



TECHNICAL NOTE NO. RTB-008-UK

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN CLIMATE NEGOTIATIONS

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BRA/24/007 – Support to COP 30
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UNDP is the United Nations' lead organisation in the fight to end the injustice of poverty, inequality, and climate change. Working with a broad network of experts and partners in 170 countries, it supports nations in developing integrated, lasting solutions for people and the planet.

About "Route to Belém"

The *Route to Belém* platform is an initiative under the UNDP programme "Support to COP30" (BRA/24/007), which combines technical expertise with new technologies and digital environments to help make COP30 in Belém, Brazil, the turning point needed to address global climate change. This will be achieved through two strategies. The first draws on scientific studies to strengthen discussions among COP negotiators. The second uses digital tools, such as a smart scheduling application, metaverse platforms, and a virtual assistant (chatbot), to engage society, the private sector, and academia in the debates, enabling participation from both those in Belém and in other locations.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations, including UNDP, or its Member States.

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ABSTRACT

This technical note examines the role of youth engagement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations, with a particular focus on COP30 in Belém. It traces the historical evolution of youth participation, from early observer status to the establishment of YOUNGO and the transformative impact of movements such as *Fridays for Future*, which have contributed to greater institutionalisation through mechanisms including Youth Climate Champions and dedicated youth pavilions at Conferences of the Parties. The analysis assesses concrete outcomes for youth within the official *Belém Political Package* adopted at COP30, highlighting how key decisions have incorporated youth perspectives and priorities. The document concludes that, while COP30 provided significant normative and procedural tools to strengthen youth advocacy, translating these advances into tangible outcomes and meaningful power-sharing will depend on sustained mobilisation and implementation at the national level.

Keywords: Climate change, climate negotiations, youth.

JEL classification: Q54, F51, J13.



“The future has many names: For the weak, it means the unattainable. For the fearful, it means the unknown. For the courageous, it means opportunity.”

Victor Hugo, French writer, 19th century

1. INTRODUCTION

As climate negotiations concern the future conditions of life on Earth, the urgent challenges of minimising the impacts of climate change, and ultimately the survival of humanity on the planet, it is essential to recognise the central role played by those often described as the “most immediate heirs of the planet”: young people.

The rationale for this centrality rests on deep and interconnected considerations. First and foremost, it is a matter of intergenerational justice. Climate change is a long-term phenomenon, and the decisions taken today — or postponed — will shape the world that young people and future generations will inherit. It is they, and their children, who will live in the coming decades with the consequences of global warming, including extreme weather events, food insecurity, water scarcity and large-scale displacement. From an ethical perspective, it therefore becomes an obligation to ensure that young people have an active voice in intergenerational — that is, long-term — choices and decisions that will shape their own futures.

At the same time, by virtue of their characteristics and vital energy, young people constitute a transformative force in the present. They act as drivers and catalysts of action and change, with a strong capacity to mobilise and organise through global movements capable of exerting political and economic pressure on governments and companies to adopt more ambitious goals and deliver concrete results.

Historically, as agents of transformation, young people have also been a source of creativity and innovation. They generate new concepts, business models, technologies, projects and initiatives within the circular economy, with the potential to reshape current business practices and economic systems, as well as to lead social projects and enterprises with genuine transformative capacity.

Their vitality and desire for interaction find expression through social media and cultural platforms, which serve as powerful means to democratise climate messaging and debate, disseminate technical and scientific knowledge, and engage broader audiences.

Young people also bring a distinctive perspective and a sense of moral urgency that is often absent from diplomatic forums and other spaces shaped by established rites, rituals and bureaucratic processes. Their approach tends to be less constrained by entrenched political and economic interests. Their direct questioning — “if not now, when?” — places ethical pressure on decision-makers, challenging the slowness and incrementalism that frequently characterise climate negotiations.

Young people also act as educators and agents of cultural change, bringing the climate discussion into their homes, educational institutions, peer groups and communities. By serving as a bridge between scientific complexity and everyday social realities, they influence behaviours and advocate for formal climate education. This capacity makes them essential to the cultural transition towards a low-carbon society.

