morning in which it coordinates its activities for the day, while small working groups of young people will meet constantly on an ad hoc basis until well into the evening. All these existing activities indicate that YOUNGO not only has the capacity to manage a Youth Pavilion, but also to keep such a facility fully utilized for the duration of a COP.

Specific uses for a Youth Pavilion include:

- Hosting youth-led side events beyond those submitted via the Secretariat in advance, as well as offering a perfect venue for programming on Young and Future Generations Day;
- Sharing stories of youth-led projects on climate change and creating bridges between people around the globe, therefore enhancing climate action;
- Showcasing YOUNGO's work and activities alongside initiatives from countries and the UN, promoting networking and collaborative action;
- Providing a dedicated workspace for numerous meetings of YOUNGO working groups;
- Displaying artwork, pictures, and other vibrant media content produced by youth;
- Centralizing youth representation for the benefit of negotiators and other stakeholders looking to find and engage with young people at COP;

Acquiring a Youth Pavilion would allow youth representatives to collaborate more effectively, and ideally function as the central place for all climate youth-related issues. It would also signify the important role of youth in climate action and in the proceedings of the UNFCCC itself. A truly unique space at the COP, the Youth Pavilion would be a space not only for young people, but for participants of all generations to meet and collaborate both formally and informally.

We therefore invite the government of Morocco to be the first country to host a Youth Pavilion at their COP, while we also encourage all Parties to make the adoption of an annual Youth Pavilion at the COP an outcome of the decision from COP-22. YOUNGO is eager to partner with Parties to make this vision a reality – and with their support we are prepared to undertake this exciting project between now and November.

## **Best Practices and Areas of Concern in the Dutch Implementation of the Doha Work Programme**

The Dutch Youth Representatives to the United Nations welcome the opportunity presented to inform you on the steps we have personally taken to implement the Doha Work Programme, as well as on recommendations on the further effective implementation of the Work Programme.

*We hope that the signing of the Lima Ministerial Declaration on Education and Awareness-Raising at COP20 in Lima and the agreement to paragraph 12 in the Paris Agreement last December at COP21 have been effective in putting Article 6 and related subjects on the agenda as effective and cost-efficient means of combatting climate change and strengthening sustainable development.*

We will first elaborate on the current situation in the Netherlands, where we are most active, and then give further recommendations based on our own experience.

---

### ***The Dutch Situation***

The Dutch Youth Representatives are not aware of any additional measures taken by the Dutch government to implement the Doha Work Programme since 2012.

### **The Youth Representative Programme**

The Dutch government has continued collaborating with and financially supporting the Youth Representative programme. This programme includes two Youth Representatives who work exclusively on the topic of sustainable development. A youth representative is elected every year to a two-year term, providing the opportunity for the exchange of knowledge and expertise through a junior-senior system where the senior is responsible for training the junior for the last year of their term. The Youth Representatives on Sustainable Development attend UNFCCC events, both the annual Conference of the Parties and Intersessionals, and the High-Level Political Forum in New York. This gives the Youth Representatives an excellent opportunity to bring together the Sustainable Development Goals and the UNFCCC's climate change agenda and communicate this in a coherent way to the public.

An important aspect of the Youth Representative programme is the communication with youth (ages 12-30) in the Netherlands and internationally through the YOUNGO constituency. Not only do the Youth Representatives inform youth on developments within the United Nations framework, they also speak to young people about their main climate- and sustainability-related concerns and any solutions they may have (with the goal of informing policymakers and politicians and the local, national and international level). Through attending events and traveling to schools and other (non- and informal) educational facilities, the Dutch Youth Representatives speak to over 2000 young people each year.

*In our experience, the Youth Representative programme is an excellent means of involving young people with the United Nations and sustainable development. We hope to see the*

*programme replicated internationally, so that youth in more countries have the opportunity to have their voice directly heard at the United Nations.*

## **The Dutch Youth Climate Movement and the Dutch National Youth Council**

We have found that one of the best ways to reach out to young people on a larger scale is through existing networks and organisations. In the Netherlands, all youth organisations are organised under the umbrella organisation of the Dutch National Youth Council (NJR). Since the start of the National Youth Council in 2001, youth organisations have started collaborating on a wide range of subjects and activities - from national lobbying groups to co-organized events and workshops. The board of the National Youth Council supports these activities and has a monitoring role.

Unfortunately, the National Youth Council has only been slightly effective at bringing the knowledge, ideas and expertise of young people to policymakers and politicians in the Netherlands. The Youth Representative programme, situated within the Youth Council, has also faced this issue repeatedly over the last years. We believe that key factors here are i.a. that politicians and policymakers are unaware of youth networks and the value of youth expertise and that there is no institutionalized structure in which youth have the opportunity to give their opinion on policy matters. The situation is amplified by the fact that many youth organisations and the National Youth Council are systematically under-funded.

