

Ocean and Climate Youth Ambassador Program 2018 - Talanoa Dialogue Submission

A message from young people on the frontlines of climate change submitted by Peace Boat

Peace Boat's Ocean and Climate Youth Ambassador Program (OCYAP) is a program which began in 2017. It aims to bring together young leaders from Large Ocean States to join a Peace Boat global voyage for 3 weeks, to raise awareness and advocate on the issues of climate change and ocean degradation.

The 2nd iteration of the program comprised of participants from Fiji, Palau, Timor Leste, Singapore, Mauritius, Seychelles and Barbados. We began our journey in Stockholm, Sweden then travelled to Copenhagen, Denmark; Bergen, Norway; Reykjavik, Iceland; Halifax, Canada; and ended in New York, USA. Along the journey we had the privilege of learning from guest educators, volunteers and fellow participants on board and meeting with government officials, civil society representatives and concerned citizens at ports.

As we shared the stories of our islands with those we met, we learnt about what some European and North American countries are doing to address this problem. In Stockholm, during our first event we participated in group discussions sharing problems faced and possible solutions to climate change such as phasing out fossil fuels and increasing investment in renewable energy. In Copenhagen, we learnt about sustainable solutions being implemented by the private sector (SUSTAINIA) and government (House of Green). We also visited an offshore wind farm to see how Denmark is transitioning to renewable energy. In Bergen, we had an event at the University of Bergen with Small Island Big Song (a group of musicians from island countries) and visited the museum to learn about plastic pollution in the ocean. In Reykjavik, we spoke to members of the Arctic Youth Council, visited an ice cave constructed inside the Perlan museum, and learnt about glaciers and how Iceland uses geothermal energy. In Halifax, we met with members of the Halifax Regional Municipality and learnt about how they are encouraging their citizens to be more sustainable through school programs, loans for residential solar panels and recycling. We also met with volunteers of Greenpeace Halifax and concerned citizens, sharing the realities of climate change on our islands and how developed countries can help. Our journey culminated in New York where we shared our message with the world during Peace Boat's Partnership Expo and at a side event during the United Nations High Level Political Forum.

The OCYAP is registered as an event in support of the Talanoa Dialogue 2018. In the 3 weeks on board, we reflected on the 3 questions of the Talanoa Dialogue through presentations, workshops, activities and discussions with those we met during our journey. We present these messages to you now:

Where are we?

During the voyage, we each presented on 'Our Islands' sharing both the beauty of home and the realities of climate change and ocean degradation. Sharing our experiences of devastating impacts being faced from a problem we did not cause.

- Fiji is a Pacific Island Country with over 330 islands and a population of approximately 900,000. Fiji is a melting pot of voyagers, weavers, farmers, rugby players, homemakers; of mothers, fathers and children living with climate change. Impacts that can already be seen include coastal erosion which is leading to the relocation of communities, salination which is threatening food security, rising temperatures, sea level rise and increasingly intense storms. In February 2016 the most powerful storm to make landfall in the Southern hemisphere, Cyclone Winston, struck causing significant damage.
- Palau is a Pacific Island Country of about 170 islands and population of approximately 20,000. The land area may be small but Palau's ocean boundaries cover an area the size of France. Palau has seen the impact of resource exploitation and in response, established the Palau National Marine Sanctuary which is comprised of the entire Exclusive Economic Zone. Also, through the Palau Pledge, all visitors to Palau are asked to sign a pledge stamped into their passport, promising to respect the environment. This is part of a campaign to raise awareness about how to act with the environment.
- Timor-Leste is a large ocean state with a population of about 1.2 million, surrounded by incredible coral reefs. Impacts from extreme weather events such as more intense cyclones and flooding threaten lives and livelihoods, increasing the urgent need for adaptation.
- Barbados is a Caribbean island with a population of approximately 280,000. The Caribbean region has a rich culture and heritage, including music such as reggae and calypso. In Barbados and other

Caribbean islands, climate change is causing large amounts of sargassum seaweed to wash up on shore, threatening marine life and tourism opportunities.

