

YOUNGO Submission to the In-session workshop on opportunities to further enhance the effective engagement of non-Party stakeholders with a view to strengthening the implementation of the provisions of decision 1/CP.21.

SB-46: Bonn, Germany

The official Youth Constituency to the UNFCCC (known as “YOUNGO”) is pleased to offer this submission for the In-Session Workshop on Stakeholder Engagement to be held at SB-46. Young people have a crucial role to play in climate action. This submission raises several key issues which we want to discuss with Parties and fellow stakeholders at the workshop in Bonn.

YOUNGO was formed as a constituency in 2009 and was fully confirmed in 2011 for COP17. While this status has greatly benefited young people at COP, there continue to be very critical challenges which limit the effective engagement of youth in the UNFCCC. The effective engagement of non-Party stakeholders in the UNFCCC process and the implementation of the Paris Agreement is a crucial topic, especially for young people. We therefore very much appreciate the opportunity to engage with Parties on this topic at the upcoming workshop in Bonn and are excited to offer our views here, with an aim to informing the selection of discussion points we will cover together at that time.

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Executive Summary

A meaningful discussion of how to enhance the effective engagement of youth stakeholders must include two elements: 1) an understanding of the challenges and barriers presently hindering such engagement, and 2) proposals from young people themselves about how to resolve these issues in collaboration with Parties, UNFCCC Secretariat, and other stakeholders.

The first point can be summarized accordingly:

- Few young people have sufficient access to the required financial, technical, institutional, and other resources needed to participate and engage effectively in the UNFCCC processes; this is especially true for youth from the Global South and indigenous communities, who remain dramatically underrepresented in decision making processes despite their incommensurate vulnerability to the impacts of climate change;
- Limited avenues exist for young people to have their voices heard and to make contributions in the process itself, especially for the negotiations (which are often closed or difficult to follow) and also in the surrounding activities of the process;
- While we appreciate the current efforts of the Secretariat given their limited resources, we wish to propose certain key improvements to better support youth engagement at the COP that could help to create additional spaces for youth to not only participate but also flourish during the conference;

The second aspect takes the form of proposals from YOUNGO aiming to address the above concerns, which overall require:

- The provision of financial support for youth participation, for example via the Global South Scholarships which YOUNGO has previously organized for the COP;
- The expansion of the few existing Youth Delegates Programs in the UNFCCC to include a young person on each Party delegation, drawing on established best practices for such;
- The creation of a Youth Pavilion at the COP or the opening of another dedicated youth space for YOUNGO, building on good precedents set by youth collaboration with the Nordic Pavilion at COP22, our use of the 1-Day Oasis space, and youth-led side events;
- The implementation of consistent and systematic solutions for youth capacity building on climate change, as exemplified by new initiatives like the Youth Negotiator Hub and other proposed projects like Regional Training Workshops and UNFCCC Fellowships;

In deciding to host this In-session Workshop at SB-46, Parties show they realize the crucial importance of stakeholder engagement in the process. Young people not only depend on the Paris Agreement for the safety of their future, but they are also vital to its successful implementation and future climate action. Thus, we look forward to having a meaningful engagement with Parties in Bonn on the topics and proposals we lay forth in this submission. Together, let us seize the post-Paris momentum to begin realizing effective youth engagement.

General Challenges Facing Effective Youth Engagement

In the context of the topics and proposals in this submission, YOUNGO wishes to elaborate on the general challenges facing effective youth engagement both in and around the UNFCCC.

Limited Global South Participation

The participation of youth from Global South in-person at UNFCCC processes is remarkably disproportionate compared to that from Global North, despite the climate impacts being more severe in Global South. This is largely due to lack of financial resources to attend and limited knowledge and infrastructure for engaging with climate policy at international and national levels.

Limited 'access' to Parties

The work of delegates at UNFCCC sessions remains largely uncommunicated (in part due to its complexity) to those who work outside the realm of international climate change policy. The work of the UNFCCC will be more effective and influential if we can leverage youth networks to make people more invested in the outcomes of the process.

Lack of Engaging Intergenerational Spaces

Though the number of youth engaged in UNFCCC processes is steadily increasing, there are limited formal channels that connect youth to negotiators and other experts. As a result, youth are left dangerously uninformed and disenfranchised from the decision-making processes which will determine their future.

