



CliMates NegoTracking Talanoa Dialogue Submission, 29 October 2018

About the Authors:

CliMates is an international youth-led think-and-do tank on climate change composed entirely of student and young professional volunteers. The goal of our organization is to take on the climate challenge by:

1. Developing and promoting innovative ideas and tools
2. Training youth to become change-makers **and**
3. Influencing decision-makers

The **Negotiations Tracking Team (NegoTracking)** is a project of CliMates that follows and analyzes international climate negotiations as well as reports on issues and outcomes. The team is composed of young people from across the world who work together on capacity-building and lobbying initiatives, with the aim of building youth expertise on international climate negotiations.

Submission Background and Introduction:

Over the course of this year, CliMates has incorporated the Talanoa Dialogue model into a number of our internal, organizational activities. On May 19, 2018, CliMates Nepal (a branch of our international organization) and IAAS Nepal jointly hosted a Talanoa Dialogue session in Rampur, Chitwan, Nepal in which a total of thirty participants took part in discussions on the

three Talanoa questions: 1.) Where are we?; 2.) Where do we want to go?; and 3.) How do we get there?. Similarly, in June 2018, attendees of the 4th CliMates International Summit in Vienna, Austria, participated in a [Talanoa Dialogue session](#) in which they too addressed the guiding questions. Following these initial, in-person Talanoa exercises, the CliMates NecoTracking Project developed and circulated an electronic survey to the full CliMates International network of upwards of 1,000 members in order to obtain a better understanding of the different ideas, perspectives, experiences and stories our membership brings to the guiding questions.

Given our organizational focus on youth empowerment and leadership in the context of climate change and sustainable development, many of our discussions naturally gravitated towards the roles, responsibilities and capacities of young people in building the world we want to see through political participation and advocacy. Thus, drawing on and synthesizing the outcomes of our internal Talanoa Dialogues, CliMates' submission focuses primarily on how young people can contribute to defining "where we want to go," though it also briefly addresses the other Talanoa topics. Below, we highlight strategies for meaningfully involving young people in decision-making processes, identify barriers young people face to equal co-partnership in sustainable development and climate policy settings, and, perhaps most importantly, illustrate the critical importance of youth leadership in steering the global community toward a more sustainable future.

Where are we?

To frame our engagement with question two of the Dialogue - where do we want to go - we must first, briefly, take stock of where we are. In the output document from their May Talanoa Dialogue session, our colleagues from CliMates Nepal and IAAS Nepal put it this way:

"We will be living a nightmare if climatic crisis is not taken seriously. We are spilling global warming pollution in the atmosphere...There is abnormality in temperature, uncertainty in rainfall, extremely hot days or unexpected winter days. This uncertainty is affecting plants, animals and humans. There is a growing threat of climate change. This is just a preview of one possible future, a glimpse of the next generation's fate..."

The climate impacts already facing Nepal are acute and, as our colleagues note, foreshadow the new, global normal if business as usual continues. The recently released [IPCC Special Report](#) on Global Warming of 1.5 Degrees indicates that global warming may reach 1.5 degrees as soon as 2030 if current emissions trends persist, investing the next decade with paramount political significance. It is clear that urgent and large-scale climate action is imperative if we are to reach the objectives of the Paris Agreement and preserve a habitable planet for posterity.

In CliMates, we often refer to ourselves as the “climate generation,” a recognition that we have inherited a world remade by greenhouse gas emissions and find ourselves coming of age at a critical juncture in the human story when the continuation of life itself hangs in the balance. As young advocates, we understand at a personal level that what happens in the next decade will have profound and lasting consequences for our future and for this reason we are determined to spur not only increased ambition within the inherited guidelines and institutional structures, but a wider imagination of what is possible for the future. As the first generation to witness the impacts of climate change and the last with the time to implement urgent and decisive action, we feel a deep responsibility to generations to come, the inheritors of what we leave behind who may suffer from the harms we create through our policy choices. This sense of responsibility animates our advocacy and our insistence that the youth voice must be heard to make intergenerational equity a governance priority.

Despite the fact that young people and future generations are the primary beneficiaries of climate action and important stakeholders in climate policy-making, it is sometimes the case that we are under-involved in climate policy processes. We maintain that the principle and promise of intergenerational equity enshrined in the preamble of the Paris Agreement cannot be realized without the full participation of young people as equal co-partners in policy processes of disproportionate consequence to our generation and those to come.

Where do we want to go and how might we get there?

The goal of CliMates is to equip young people worldwide with tools, strategies and opportunities to be more involved in the fight against climate change. Through our various campaigns, research projects and advocacy efforts, CliMates strives to raise awareness among young people and “empower the climate generation.” To fulfill the promises of the Paris Agreement, we fully intend to continue our work and involve more and more young people in order to sensitize society to the problem of climate change and its solutions.

CliMates is already committed in a range of projects to raise awareness and will continue to expand its involvement in projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. For example, CliMates France is currently running a project to write, or re-write, the first article of the French Constitution to include ecological issues. Our Ecological Constitution Project petition has been signed by over 50,000 people, and is supported by several private actors such as Ben & Jerry’s, and Lilo. The campaign suggests a law to add planetary environmental limits to the Constitution as well as the principle of non-regression for environmental protection. CliMates has organised marches and communication campaigns to support the project. The call for an ecological constitution is an example of CliMates ability, through the mobilisation of young people, to put progressive pressure on the government to align its commitments and actions with the spirit and goals of the Paris Agreement. Young people are critical shapers of societal attitudes and opinions

and have historically been the drivers of progressive social and political change. Recognizing our effectiveness as educators and domestic civil actors, the UN climate change process can help place international pressure on northern governments to strengthen commitments and hasten implementation and provide crucial support for civil society mobilizations, such as the Ecological Constitution Project, that young people are spearheading.