From a political perspective, the inclusion of young people enhances the legitimacy and long-term sustainability of climate agreements. Any effective climate policy will require decades of implementation and broad societal adherence. Engaging young people from the design and formulation stages of such policies helps ensure continued support from the generations that will be responsible for sustaining and implementing them over time, while also allowing learning curves to be covered and policies to be refined and improved in the future.

Finally, the diversity of experiences brought by young people — particularly those from the Global South, Indigenous Peoples, and peripheral and coastal communities — is vital to ensuring that negotiations go beyond emissions reduction to address climate justice, finance, adaptation and loss and damage for the most vulnerable. Ignoring youth voices is therefore not only unjust; it is a short-sighted strategy that undermines the ambition, effectiveness and durability of responses to the greatest collective crisis facing humanity. Initiatives such as the UNFCCC Pre-Conference of the Parties (Pre-COP) events in Brasília, including the “Youth Speak to the World” space, illustrate this understanding: building the climate agenda without young people is an attempt to plan a future for a world that will no longer exist.

2. YOUTH AND CLIMATE NEGOTIATIONS

The organised involvement of young people in global climate negotiations has important milestones that can be traced back to the 1990s. Youth participation initially emerged in a more pioneering and sporadic manner during the early Conferences of the Parties (COPs) under the UNFCCC, following the Convention’s establishment in 1992 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, also known as Rio 92 or the Earth Summit.⁴

Young people, primarily those affiliated with student environmental organisations or non-governmental organisations, initially participated as observers, without the coordination necessary to consolidate a global network. This situation changed only in 2005, during the eleventh Conference of the Parties (COP11), held in Montreal, Canada, which is widely regarded as the “official birth” of the organised youth movement within the UNFCCC.

This milestone was marked by the establishment of YOUNGO (Youth Non-Governmental Organizations), which became the official constituency representing children and

4. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, brought together representatives from 179 countries and resulted in the adoption of landmark instruments such as Agenda 21 and the conventions on climate change, biodiversity and desertification. These outcomes laid the foundations for the concept of sustainable development.

young people within the UNFCCC process. The creation of YOUNGO provided structure, representation and continuity to what had previously been a more informal form of engagement. YOUNGO thus emerged as the formal channel through which young people gained a voice at COPs, including the right to deliver statements in plenary sessions and to submit proposed text to the negotiations.

2.1. Acceleration and visibility (2009 – 2017)

During COP15 in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 2009, young people were already present in a highly visible manner, advocating for a more ambitious agreement. However, the disappointment with the substantive outcomes of the international negotiations ultimately generated the momentum needed to drive more critical and mobilising tactics among youth groups engaged with climate change issues.

In the years that followed, throughout the 2010s, the youth climate movement expanded in both scale and sophistication. This evolution can be characterised by: (i) the consolidation and growth of youth pre-COP conferences, known as Conferences of Youth (COYs), which, although established in 2005, became large-scale parallel events to the COPs during that decade; (ii) the adoption of **more professional advocacy strategies** (see Box 1), including the organisation and integration of “Youth Days” within the official COP agendas; and (iii) the **expansion of national and regional youth** climate networks.

The global youth-led climate events held annually, the Conferences of Youth (COYs), take place shortly before the COPs, usually in the same host city. Organised by the UNFCCC youth constituency, YOUNGO, COYs bring together young people to build capacities, develop shared policy positions on climate action, and produce the Global Youth Statement for submission to the official climate negotiations. Local and virtual COYs are also organised to ensure broader and more inclusive participation.

Box 1. What is a professional advocacy strategy?

Advocacy

- The term refers to the defence of a cause, particularly one of public interest, with the aim of influencing the formulation or amendment of public policies through strategic actions such as engagement with decision-makers.
- Advocacy goes beyond activism alone, as it relies on data and evidence to promote beneficial change and to ensure that the rights and needs of specific populations are addressed.

