



CONCEPT NOTE

Climate Vulnerability and Resilient Youth: Towards a Net Zero Future

Thursday, 24 October 2024, 1230 - 1400 hrs (WST), LTC-2
Ministry of Justice and Courts Administration, Apia, Samoa

Context

The Commonwealth family consisting of 56 nations and representing 1.5 billion young people is facing a critical challenge as 70 percent of its members, particularly those from over 37 Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and other developing nations have become increasingly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change over recent decades. These nations are experiencing extreme climate events and disasters with escalating frequency and intensity, posing significant risks to their populations and ecosystems. Notably, 87 percent of young people live in the most climate-vulnerable developing countries, underscoring the urgent need to address their unique challenges and perspectives. In this context, the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Samoa ahead of COP29 presents a vital opportunity to explore the intersection of climate vulnerability and youth resilience, emphasizing the urgent need for innovative solutions and collaborative efforts to achieve a net zero future.

Climate vulnerability refers to the susceptibility of individuals, communities and nations to the adverse effects of climate change. Factors contributing to climate vulnerability include geographic location, socio-economic status and access to resources. The climatically vulnerable countries are experiencing severe climate impacts such as rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and food insecurity.

Net Zero refers to the balance between the amount of greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere and the amount removed from it. Achieving net zero means that any emissions produced by human activities, such as burning fossil fuels or deforestation, are counterbalanced by efforts to absorb an equivalent amount of greenhouse gases primarily through natural processes like reforestation or technological solutions such as carbon capture and storage. The goal of reaching net zero is crucial in mitigating climate change as it aims to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, thereby reducing the risks and impacts associated with climate-related disasters.

Youth, who represent a significant portion of the population in these vulnerable regions, are particularly affected by climate change. They face challenges such as:

- I. **Displacement and Migration:** Climate-induced disasters can lead to forced migration, disrupting education and community ties for young people.
- II. **Health Risks:** Increased frequency of heatwaves, floods, and other climate-related events can exacerbate health issues, particularly in regions with limited healthcare access.
- III. **Economic Opportunities:** Climate change threatens traditional livelihoods, particularly in agriculture and fisheries, which many young people rely on for employment.
- IV. **Limited Participation:** Young people often lack a voice in decision-making processes related to climate policies, despite being among the most affected.

Despite the challenges they face, youth are also a source of innovation and resilience. They possess unique perspectives and capabilities that can drive transformative change. Engaging youth in climate action is essential for several reasons:

- I. **Innovative Solutions:** Young people are often at the forefront of technological advancements and creative problem-solving, offering fresh ideas for climate adaptation and mitigation.
- II. **Advocacy and Awareness:** Youth movements have gained global attention, raising awareness about climate issues and advocating for urgent action. Their passion and commitment can mobilize communities and influence policymakers.
- III. **Intergenerational Equity:** Involving youth in climate discussions ensures that their needs and aspirations are considered, promoting intergenerational equity in climate action.

Towards a Net Zero Future

Achieving a net zero future requires collective action across all sectors of society. For youth, this means not only participating in climate initiatives but also leading them. Key strategies to empower resilient youth include:

- I. **Education and Capacity Building:** Providing young people with the knowledge and skills necessary to understand climate issues and develop solutions is crucial. This includes integrating climate education into school curricula and offering training programs.
- II. **Access to Resources:** Ensuring that youth have access to funding, technology, and mentorship can help them implement their climate initiatives effectively.
- III. **Policy Engagement:** Encouraging youth participation in policy-making processes can amplify their voices and ensure that their perspectives are included in climate strategies.
- IV. **Networking and Collaboration:** Creating platforms for youth to connect with each other and with experienced leaders can foster collaboration and the sharing of best practices.

The intersection of climate vulnerability and youth resilience presents both challenges and opportunities. As we move towards a net zero future, it is important to recognize the critical role that young people play in shaping climate action. By empowering youth, fostering their participation, and supporting their initiatives, we can build a more resilient and sustainable world for all.

Objectives

- I. **Empower Youth Voices:** Create a platform for youth leaders from across the Commonwealth to share their experiences and perspectives on climate vulnerability.
- II. **Promote Intergenerational Dialogue:** Facilitate discussions between young leaders and policymakers to bridge the gap between generations in addressing climate change.
- III. **Present Solutions:** Encourage youth participants to present equitable and transformative climate adaptation, mitigation, and financing policy solutions.
- IV. **Raise Awareness:** Highlight the urgent need for action and collaboration to support the most vulnerable populations in the face of climate change.

Outcomes

- I. The Apia-Dhaka Declaration consists of a set of actionable recommendations for policymakers to consider in their climate strategies.
- II. A strengthened network of youth leaders committed to climate action.
- III. Increased visibility of youth-led initiatives and solutions in the context of the Commonwealth and global climate discussions.

Programme

Thursday, 24 October 2024		
Time	Agenda Item	Agenda Item Description
1230 - 1300	1	Registration and Refreshments
1300 - 1310	2	<p>High Level Roundtable:</p> <p>Inaugural Remarks by Co-Chairs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> H.E. Md. Touhid Hossain Foreign Minister (Adviser) of the Government of Bangladesh H.E. Hon'ble Minister of the Government of Independent State of Samoa <p>Special Remarks by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rt Hon Patricia Scotland KC Commonwealth Secretary-General
1310 - 1315	3	Break for Group Photo with Youth Representatives
1315-1350		<p>Panel Discussion:</p> <p>Moderators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be moderated by two Co-Chairs <p>Panelists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hon. Dr. Peya Mushelenga, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of Namibia Hon'ble Minister from Asia Hon'ble Minister from Pacific Hon'ble Minister from Caribbean H.E. Mr Antonis Sammoutis, High Commissioner of the Republic of Cyprus to Samoa Joshua Opey (Ghana), Chairperson, Commonwealth Youth Council Amanda Jessica Slew (Jamaica), Regional Representative for Caribbean Gurdit Singh Vohra (India), Vice Chairperson—Partnerships & Resources, Commonwealth Youth Council Muskaan Anand (India), Regional Representative for Asia, Commonwealth Youth Council Regional Representative for the Pacific, Commonwealth Youth Council
1350-1400	Q&A; Closing Remarks	