Lack of Awareness and Capacity Building

Even the young people who manage to engage in the UNFCCC often face barriers in terms of the knowledge and tools to be effective there. While YOUNGO makes considerable efforts to build its own capacity, these best efforts still leave gaps which are compounded by the fact most young people only engage for a single COP (we have some great veterans, but they are a tiny minority due to the participation challenges we face). Also, young people outside the select few to make it to the UNFCCC are unlikely to have even basic awareness and knowledge about the process, or even climate change generally in many places.

These crucial general broad issues set the stage for tackling some specific topics in greater detail, as follows in this submission.

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 (see picture below). 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.



(Photo Credit to YOUNGO)

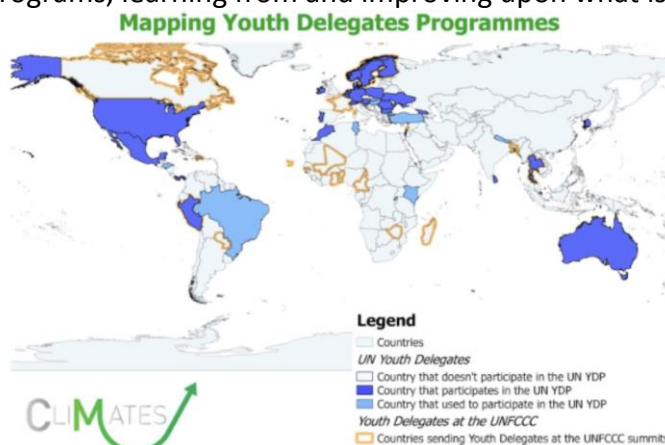
We very much appreciate the French support we received; it sets a favorable precedent for running a similar process for COP-23, and we call on additional Parties to support this annual scholarship program for 2017 and beyond.

Youth Delegate Programs (YDP)

Ensuring that youth are able to be physically present at sessions of the UNFCCC is the 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.

The UN Youth Delegate Program (YDP) was created to foster youth involvement in national decision-making processes and it invited Member-States to consider the inclusion of Youth Representatives into their national delegations to the UN General Assembly. Subsequently, some countries have implemented a version of the YDP for the UNFCCC, but this is still quite limited [Refer to the map below]. Youth Delegates to the UNFCCC come mainly from African and European countries, and the countries involved in the UN Youth Delegate Program are sparse.

The Netherlands, Finland, and Norway are among those who already have official Youth Delegates at the UNFCCC. These young people 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.



(Map of youth delegate programs sourced from the “Panorama of the Youth Delegates Programmes” by the YOUNGO member, CliMates. This full report is available upon request.)

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; for example, the Dutch YDs are mandated to engage at least 2,000 youth domestically each year. 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 Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) 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 the implementation of the Paris Agreement, especially ACE. 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.

Spaces for Youth at the COP

One of the major challenges facing youth engagement in the process – for those youth able to make it to the COP – is the lack of available space for youth activities. We very much appreciate the efforts of the Secretariat to support us within their limited resources in this area, especially considering the high value of requests. That said, we would like to highlight what the main deficiencies are at present, as well as to propose some ways to improve the situation.

Challenges:

Insufficient daily coordination meeting space

The normal 1-hour time provided to each constituency for morning coordination meetings is almost never sufficient to complete our required business. This is primarily due to the wide array of youth who attend the COP; building consensus and coordinating across such diverse perspectives and backgrounds (and often language barriers) is very time-consuming.

Lack of effective workspaces for youth

While we appreciate the services currently provided by the Secretariat (granting a constituency office space and the opportunity to book additional meeting rooms), these facilities are unable to accommodate the full range of youth meeting needs. This leads to the iconic phenomenon of seeing scattered circles of youth in places around the venue most of the time. While we do our best to be fluid and adaptable under these circumstances, it does greatly complicate our work, while it also makes it difficult for non-YOUNGO participants in the COP to fully appreciate the true scale of youth engagement there (since we appear typically in small groups and are decentralized).

Difficulty in obtaining side event slots

We fully understand the overwhelming demand for side event slots and the resulting strain this places on the allocation process for the Secretariat. This is a complicated topic. Yet we have found that many potential youth-led side events are unable to be held under the current system. In one case for COP22, the necessity to merge many requests into one event application resulted in an entire event (that could easily have filled the full time) being squished into only one 5-minute speaker on another panel.

