

Youth in Asia and the Pacific unite to fight climate change ahead of COP26

On 9-10 February of 2021, The Regional Dialogue on Youth Empowerment in Climate Actions took place, gathering more than 1,000 young leaders, government officials and civil society representatives from the Asia-Pacific region. More than 30 speakers, representing all subregions in Asia and the Pacific, took the floor to discuss how youth perspectives can be elevated and better involved in addressing the global climate crisis. The aim of the dialogue was to inspire, enhance knowledge and drive action for youth engagement in climate action by bringing together a large number of key stakeholders. Before the Dialogue itself, more than 20 pre-events were organized by youth organizing partners, engaging over 1000 participants in the region.



The Dialogue was opened with remarks by Kanni Wignaraja, Assistant Secretary-General, Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific from UNDP, Karin Hulshof, Regional Director for East Asia and the Pacific, UNICEF, Alison Barrett, Director of Education and Society, East Asia and COP 26 Global Lead, British Council, as well as Heeta Lakhani, the Global Focal Point from YOUNGO and Ovais Sarmad, Deputy Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC.

Heeta said in her opening remarks that “As youth, we are part of the solution to the global issue of climate change”. She spoke about how ensuring youth participation and bringing everyone’s voices together could help ensure a just and [green recovery](#) from COVID-19. “We as youth, have to be the change makers, but we also have to be the bridges to our communities.” She invited her peers to share their stories from their communities into the collaborative spaces where climate activists work. Just as importantly, she encouraged them to bring information and inspiration back into their communities. She called on them to “raise your voice for the climate crisis, but also raise your voice for the most marginalized communities.”



Similarly, Ernest Gibson, a member of the [Secretary General’s Youth Advisory Board on Climate Change](#) mentioned that “It’s very easy to get caught up in the noise”. He shared that being from Fiji, he experienced the value of storytelling from the day he was born, and how he believes that storytelling and writing can really help youth to direct their actions in a meaningful way. “The climate crisis is an ongoing story and one that we, as youth, have the unique opportunity to write the next chapter of.”



Ovais Sarmad, UNFCCC, shared in his opening remarks the importance of climate action in these extraordinary times. “The COVID-19 pandemic has created new challenges and uncertainties for us all. What remains certain is that we must strive to strengthen our climate pledges and work together to further climate action. There is not a vaccine for climate change.” Additionally, he pointed out opportunities for youth to engage at [the Asia-Pacific Climate Week that was recently announced](#), the ‘Youth4Climate: Driving Ambition’ summit in September and the Conference of Youth (COY)

organized by YOUNGO. Fleur Newman and Luca Brusa from the UNFCCC Secretariat also highlighted the Climate Weeks and the important review of the work programme on [Action for Climate Empowerment \(ACE\)](#) at the COP26 in Glasgow this year.

On the second day of the Dialogue, a number of simultaneous breakout sessions were organized, including youth panels and a government roundtable to discuss ideas for regional collaboration on youth engagement in national climate processes. Day 2 also marked the launch of the **Youth Empowerment in Climate Action Platform**, a collaboration between the UNFCCC Regional Collaboration Centre for Asia and the Pacific (RCC Bangkok), UNDP, UNICEF, the British Council, YOUNGO, Movers Programme and the 2030 Youth Force.



Finally, the dialogue was concluded after closing remarks by the UK COP26 Regional Ambassador to Asia and the Pacific, H.E. Ken O’Flaherty, the Ambassador of Italy in Singapore, H.E. Ambassador Raffaele Langella, UNDP Deputy Regional Director for Asia-Pacific, Christophe Bauhet, and Ms. Lameya Alam, Ambassador of the youth Movers Programme. Highlighting that young people have always been the strongest driver for any change in society and seeing the huge mobilization of youth for climate action, governments need to take their concerns seriously and quickly make the transition to a zero-carbon future.

