

Draft Statement

Dear Distinguished Delegates,

We are delighted to take part in the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific 79th session of the Commission to represent youth voices from the region in front of high-level representatives.

Asia and the Pacific is home to almost two-thirds of humanity, with the highest number of children and youth in the world, constituting approximately 60% of the world's youth population.

The ESCAP theme study shows the need for greater ambition for climate action in Asia and the Pacific. Countries in the region are confronted by the worst consequences of climate change, with the region being declared as the most vulnerable to climate crisis. Of the ten countries most affected by climate-induced disasters, six are in the region. Together with other vulnerable groups, young people across the region are disproportionately affected by climate change impacts.

Rising sea levels threaten to submerge our land--including this very city where we stand today, changing weather patterns affect food sovereignty, and frequent floods and disasters affect the most vulnerable communities, undermining hard-won gains in sustainable development and our collective future. Meanwhile, the region produced over half of the global greenhouse gas emissions in 2020, emissions that will continue rising.

As young people, we have grown up with the climate crisis. This is the stark reality that we face at every turn. We no longer wish to hold onto feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. So, we stand before you today representing the young people of our region, whose survival and future is at stake.

We are dedicated and committed to climate action. We recognise the power and strength that young people have as a collective: the thought-leadership we personify, our ingenuity, our drive, our courage and conviction, that can steer us towards a better future.

Similarly, to all our allies in the room, we also recognise the capacity and strength that all of you bear. Together, we all share this responsibility to mitigate and adapt to the climate crisis to protect our beautiful planet. Every single one of us is bound to live with the consequences of the decisions made at this session because the climate crisis is not just a problem for tomorrow, but is happening right now.

As we stand here today, we represent the views of thousands of young people who engaged in consultations during the 10th Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development and for this Session, and recommend in unity, the following :

1. The scale of action needed requires greater cooperation beyond national borders, including - adherence to international commitments and to the Paris Agreement to keep global temperatures well within 1.5° C, - to a just and equitable transition to phase-out fossil fuels, and - to operationalize long-term credible plans for reaching net-zero by 2050.

2. While recognizing the urgency for decarbonization of all sectors, but foremost of energy systems, the transition to a net zero emissions future should not leave vulnerable communities, youth, women, indigenous peoples, Persons with disabilities, and others, as well Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) behind, centering the principles of equity, justice, and human rights. False solutions that prolong the crisis must be confronted for diverting attention from the urgent task of decarbonization.

3. Scale up funding with a priority for disadvantaged countries - LDCs and SIDS, considering historical responsibilities, for communities, and individuals. It should be accessible to civil society for greater impact and for youth to implement climate change solutions and their visions of sustainable societies.

4. Ensure meaningful partnerships with youth of all demographics. Create avenues for policy coherence discussions on climate justice and peer learning at sub-regional and regional spaces that involves young people. Support the development of young people, their access to opportunities, involvement in the update of Nationally Determined Contributions and other political processes through training and collaboration, and protection of young people working for the planet.

We refuse to sit idly while decisions about our present and futures are lost in the corporatocracy and politics of today while our tomorrow awaits consensus in critical times. We are ready to be included in the conversations for our present and our futures. We urge you to prioritize people and the planet over profits. We urge you to have the courage and strength needed to act now to ensure that the race to net zero does not leave the generations of our future behind.