There is a lot more the youth could contribute to the process through side events, if they just had more access to them. As a final note, we do greatly appreciate the efforts of the Secretariat in providing the Intergenerational Inquiry and other events on the Young and Future Generations Day; however, the formality and political character of that particular side event makes it very separate from hosting typical youth events.

Many young people only have access to the Blue Zone for half of the COP

Since the youth demand for badges greatly exceeds the supply, most youth delegations to the COP have adopted a model by which they split their badges between different participants during the first and second weeks. This promotes including as many youth as possible in the Blue Zone, but unfortunately results in a large number of youth who came all the way to the COP (and are participating the whole time there with their delegation) but then get stuck outside part of the time. Many and various attempts have been made in YOUNGO to help better connect these “inside” and “outside” youth, but with little success thus far.

The main barrier is typically the logistics of transitioning between the Blue Zone and the Green Zone (which has sometimes involved a fair bit of transit time, and always entails exiting and reentering security). Given the hectic pace of the COP, these seemingly small barriers have a drastic impact; those who do have badges seldom manage to transition between venues to collaborate with their outside colleagues.

Proposals:

Host a Youth Pavilion at the COP

Providing a space for youth alongside the country pavilions at the COP would solve many of the above problems all at once. A Youth Pavilion would:

- Serve as the venue for all youth-led and themed side events (enabling many more than under the present system), including the special programming for Young and Future Generations Day;
- This larger number of events could effectively:
 - Share stories of youth-led projects on climate change in order to foster greater connectivity and collaboration;
 - Showcase YOUNGO's initiatives and activities implementing climate action to facilitate the replication and scaling-up of successful efforts from around the world;
 - Enable inter-generational dialogues on key topics in the negotiations and broader climate action issues;
- Provide a dedicated workspace for the numerous meetings of YOUNGO working groups;
- Display artwork, pictures, and other vibrant physical media content produced by youth;
- Centralize youth representation for the benefit of negotiators and other stakeholders looking to find and engage with young people at COP;

There is already an encouraging precedent for a Youth Pavilion. For COP22, YOUNGO partnered with the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) to organize a day-long Youth Space at the Nordic Pavilion (see pictures below). It featured a full schedule of various interactive and youth-led side events; both YOUNGO and the NCM found this partnership very productive. While potential arrangements for a similar partnership at COP23 have yet to be discussed, YOUNGO does plan to continue and expand its outreach to Parties for this kind of collaboration. That said, the ideal situation would be having one consistent Youth Pavilion for the duration of the COP, and YOUNGO's work for the COP22 Youth Space demonstrates its capabilities to effectively utilize such a space.

NEW NORDIC CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

Youth Day

at the Nordic Pavilion at COP22 on November 7th

norden.org/cop22/youth-day

Nordic Pavilion, Section DEL2

www.norden.org/cop22

#NNCS

11:00-11:25 Opening Remarks (YOUNGO)

11:30-12:45 **Mainstreaming Climate Change in Education: Opportunities and Challenges**
How can different players contribute to mainstreaming climate change into education, and to promote relevant education in schools? Approaches from various continents are discussed with their arising opportunities and challenges.

12:50-14:20 **What Would Youth Do? Young People's Expectations for COP22**
Today's youth and future generations depend on greatly accelerated climate action. As Parties meet to discuss implementation of the Paris Agreement, what are the expectations of young people from around the world regarding the outcomes from COP22?

14:25-16:25 **Youth & Elders: An Intergenerational Dialogue on Enhancing Climate Action**
A moderated discussion will address the question: How can we strengthen the relationship between youth and their elders to unlock the necessary action on climate change? New partnerships and proposals will be developed for further action.