After the dialogue, more than 1115 participants responded to the post event survey, rating the event at 8.8/10 on average for the usefulness of the dialogue, a testament to the relevance of these conversations. UNFCCC and RCC Bangkok stay committed to work together with partners in the region to ensure continued meaningful youth involvement in climate action. Do you want to get engaged? Please visit the Regional Youth Climate Action Platform where a number of opportunities will be shared over the coming months:

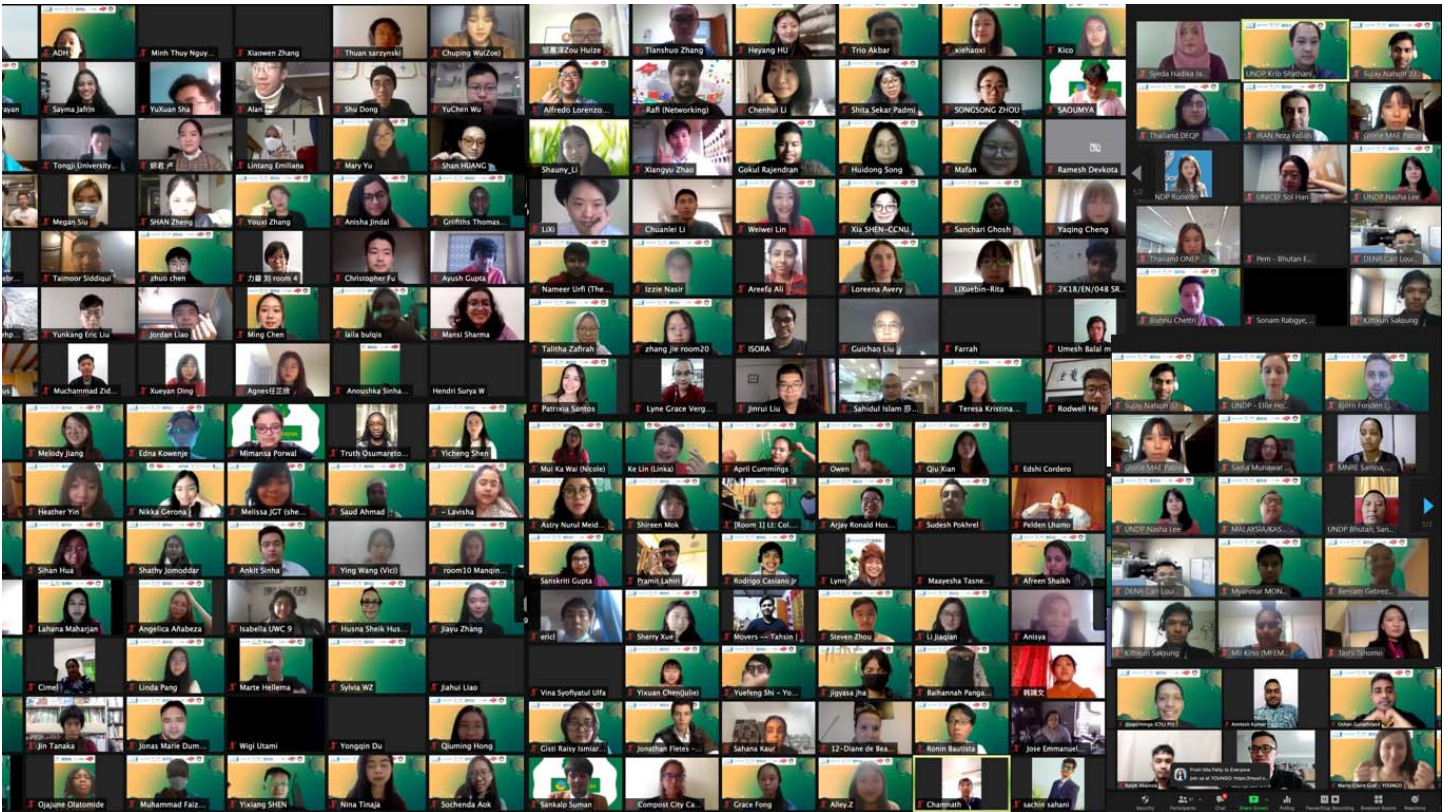
<https://www.youthapac.org/climate>

Did you miss the event? No problem! You can watch the full livestream of the Dialogue here:

<http://bit.ly/ClimatePromiseRegionalDialogue>

For more information, please contact Björn Fondén, Climate Change Support Officer at RCC Bangkok:

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Action Committee for the Event and Regional Platform

Website -

www.youthapac.org/climate



The science is clear, countries have a short window of time to take the urgent action necessary to limit average global temperature rise to a safer 1.5 °C. Global warming is already causing long-lasting changes to our climate system and threatens lives and livelihoods around the world. We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity - through the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - to ensure a more sustainable, equitable and prosperous future for all.

In the recent past, we are witnessing increased interest, engagement, and activism by youth on the climate agenda. Through climate strikes etc. young people have demanded governments and other relevant stakeholders to take collective actions on climate change. With this context in mind, it is important to engage the voices of young people and identify actionable initiatives to lay the foundation for ambitious climate actions.



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