- Singapore is an island country in Southeast Asia with a population of approximately 5 million. Singapore is one of the world's fastest growing economies and one which supports green innovation. Sea level rise poses the greatest threat to Singapore as much of the country lies only 15m above the mean sea level, of which about 30% lies less than 5m above the mean sea level.
- Mauritius is an Indian Ocean island nation with a population of approximately 1.3 million. Mauritius is a paradise of forests, biodiversity, beaches, reefs and lagoons and these must be protected. Impacts being faced include increasing temperature, sea level rise, coastal erosion and increasingly intense and frequent extreme weather events.
- Seychelles comprises of an archipelago of 115 islands in the Indian Ocean with a population of approximately 95,000. This East African nation showcases the beauty of the environment through nature reserves, beaches, coral reefs and marine life. Coral bleaching events not only negatively impact the ecosystem but also affect tourism and fisheries, the 2 main industries of the nation.

We recognize that climate change impacts are being faced all over the world through storms, flooding, droughts, severe winters, heat waves, sea level rise, and coral bleaching, to name a few. Current commitments are inadequate for a 1.5 degree world and it is going to take all actors: state and non-state, public and private, individuals and corporations, to build a sustainable future.

Where do we want to go?

We want to encourage a worldwide change of how we live and how we interact with the environment

One of the OCYAP events on board was a presentation of 'Tips to be more Environmentally Friendly' where we shared 7 ways to live more sustainably and reducing your carbon footprint:

- Transportation: we can walk more, cycle, carpool and use public transportation
- Energy: turning off switches when not in use, and choosing energy saver products
- Green Innovation: installing insulation in new houses, increasing use of solar panels
- Sustainable lifestyle: Practicing the 3Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle), replacing plastic with reusable products including bags, bottles, bowls, and straws. Buy products with reduced or environmentally friendly packaging.
- Support Eco-Friendly Businesses: Eat local, support eco-tourism and eco-friendly products
- Campaigns: sign petitions, join clean-ups, get involved with local climate organizations or social movements
- Raise Awareness: Through education (learn and share knowledge) and communication (social media)

We need systems change through a safe, just and equitable global transition to a low carbon economy, and redistribution of wealth and resources, creating real solutions that don't leave our planet and most species including our own, in catastrophe and ecocide.

How do we get there?

A global wave of compassion, commitment and action is necessary to build a sustainable future for all.

While we should all work to solve this problem, there must be an acknowledgement of the historic responsibility and contribution of developed countries to climate change. Developed countries and major polluters need to take the lead on strong, ambitious actions aimed at reducing emissions to mitigate future impacts, as well as providing support for those already feeling the impacts of climate change.

These actions should include divesting from fossil fuels, a moratorium on new coal mines, increased investment in renewable energy, increased climate finance for vulnerable countries, and a loss and damage fund for those experiencing permanent climate change impacts.

A greater commitment to education: it is very hard to care about an issue if you don't know much about it. This journey has reinforced the importance of continuing to share our realities with the world, to put the human face on climate change. Climate education will be a crucial tool in turning the tide on this fight, from children learning to recycle in school to youth realizing the beauty of the ocean; to corporations implementing sustainable business practices; to the public supporting climate friendly policies and voting for responsible representatives.

Education can come in many different forms, as we learnt during the voyage:

- Through song and dance: We were joined on board by 'Small Island, Big Song', a collaborative project aimed at uniting musicians throughout the Pacific and Indian Oceans through a love of sea, islands and traditional cultures. They shared their cultural heritage through traditional instruments and songs inspired by the islands.
- Through multimedia: our stories and Peace Boat journey were documented by social impact filmmaker, Ryan Carl, so we could continue raising awareness and sharing our experiences. Visual media can be used as an important tool to communicate important stories in the hopes of increasing understanding, empathy and action from people around the world
- Through empowerment: The United Nations Climate Change Focal Point for Education and Youth, Adriana Valenzuela, was one of our guest educators. She taught the history of negotiations and importance of youth leadership through interactive sessions, open discussions and group work.

We will do our part by continuing to speak up and speak out about our experiences, to continue encouraging a global discussion because we can all contribute to the solution.