14:30 Partnerships for youth empowerment:
Education, mentorship, and resource mobilization

15:05 Partnerships for enhancing high ambition:
Youth as a catalyst for climate action

15:40 Partnerships for youth participation:
Growing the voice of youth in decision-making

16:30-17:00 Closing Remarks (YOUNGO)

17:00-17:45 **Scaling-up Climate Action for Climate Empowerment (UNFCCC)**
Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) is the more popular name for Article 6 of the UNFCCC, dealing with education, training and public awareness on climate change. In May 2016, the Nordic Council of Ministers sponsored the first global workshop for national ACE focal points, held at the UNFCCC headquarters in Bonn, Germany. This event is a follow-up to that workshop and a rallying point for all ACE focal points

18:00 Opening reception of the New Nordic Climate Solutions pavilion hosted by the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM)

(Photo credit to Timothy Damon, YOUNGO Focal Point, 2016)

Provide YOUNGO with a full-time side event room for the COP

A much easier solution would be to provide YOUNGO with an exclusive side event room for use throughout the COP, considering the many logistical elements to hosting an actual Youth Pavilion (finance, design, legalities, etc.). Such a space would resolve the core challenges by ensuring adequate time for daily coordination meetings (and the constant meetings of youth working groups), as well as abundant opportunities for hosting youth-led and themed side events.

As a further example of YOUNGO's ability to fully utilize such a full-time space, there was the day-long programming organized for one of the new 1-Day Oasis Spaces we had the opportunity to use at COP22 (many thanks again to the Secretariat for their facilitation of this). We encourage continued innovation of new outlets for observer participation, such as the Oasis

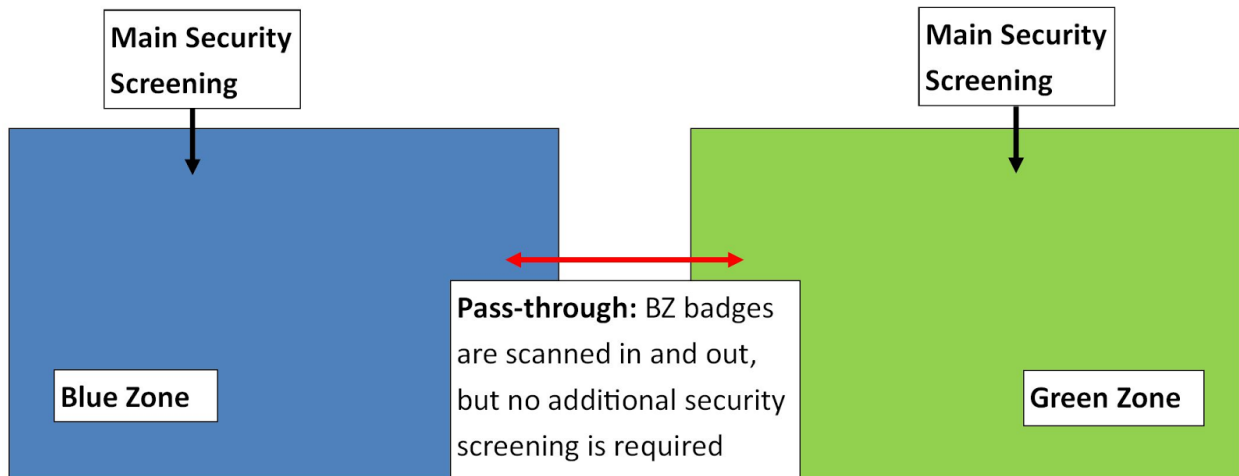
Space, while seeing the successes we have had with these existing platforms as positive momentum for YOUNGO to take on a larger assets like a dedicated side event room for the COP.



(Photo credit to Timothy Damon, YOUNGO Focal Point, 2016)

Ensure a smooth connection between the Blue and Green Zones

The ideal setup of a COP venue would see the Blue Zone (BZ) and the Green Zone (GZ) in immediate proximity and, crucially, connected by a pathway that does not require exiting and reentering security. Such an objective is most easily achieved where a COP venue is being designed from the ground up, however the same principles should apply even in cases where the venue is partially or entirely within an existing facility.



Having this kind of connection would allow much more efficient passage between the BZ and the GZ, meaning young people outside the BZ could be better connected to what was going on inside (because the youth in the BZ could more easily move between zones, thus doing more of their work outside where it is more accessible to everyone).

Therefore, we suggest to the Secretariat and all future hosts of the COP to consider arranging the venue as illustrated above, in order to facilitate the most effective engagement by observers.

Capacity Building Support for Youth

While quite a few young people make it to engage with the UNFCCC process each year, many of them are doing so for the first time and thus face many knowledge barriers. YOUNGO organizes the Conference of Youth (COY) each year right before the COP as a space to build the capacity of these new young people, but experience shows that a more consistent and systematic approach is needed for building and maintaining capacity.