Advocacy strategies

- Advocacy strategies consist of a coordinated set of actions aimed at influencing the formulation or modification of public policies and legislation in support of a specific cause or right.
- They involve social mobilisation, awareness-raising, political engagement and strategic communication to exert pressure on decision-makers, including governments and public institutions.

Main elements of advocacy strategies

- Clear objective: the definition of specific and measurable goals (e.g. the adoption of a law or regulation, or the implementation of a public policy within a defined timeframe).
- Research and analysis: understanding the political and institutional context and the public policy cycle in order to identify the most effective moments for action.
- Coalitions and alliances: joining forces with other organisations, experts and civil society groups to increase impact.
- Effective communication: developing, disseminating and evaluating clear messages (where relevant, tailored to specific audiences), focused on the desired solution, to influence public opinion and decision-makers.
- Mobilisation and participation: engaging interest groups and the wider public through campaigns, petitions and other forms of collective action.
- Political engagement: engaging directly with legislators, government representatives and other relevant authorities.
- Monitoring and evaluation: tracking the implementation of public policies and adjusting strategies and communication approaches as necessary.
- Sample advocacy strategy: an environmental non-governmental organisation may use advocacy to press for more stringent anti-deforestation legislation, engaging the public through social media and maintaining systematic dialogue with members of parliament.

How is professional advocacy different?

The main difference lies in scope, structure and level of specialisation. An advocacy strategy refers to the overall plan to advance a cause, whereas professional advocacy denotes a **long-term, carefully designed approach supported by specialised professionals** and, in many cases, dedicated **resource mobilisation** (financial and other). This enables advocacy efforts to be conducted in a more structured and efficient manner, across multiple fronts. Professional advocacy may also include lobbying activities, understood as a more focused and direct form of engagement with decision-makers.

Source: Authors' elaboration.

2.2. The global turning point (2018 – 2019)

August 2018 marked the emergence of the *Fridays for Future*⁵ movement, initiated by the then little-known Swedish climate activist and student Greta Thunberg. The movement radically transformed the visibility and political influence of youth climate activism, turning Thunberg into a global reference point — both for supporters of climate action and for critics of the climate movement. The event that catalysed widespread attention and mobilisation occurred when Thunberg organised a protest in August 2018 in front of the Swedish Parliament, holding a sign reading “School strike for climate”.

For this reason, *Fridays for Future* also became widely known as the “School Strike for Climate”. It evolved into an international student movement in which young people skipped school on Fridays to participate in demonstrations aimed at pressuring political leaders to take stronger action on climate change, with particular emphasis on reducing dependence on fossil fuels and accelerating the transition to renewable energy.

On 15 March, 2019, the movement mobilised more than one million strikers across over 2,200 strikes in 125 countries. On 24 May, 2019, during the second global strike, *Fridays for Future* organised approximately 1,600 protests in 150 countries, attracting hundreds of thousands of participants. The May protests were strategically timed to coincide with the 2019 elections to the European Parliament.

The 2019 *Global Week for Future* featured more than 4,500 strikes across over 150 countries, concentrated around the Fridays of 20 and 27 September. It is widely regarded as the largest climate strike movement in history. The strikes on 20 September alone mobilised an estimated 4 million participants worldwide, many of them school-aged children, including approximately 1.4 million in Germany. On 27 September, around 2 million people took part in demonstrations globally, including more than one million participants in Italy and several hundred thousand in Canada.⁶

The organisation of these large-scale, global school strikes generated unprecedented public pressure on climate negotiators. Young people came to be perceived not merely as “future observers”, but as critical stakeholders and present-day political actors, capable of shaping public narratives and influencing public opinion.

2.3. Institutional consolidation after 2021

COP26, held in Glasgow, Scotland, in 2021, marked the Conference of the Parties with the largest youth delegation in history up to that point. Youth presence was visible and influential across all negotiation and engagement spaces.

The significance of COP26 lies in the operationalisation of political recognition of young people within UNFCCC decision-making instruments. Youth advocacy was translated into

5. See: <https://www.unep.org/championsofearth/laureates/2019/fridays-future-movement>; <https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2019/09/27/news/clima-237064333/>; and <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-49856860>.

