



YOUNGO

Dated: September 18, 2017

Submission to the SBI Chair on:

“Ways of enhancing the implementation of training, public awareness, public participation and public access to information so as to enhance actions under the Agreement” (Decision 1/CP.21, paragraph 83).

The official Youth Constituency to the UNFCCC (known as “YOUNGO”) is pleased to offer this submission to SBI Chair on the guiding topic indicated above.

Young people have a crucial role to play in climate action. 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. YOUNGO at the same time strongly believes in the inclusive nature of Paris Agreement and that it cannot be re-negotiated under any circumstances.

We therefore very much appreciate the opportunity to engage with SBI Chair and are excited to offer our views here on the topic highlighted above.

Introduction

Under article 12 of the Paris Agreement, the parties committed to *“cooperate in taking measures, as appropriate, to enhance climate change education, training, public awareness, public participation and public access to information, recognizing the importance of these steps with respect to enhancing actions under this Agreement.”*

Additionally, the decision adopted by the COP21 to lay out the work plan enabling the operationalization of the Paris Agreement provided a mandate for the CMA to *“explore ways of enhancing the implementation of training, public awareness, public participation and public access to information so as to enhance actions under the Paris Agreement”* (Decision 1/CP.21, para. 83).

YOUNGO welcomes the recognition by the parties to the UNFCCC of the importance of training, public awareness, public participation and public access to information for effective climate action. In this regard we would like to propose a way forward based on the specific nature of para. 83 as a response to the call for submission.

About the mandate provided in para. 83

Education, training, public awareness, public participation and public access to information are key components of the global response to climate change, and are crucial for the rapid and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The importance of climate education, training, public awareness, public access to information and public participation is recognized since the adoption of the UNFCCC (article 6). Cooperation on these elements has been promoted through the New Delhi Work Programmes and currently under the Doha Work Programme on Action for Climate Empowerment.

To avoid duplication of work, the mandate contained in para. 83 should be implemented on the basis of the lessons learned through these processes. The objective of the exercise agreed upon at the COP-21 should be further refined according to the mandate of para. 83 to ensure that this mandate provides actual added value that complements existing work.

Process forward and expectations for COP-23

Considering that parties have not yet been in a position to agree on the content and modalities for the completion of the mandate provided in para. 83, we would recommend that the SBI47 (November 2017) focuses on:

- Precising the purpose of the work under its mandate and its relation to the work programme for the operationalization of the Paris Agreement.
- Defining an effective work plan for the following months allowing the CMA to complete the mandate provided in para. 83 before the end of its first session in December 2018 (COP-24).

This work plan to effectively implement para. 83 could include the following elements:

- A call for submission (to be done before May 2018) to parties and stakeholders on experiences with the promotion of training, public awareness, public access to information and public participation in relation to key elements of the Paris Agreement - including in relation to the groups from civil society listed in the Paris Agreement and also linking with the related work areas of ACE.
- Open Dialogue ideally taking place in the first week of COP, and report to be finished by the end of first week, to have the report (as it would be an in-session document) up for consideration during the second week negotiations (under SBI agenda item 18, also crosscutting with number 16 and 19).
- A joint-report from the secretariat and non-party stakeholders drawing from the experience of the New Delhi and Doha Work Programmes and from the recent in-session AIM workshop on enhancing stakeholders engagement summarizing information that is relevant in the context of the para. 83, including examples of good practices and lessons learned shared by the parties and stakeholders.
- A joint APA, SBI and SBSTA intersessional workshop in May 2018 to consider practical opportunities for training, public awareness, public access to information and public participation to strengthen the effectiveness of the mechanisms and processes further elaborated in the context of the Paris Work Programme (APA agenda items 3-7 and SBSTA work on article 6 PA).

In this context, we believe that the most promising avenue for the parties to build on the mandate contained in para. 83 and strengthens climate action under the Paris Agreement, is to guarantee that its four elements are effectively reflected in the implementation guidelines for the Agreement.

We believe that this mandate provides an opportunity to consider how this can strengthen each key element of the Paris Agreement in a manner that promotes cooperation and exchange of experiences on the implementation of these elements while respecting the importance of national processes and determination as a basis for the implementation of the agreement.

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 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). The current [Global South Scholarships](#) (GSS 2017) project being run in YOUNGO aims to bring young people from Global South to COP23 and YOUNGO remains open to future collaboration with governments and funding institutions for the same.

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. 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.

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.