Furthermore, even the most basic awareness of the UNFCCC - and even climate change knowledge generally - is often missing from the lives of young people outside the relatively small circle who are able to engage with the international process. These are young people we need to “activate”, via projects for ACE, in order for them to be empowered to take climate action and contribute their parts to implementation of the Paris Agreement (whether at their community, national, regional, or international level).

Fortunately, there are projects and initiatives that can address both of these aspects of capacity building. We invite Parties and fellow Non-Party Stakeholders to support these efforts, along with those already mentioned previously in this submission. To highlight two of these:

The Youth Negotiator Hub

Currently, limited opportunities exist for youth to meaningfully engage in climate negotiations and work constructively with governments and international bodies. This threatens to limit climate ambition and jeopardize future involvement of youth in these important decision-making processes.

The Youth Negotiator Hub intends to address this gap. The Hub aims to facilitate effective intergenerational knowledge sharing and build capacity for youth to engage in international and national climate policy. Through the creation of an online platform and formal mentorship network, we are working with governments and youth organizations around the globe to operationalize the concept of intergenerational partnership. The Hub will facilitate the co-creation of interactive online resources to demystify UNFCCC and national climate-related processes, and of youth engagement strategies to redefine the role of youth in enhancing ambition.

UNFCCC Fellowships

As the Youth Negotiator Hub enhances both the breadth and depth of capacity building resources available to support effective youth engagement in the UNFCCC processes, there will remain the challenges of physically getting young people to the relevant sessions and of training them with these tools.

The answer to this additional pieces of the puzzle could potentially take the form of a UNFCCC Fellowship Program (name yet TBC), a youth-led and intergenerational initiative that would manage the process of bringing young people to UNFCCC sessions. Whereas previous Global South Scholarship efforts only included funding to support the participation of young people, such a fellowship program would incorporate the capacity building resources available from the Youth Negotiator Hub and other partners into a comprehensive preparation regime in order for them to engage effectively with the process upon arrival there. If included on the official delegations of their home countries, these youth could also support their negotiators while increasing the youth voice in the process.

The concept for such a program is currently in development by the Global Youth Development Institute (GYDI), a new member organization of YOUNGO with a growing list of members, partners, and supporters both inside and outside the Youth Constituency. With the support of Parties and other stakeholders, it is entirely feasible to launch this initiative in time for bringing the first cohort of fellows to COP23.

Regional Training Workshops

While the Youth Negotiator Hub will facilitate the needed capacity building for youth to engage directly with the UNFCCC, there remains the need to educate and engage youth more broadly on climate change. It is well established that peer-to-peer education and outreach is the best way to engage young people, generally and for climate change. YOUNGO has many youth organizations with great experience for sharing with others, yet they lack sufficient resources and structures to engage in these kinds of activities most effectively.

One potential solution for achieving this objective is the concept of globally coordinated, youth-led regional training workshops. This idea was inspired by a very successful pilot training workshop organized by the SIDS Youth AIMS Hub (SYAH) and Commonwealth Youth Climate Network (CYCN) in August/September, 2016, and is now being developed by GYDI and its partners.

These workshops would raise awareness about climate change and build the capacity of youth to take action on climate change at various levels. A few of them might then engage directly with the UNFCCC process, but mainly they would take action within the global context of the Paris Agreement to implement climate action on the ground in their region, country, or local community.

Making such a project a reality would utilize both the resources available in the YOUNGO network and those contributed by Parties (via the Youth Negotiator Hub and other avenues). In this way, it would form an effective intergenerational partnership that would not only benefit YOUNGO and Parties directly, but also would reach the young people we most need to activate for climate action to ensure the success of the Paris Agreement.

Thus we call on Parties to support these and other capacity building efforts in support of YOUNGO and youth action on climate change.

Conclusion

We thank the Secretariat and Parties for their time in considering the topics and proposals raised in this submission. Hopefully the agenda of the In-session Workshop will be able to incorporate these matters for discussion in person in Bonn. Certainly the more effective engagement of young people in the UNFCCC process - and our closer collaboration with Parties - will enhance the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the collective global effort to prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference in the climate system.