In addition to our efforts in various countries to engage youth in national politics, we believe young people must be front and center in international and intergovernmental fora. We believe the UNFCCC, and other intergovernmental initiatives, have a responsibility to help empower young people as equal co-partners in sustainable development and must involve us in true intergenerational collaboration and policy co-design. As UN Secretary General António Guterres said in a speech celebrating the launch of the “Youth2030 Strategy,” the United Nations and analogous institutions must transition from working *for* youth to working *with* youth “in understanding their needs, in helping to put their ideas into action, in ensuring their views inform our processes.”¹ The success of Agenda 2030 and the UN climate change process depend upon the meaningful involvement of the climate generation.

A number of practical barriers inhibit youth attendance and participation at UN climate conferences. Young people, especially youth in the global south, often cannot self-finance their attendance and must receive support from scholarships and other sources. We applaud efforts such as the Global South Scholarship which are addressing this resource gap and enhancing the involvement of young people from the most climate vulnerable regions and wish to see these efforts progressively scaled up over time. We especially salute the fact that the GSS program not only provides financial support but training and capacity-building such that youth recipients have the knowledge to meaningfully engage in the process. Similarly, we believe that the UNFCCC could provide more support for the youth delegate program as a way of further prioritizing youth engagement. Specifically, the position of youth delegate might be given more operational weight and understood as a serious advisory role on equal footing with other roles in a delegation, especially in global south countries.

Beyond these practical constraints on youth engagement, more subtle dynamics exist in the UNFCCC forum which occasionally work to disempower youth. As was noted by a speaker at the Intergenerational Inquiry at COP 23, few senior decision-makers were in attendance at a forum dedicated to fostering dialogue between young people and policymakers. This is one example of a larger trend at UNFCCC events. Many youth attendees at UNFCCC conferences report not being taken seriously by adult decision-makers, and some youth delegates feel that

¹ “Youth2030: UN SG launches bold new strategy for young people ‘to lead,’” 25 September 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/news/2018/09/youth2030/>

they do not command the respect of older participants and are simply invited to attend or speak at events as a form of ‘youth washing’ or fulfilling basic procedural requirements pertaining to youth participation.^{2 3}

These dynamics demonstrate that it is not enough to simply give youth a voice in the process or a seat at the table, but we must also work to encourage and ensure that older decision-makers actively and respectfully engage with us as equal co-partners. One potential way to address the ageism in UNFCCC processes is to institute ‘intergenerational sensitivity trainings’ in order to train conference speakers and participants about how to respectfully incorporate and interact with the voices and views of young people. Another potentially complementary solution is to create panel and side event guidelines or requirements to ensure that side events themselves reflect the principle of intergenerational equity. Often, young people speak at ‘youth’ side events which are generally not well attended by older delegates while it is less common for young people to be featured speakers at panels which are not explicitly about ‘youth issues.’ This creates a situation in which ‘youth issues’ are often heard only by other young people and fail to be fully mainstreamed in larger climate discussions. To streamline a more robustly intergenerational form of dialogue across the UNFCCC process, a requirement for ‘intergenerational parity’ might be adopted which would place certain age-balancing requirements on side events and panels and ensure that youth are able to contribute to a wider range of discussions than they currently are. This policy would function best alongside a gender parity policy for panel and side events which would ensure a gender and age balance among featured speakers and perspectives within UNFCCC non-party stakeholder engagement. Lastly, we applaud the Talanoa Dialogue process and the turn to storytelling as a mode of political expression in the UNFCCC space and believe that this approach holds great potential for further involving young people.

Conclusion

Creating the conditions to achieve intergenerational equity requires that it become more than an abstract legal principle. Intergenerational equity must be prioritized across the range of present-day operations of the UNFCCC, for it cannot be realized without a truly intergenerational process. As one respondent to the Talanoa survey our team conducted wrote:

Youth, as a cross-cutting stakeholder and the main beneficiary of the impacts of these negotiations, should benefit from a privileged space in the negotiations sphere. Youth are

² Larissa Kwiatkowski (2017). “Paths to Meaningful Youth Involvement at the International Climate Change Negotiations: Lessons from COP22 in Marrakesh,” Master’s Thesis in Sustainable Development at Uppsala Universitet, Retrieved from <https://uu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1114168/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

³ UK Youth Climate Coalition, “UKYCC at COP 23: “Adorable” Youth,” UKYCC, Retrieved from <http://ukycc.org/ukycc-at-cop23-adorable-youth/>

a strong source of proposals to design concrete solutions, but also to design the global guidelines we should all respect and implement to go where we want to go. Youth can provide UNFCCC with the vision, and with the means because we are the long-term climate action.

We are the climate generation, with the insights, sensibilities and imagination to steer the world from climate crisis toward hopeful and bright futures. Young people coming of age in a warming world know that we have responsibilities to generations to come, and that we owe it to ourselves and posterity to preserve instead of deplete and despoil the earth. We want a world of intergenerational equity in which we honor and dignify future generations and make every effort to leave behind a just, sustainable and peaceful legacy rather than a planet fractured and riven by climate change. We, as young people, are thankful that we have a voice in these processes even as we must continue to implore our elders to listen deeply.