6. See: <https://www.vox.com/energy-and-environment/2019/9/20/20876143/climate-strike-2019-september-20-crowd-estimate>.

formal textual references in COP decisions, which were subsequently cited and further developed at COP27 and COP28. This process culminated in the establishment of a formal and institutionalised mechanism linking youth engagement to the COP Presidency through the role of the *Youth Climate Champion*. This innovation incorporated youth voices into climate governance, symbolising both progress in inclusion and the ongoing challenge of translating representation into concrete action.⁷

In 2022, at COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh, a *Children and Youth Pavillion* was incorporated for the first time within the UNFCCC Blue Zone, the United Nations' official negotiation area, marking a significant material and symbolic recognition of the role of young people. The Pavillion was jointly financed by the Government of the United Kingdom and the United Nations. It provided a visible and permanent space for youth to host events, network⁸ and undertake advocacy activities at the heart of climate negotiations.

The Egyptian Presidency maintained the role of Youth Climate Champion, appointing Dr Omnia El Omrani⁹ as the first woman to hold this position, with a mandate to strengthen youth engagement in the negotiations. For the first time, young people were granted dedicated sessions in the COP Plenary, where they delivered official statements directly to negotiators. In parallel, the *Sharm El-Sheikh Action Plan on Climate Empowerment* was adopted, including commitments to integrate youth voices into national and international climate policies.

During COP27, young people—particularly from countries of the Global South—successfully advocated for the establishment of the Loss and Damage Fund, a historic achievement reflecting a long-standing demand of youth-led movements. The narrative of intergenerational climate justice gained prominence, amplified by powerful interventions from young leaders such as Vanessa Nakate of Uganda and Mitzi Jonelle Tan of the Philippines.

During the Pre-COP activities, youth collectives organised the *Conference of Youth (COY17)*, producing a political declaration that was formally delivered to negotiators. The event was marked by increased participation of young people from the Global South, including Indigenous Peoples and representatives of vulnerable communities, thereby broadening the diversity of perspectives represented.

7. The Government of the United Kingdom, then holding the Presidency of the Conference, formally appointed the first **Youth Climate Champion**, David Saddington. An entrepreneur and scientist, he is best known for his work as a communicator on climate change. Much of his professional experience had been linked to the United Kingdom Government's Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. In 2021, he served as Head of the COP26 International Nature Campaign and as a member of the Board of Directors of the *We Are Family Foundation* (see: <https://champions-speakers.co.uk/speaker-agent/david-saddington>).

8. The practice of building and maintaining a network of professional contacts with the aim of exchanging knowledge, experiences and opportunities, fostering collaboration and mutual benefits in terms of professional development and access to new ideas, partnerships and employment opportunities.

9. She is a medical doctor and researcher specialising in climate and health policy at Imperial College London. In 2024, she was selected by Apolitical as one of the 50 People Changing the Game for Gender Equality, and in 2023 Fast Company Middle East recognised her as one of the 35 Most Creative People in Business. She was also awarded the Women of the Future Award 2023: 50 Rising Stars in ESG. At that time, she had more than eight years of professional experience working at the intersection of climate change and health.

Access, however, remained uneven. Many young participants faced logistical barriers, high costs and visa-related challenges in travelling to Egypt. As a result, some activists criticised the process as largely symbolic, arguing that it did not guarantee that youth voices would be meaningfully incorporated into technical decision-making. Despite the existence of dialogue spaces, there was no legal obligation for governments to adopt youth demands.

COP27 consolidated youth participation as a structural element of the COP process, moving beyond external activism into the negotiation spaces themselves and providing both physical and political visibility. At the same time, it exposed the ongoing challenge of translating presence into genuine decision-making power, thereby paving the way for further institutional advances at COP28 the following year.

In 2023, COP28 in Dubai (United Arab Emirates) further consolidated the institutionalisation of youth participation within the UN climate process. It established structural precedents, including dedicated funding programmes and mandatory intergenerational dialogues, which subsequently influenced the design of later COPs.