To improve the means that young people are given to have their policy recommendations be heard by politicians and policymakers, the Youth Representatives have collaborated with a number of youth organisations and volunteers to start the Youth Climate Movement. All youth organisations interested in the topics of climate change and sustainable development will get the chance to state their policy recommendations and immediate concerns in thematic and regional meetups. The results of these meetings will be collected in a biannual Policy Recommendation, which will be discussed at regular intervals with politicians and policymakers through elected spokespersons. Additionally, we will hold an annual conference to bring the ideas of young people to politicians and policymakers, and an annual Youth Climate Summit where young people are invited to learn about their own role in the climate problem. The first Youth Climate Summit was held last year in advance of the climate summit in Paris (COP21), and the Youth Climate Movement published its first policy recommendations in the form of a Youth Manifesto. This Youth Manifesto was handed over to our prime minister at COP21.

*This new system of the Youth Climate Movement has the advantage that there will be an ongoing dialogue between youth, politicians and policymakers, so that we can work together in a systematic way to resolve the climate crisis. We particularly hope that policymakers and politicians will challenge us to come up with solutions to questions and problems that they themselves have a difficult time with.*

## **Education for Sustainable Development in the Netherlands**

The Youth Representatives, youth organisations and volunteers have been working on improving the state of sustainability education in the Netherlands since 2010. A Manifesto stating the importance of education for sustainable development was signed by over 40 youth organisations and more than 60 businesses and civil society organisations in 2014. This Manifesto reemphasized the importance of education for sustainable development in creating a qualified workforce and a stable economy now and in the future. A majority of political parties in

the Netherlands also supported the Manifesto, and requested a report on the state of education for sustainable development in the Netherlands. This report was finished in 2015 and shows that there is sufficient demand within society for more education on sustainable development, but that schools and other educational facilities have a difficult time accessing the resources that they need to be able to provide this type of education. The team behind the Manifesto (consisting of mostly young people) has been working with politicians to realize a supporting structure that can help bridge the gap between available resources and the demand within society. This year, we hope to gain support from the majority of political parties in the Netherlands to start implementing the supporting structure.

*We have noticed that the Ministries of Education and Infrastructure & Environment have failed to act upon the societal demand for more education on sustainable development. The actions of both ministries (and other ministries involved) have slowed down the progress made in achieving a supporting structure, regardless of decisions taken at COP20 and COP21 to improve education on sustainable development.*

*Instead, it has been civil society actors who have started the conversation with politicians and policymakers. Unfortunately our experience has been that policymakers are not receptive to our suggestions because of political reasons, and that politicians have only been willing to cooperate when it leads to political gain. Because of both these reasons progress has been incredibly slow, even though demand from within society has been highlighted repeatedly.*

### **The DuurzaamDoor programme**

In 2012 the government decided to financially support (until 2016) the educational programme DuurzaamDoor, which facilitates through networks the gathering of government, business, research and civil society to find solutions to sustainability challenges. It is unclear if the program will continue after this year. *We, however, believe it to be important that the program is not only continued but expanded since its current reach has not moved past the 'usual suspects' of sustainability experts in the Netherlands.*

We are disappointed that the Dutch government has not taken a more proactive stance in making these initiatives a reality, and that the government has failed to initiate any other means of implementing the Doha Work Programme in the last years. Even though an official Article 6 Focal Point has been elected, there are no indications that this has had any positive effects in the implementation of Article 6 and the Doha Work Programme.

---

### **Policy Recommendations**

Based on our own experience, we want to provide the UNFCCC Secretariat and all Parties a number of policy recommendations:

- Youth representatives, youth delegates or even young delegates are a great means of bringing the voices of youth to the United Nations. Ideally, every delegation would consist of at least one young delegate and at least one female delegate.
- Discrimination against young people (agism) is a problem in countries all over the world and limits the influence young people can have in decisionmaking. The UNFCCC should

take a stand to prevent and combat agism in the UNFCCC process and in the policymaking realm worldwide.

- Because of the current lack of youth voices within country delegations, and because of the agism problem, the UNFCCC Secretariat should strive to advance the position of the voice of the Youth Constituency (YOUNGO) within the UNFCCC process. Increasing the visibility of young speakers and providing YOUNGO with access to an all-day meeting space are examples of ways the Secretariat could do this.
- Citizen's concerns should get a central role in the UNFCCC negotiation process. The importance of education, for example, has been clear to civil society and citizens since the start of the climate crisis. Governments, however, have failed to act upon this realization. Letting citizens be involved in agenda-setting prevents similar system failures in the future.
- Citizens all over the world are organizing themselves into networks so that their ideas can be translated into policy. Examples can be found in the Dutch Youth Climate Movement and the Citizen's Climate Engagement Network. One of the main issues is that governments are not receptive to these networks, and do not know how to use the expertise in these networks for their own benefit. The UNFCCC Secretariat can play a bridging role between citizens and governments and help make dialogue effective and result-oriented.
- National Ministries and national and local policymakers are often unaware of the decisions taken at the international level, and (in the Netherlands) have become highly politicized. This has slowed down progress on climate action for political gain. The UNFCCC Secretariat can help country delegations with effective communication strategies of UNFCCC agreements in their home countries, so that national policymakers receive more incentives for action.

*We also support all recommendations made in the SBI-44 submissions by the Climate Action Network (CAN), the Youth Constituency at the UNFCCC (YOUNGO), and the Citizen's Climate Engagement Network (CCEN).*

Warm regards,

Soscha de la Fuente (Youth Representative on Sustainable Development to the UN '14-'16)  
Max van Deursen (Youth Representative on Sustainable Development to the UN '15-'17)