In terms of youth engagement, COP28 was widely regarded at the time as the “most youth-inclusive COP”, reflecting increases both in the number of participants and in the diversity of representation. More than 1,000 young people were accredited as delegates, with stronger representation from countries of the Global South, including the Pacific Islands, Africa and Latin America. This expansion was made possible through efforts to reduce financial barriers, including scholarships and logistical support for young people from vulnerable countries.

At the institutional level, and for the first time, the COP Presidency—led by the United Arab Emirates—integrated young people into official decision-making roles, marking an unprecedented step. This included the appointment of the first *Youth Climate Champion* to also hold the position of Minister of State, Shamma Al Mazrui,¹⁰ with a specific mandate to engage young people.

Important innovations were also introduced, including the establishment of the *Youth Climate Delegates Programme*, which financed the participation of 100 young people from developing countries, and the first official *Intergenerational Dialogue* at a COP. This formal space enabled young people to present their demands directly to ministers, negotiators and the United Nations Secretary-General. The outcomes of these exchanges were synthesised in an official report submitted to Parties and informed discussions on the *Global Stocktake* (GST). The final GST text—the first global assessment under the Paris Agreement—included references to “future generations” and “youth participation”, reflecting sustained and effective youth advocacy. Young people also pressed for stronger language on the phase-out of fossil fuels, a demand that was partially reflected in the final negotiated text.

10. She was appointed Minister of State for Youth Affairs of the United Arab Emirates in February 2016, at the age of 22. She serves as Chair of the Board of Trustees of Zayed University; President of Special Olympics UAE; a member of the Board Committee and the Executive Council of NAFIS; a board member of the Emirates Foundation; and a member of UNICEF's Generation Unlimited Global Leadership Council. See: <https://unfccc.int/PYCC>.

At the Youth Pavilion in the Blue Zone, the physical space was expanded and featured a programme largely self-managed by young people. In parallel, the Youth Hub in the Green Zone (open to the public), with a capacity of up to 3,000 participants, hosted a programme promoting culture, arts and climate activism.

COP28 also saw the launch of the *Youth Climate Changemakers Award*, recognising youth-led solutions, and the *Youth for Climate Fund*, a partnership between the COP28 Presidency and UNDP to finance youth-led projects in the Global South. In addition, a total of USD 1.2 billion was announced by multiple donors for climate education and youth capacity-building.

Beyond the outcomes already mentioned, youth advocacy also contributed to: (i) the global commitment to triple renewable energy capacity by 2030; (ii) the adoption of the *Health and Climate Declaration*, the first of its kind in the history of the COPs; and (iii) progress in discussions on adaptation and loss and damage, including the operationalisation of the Loss and Damage Fund approved at COP27.

Nevertheless, several challenges and criticisms persisted. Some young participants reported that their engagement remained more symbolic than influential in technical negotiations, and binding mechanisms were still lacking to ensure that youth voices would be systematically incorporated into future decision-making processes.

COP29, held in Baku, Azerbaijan, in 2024, continued efforts to consolidate youth participation beyond symbolic inclusion. Youth pressure helped sustain attention on intergenerational equity and the need for immediate action. Although final decisions fell short of youth demands, the influence of young people on public debate and the political agenda continued to grow in an increasingly irreversible manner.

For the first time, COP29 included structured dialogues between young people and negotiators within official sessions, allowing representatives of youth organisations to present their demands directly to political leaders. This further consolidated a formal space for youth engagement in decision-making. The presence of accredited *Youth Delegates* within national delegations also increased significantly, with several countries including young people as part of their official negotiating teams.

The negotiations placed particular emphasis on climate finance and intergenerational justice. COP29 was widely referred to as the “Finance COP”, focusing on how developed countries would finance the climate transition in vulnerable nations. In this context, young people advocated for: (i) greater transparency in climate finance; (ii) mechanisms that account for the needs and rights of future generations; and (iii) direct access to climate finance for youth-led projects. Intergenerational justice emerged as a central theme, with young people underscoring that decisions taken today will directly shape their lives.

Youth leadership was also evident through actions and mobilisations, including marches and protests organised by young people both inside and outside the COP venue, calling for more ambitious climate action. These efforts were amplified through the strategic use of social media and digital platforms to disseminate messages and apply pressure on global leaders. As a result, young people from developing countries and small island states facing existential climate threats gained increased visibility, sharing first-hand accounts of climate impacts in their communities and advocating for loss and damage mechanisms to

compensate populations already affected by extreme events. Among the most significant initiatives were youth-led side events addressing issues such as climate education, green entrepreneurship and sustainable technologies.

Additional concrete outcomes influenced by youth advocacy were achieved, enabling youth proposals to be incorporated into official declarations and decisions. Among the most significant were: (i) commitments to include young people in national climate planning processes, including Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs); (ii) the strengthening of the United Nations *Youth and Climate Change Action Plan*; and (iii) announcements by governments and companies of dedicated funding streams for youth-led climate initiatives.

Since the announcement of COP30 to be held in Belém, the Government of Brazil has consistently emphasised youth leadership, beginning with preparatory processes such as the 2024 Pre-COP in Brasília. This signalling underscored that formal and substantive youth participation would be a central pillar of the Conference. In this context, Ms Marcele Oliveira,¹¹ was appointed as *Youth Climate Champion*, representing and providing leadership from Brazilian urban periphery movements.

3. PREPARATORY PROCESSES AND ACTIVITIES FOR COP30

COP30 took place in Belém do Pará, at the mouth of the Amazon River, widely regarded as a “gateway” to the Brazilian Amazon. Against this backdrop, the Conference is considered a historic and pivotal opportunity for youth participation, particularly for the following reasons:

1. First COP in the Amazon – symbol of struggle and leadership: As the first COP held in the heart of the Amazon, COP30 brings global attention to a territory where Indigenous, *quilombola*¹² and Amazonian riverine youth are on the front lines of forest protection. Amazonian youth will have a unique opportunity to gain global visibility, denounce real and lived climate impacts, and present solutions grounded in traditional knowledge and science. It symbolises the recognition that there can be no solution to the climate crisis without the leadership of youth from critical biomes.
2. Expanded participation of youth from the Global South: The location in Belém facilitates the participation of young people from Latin America, the Caribbean and other Amazonian countries, who have historically faced greater barriers to attending COPs held in Eurasia. This is expected to strengthen pressure for fair

11. Born in Realengo, a neighbourhood in the city of Rio de Janeiro, she is a climate activist and cultural producer, and a graduate of the Federal Fluminense University (UFF). She is a participant in the *Young Climate Negotiators* programme. Marcele has also participated in COP27, held in Egypt in 2022, through the *Coalizão O Clima É de Mudança* movement and the *PerifaLAB* network. *PerifaLAB* is a network of independent collectives that seeks to train and accelerate leaders from urban peripheries to occupy positions of influence and decision-making. Operating as a think tank for political, cultural and media production, its objective is to strengthen the representation of peripheral communities across a range of strategic spaces. See: <https://unfccc.int/PYCC>; <https://cop30.br/pt-br/presidencia-da-cop30>; and <https://wikifavelas.com.br/index.php/PerifaLAB>.

12. *Quilombolas* are Afro-Brazilian descendants of enslaved people who escaped or left plantations to form autonomous communities known as *quilombos*. Primarily established during Brazil's slavery era, *quilombos* were recognised by the 1988 Constitution as “traditional communities”, which affirms their right to collective land ownership. Many *quilombola* communities still live in rural areas, maintaining distinct cultural identities and, in some cases, facing persistent poverty and challenges related to land titling.

climate finance and historical reparations, key priorities for youth in developing countries. COP30 may also mark a turning point for official youth delegations from Amazonian countries, advancing concrete demands related to conservation, the bioeconomy and territorial rights.

3. Amplification of traditional and intersectional voices: Indigenous, Black and peripheral youth will have a central platform to demonstrate how climate justice is inseparable from social and racial justice. Increased pressure is expected for negotiations to incorporate nature-based solutions and human rights safeguards—long-standing demands of these groups—as well as for COP30 to formally adopt mechanisms for listening to and integrating traditional knowledge into decision-making.
4. Pressure for implementation and ambition: COP30 represents a critical moment for the revision of nationally determined contributions (NDCs), providing youth with a strategic opportunity to demand more ambitious targets. It will also be a test case for the implementation of the new climate finance arrangements agreed at COP29, with youth playing a key role in monitoring transparency and effectiveness.
5. Potentially innovative participation structures: The Brazilian Government has signalled its intention to deliver a COP that is open to society, with both physical and digital spaces enabling large-scale youth participation. Brazil's experience with youth councils and participatory public policies may serve as a model and reference point for future COPs.
6. A legacy for future climate governance: COP30 has the potential to consolidate the inclusion of young people in official delegations as a standard practice, moving beyond observer status. It could also generate more binding commitments on climate education and green skills development for youth. Ultimately, COP30 will serve as a barometer of whether the UN system is genuinely prepared to share power with new generations.

However, to make this possible, Belém had to overcome a series of preliminary challenges that, throughout 2025, raised questions about the feasibility and viability of hosting the COP in the city. These included logistical access, the availability of affordable accommodation, transportation, and accreditation for local youth and participants from low-income countries. These constraints were partially addressed through subsidies provided by the Brazilian Government to support the participation of the poorest countries.¹³

During the Pre-COP30, held in September 2025, youth movements submitted letters to the COP30 Presidency outlining proposals and priorities for the conference, as part of the programme “*Youth Speak to the World: Towards COP30*”, led by the National Secretariat for Youth and the COP30 Youth Climate Champion, Marcele Oliveira. Bringing together more than 300 young people representing over 40 organisations, the meeting underscored the central role of youth in Brazil in shaping policy and influencing national climate action

13. See: <https://oglobo.globo.com/brasil/cop-30-amazonia/noticia/2025/09/12/subsidio-do-brasil-permitira-presenca-de-paises-em-desenvolvimento-na-cop-30-diz-marina.ghml>.

processes. During the “*Youth Mutirão*”,¹⁴ more than 230 youth-led initiatives from around the world were mapped. These projects address priority themes such as adaptation, climate change and race.¹⁵ The initiative, integrated into the “*Youth Speak to the World*” programme, delivered the following key outcomes and highlights:

- Amplification of youth voices: Children, adolescents and young people from different regions of Brazil and other countries presented demands, experiences and proposals for the climate agenda, reinforcing their role as agents of transformation.
- Pressure for formal inclusion: Participants called for stronger institutional participation of youth in official climate negotiations, both at the Pre-COP and at COP30, including the establishment of permanent consultation mechanisms.
- Exchange of local experiences: Youth-led initiatives on climate education, environmental justice, Amazon conservation, and mitigation and adaptation projects were shared, fostering connections across movements.
- Positioning document: The activity contributed to the drafting of a youth manifesto or set of recommendations to be taken to COP30, calling for more ambitious government action.
- Media visibility: The initiative generated media coverage highlighting youth leadership and underscoring the need for public policies that take future generations into account.
- Dialogue with decision-makers: At various moments, participants engaged directly with government authorities and climate negotiators, pressing for concrete commitments.

The activity served as a barometer of youth priorities for the Belém conference, particularly with regard to climate finance, a just transition and combating deforestation. The initiative reinforced the global movement to recognise youth as an essential component of climate governance, contributing to the shaping of the COP30 agenda.

4. YOUTH IN COP30 AND OUTCOMES

Based on the information available slightly less than one month before the conclusion of COP30, the specific outcomes of youth participation have not yet been finalised. Nevertheless, the documentation currently available for COP30 establishes a robust institutional and normative commitment to youth inclusion, grounded in the fundamental principle of intergenerational equity, which explicitly prioritises youth voices.

14. The term “*Mutirão*”, originally from the Tupi-Guarani language and meaning “collective effort”, was adopted by the COP30 Presidency as a slogan to encourage climate action worldwide.

15. See: <https://cop30.br/pt-br/noticias-da-cop30/movimentos-de-juventude-entregam-prioridades-para-a-cop30-a-presidencia-da-conferencia>.

The concrete results in their full scope—such as the number of sponsored youth delegates, as well as the format and political impact of a potential Youth Summit or youth-led dialogues within the official agenda—are expected to become clearer as operational plans are released in the final days of 2024 and early 2025.

Drawing on the official documents available on the UNFCCC COP30 website,¹⁶ referred to as the “Belém Political Package”, a set of proposals, principles and governance structures is presented to guide an inclusive process, with youth engagement clearly identified as a priority. The sections below analyse the results and impacts related to youth participation as reflected in the main decisions affecting youth within the Belém Political Package.

4.1. *Mutirão Global*:¹⁷ Uniting humanity in a global mobilisation against climate change

Based on the preliminary proposal of the COP30 Presidency entitled “*Global Mutirão: Uniting humanity in a global mobilisation against climate change*”,¹⁸ the document constitutes a high-level political declaration. Its implications for youth are framed primarily through overarching principles, recognition and indirect pathways, rather than through dedicated and standalone youth programmes.

In the draft decision text, the **formal recognition of youth as one of the fundamental stakeholders stands out as a primary element**. The document explicitly recognises “young people and children” among non-Party stakeholders whose role and engagement are considered vital to supporting the Parties, contributing to progress, and strengthening climate ambition and implementation (paragraph 2, page 2), thereby legitimising their place within the multilateral process. The preamble firmly anchors climate action within a human rights framework, explicitly referring to “children” and the **principle of intergenerational equity** (page 1). A key operative paragraph (paragraph 3, page 3) further confirms the determination to protect the climate system “for present and future generations, taking into account the importance of intergenerational equity for children and young people”. This language elevates the long-term interests of youth from a normative concept to a formal consideration in the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

The document’s overarching focus on **responding to urgency**, accelerating implementation and keeping the 1.5 °C goal within reach is, without doubt, the most significant outcome for young people. Their futures are directly tied to the success or failure of the ‘**Global Mutirão**’ (global mobilisation effort) and initiatives such as the ‘Belém Mission for 1.5’ and the ‘**Global Implementation Accelerator**’ (paragraphs 29, 41–42). The strong scientific acknowledgements regarding the exhaustion of the carbon budget (page 2) underscore the intergenerational risks and impacts of current actions. In addition, the text recognises the economic and social benefits of climate action, including job creation (paragraph 9,

16. See: <https://unfccc.int/cop30/auvs>.

17. The *Global Mutirão* can be understood as the scientific and political “thermometer” of the planet in the fight against climate change, with COP30 in Belém serving as the stage on which countries sought to demonstrate how they would respond to the urgent diagnosis signalled by this “thermometer”.

18. See: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma7_2c_Mutirao_auv.pdf.

page 3). The drive to **align national plans with long-term strategies and to develop implementation plans** (paragraphs 35–36) is linked to the formation of **future green economies and labour markets, which will shape young people’s future professional and economic opportunities**.

Although not youth-specific, the strong reaffirmations **on scaling up climate finance for developing countries** (for example, the target of USD 1.3 trillion per year by 2035, paragraph 47), as well as finance for adaptation and for loss and damage (paragraphs 50–53), are highly relevant to the construction of resilient societies and economies in which the next generation will live. Strengthened support for transparency and capacity development (paragraphs 24, 37) also contributes to building the institutional knowledge that young people will inherit.

In this regard, the text **calls on the efforts of all non-Party stakeholders, including young people, to work together to accelerate action** (paragraph 30). The ‘Global Implementation Accelerator’ and the ‘Belém Mission for 1.5’ were designed as cooperative initiatives involving non-Party stakeholders, providing a potential, albeit unspecified, channel through which organised youth groups may contribute.

However, while the emphasis is placed on intergenerational and future-oriented impacts, a gap remains in terms of effectively empowering the participation of today’s youth in immediate decision-making. As a result, the implied outcome is a world at risk of exceeding 1.5 °C and an increasingly protracted just energy transition, while the pathway to achieving this outcome does not centre direct youth participation in negotiations. Consequently, political relevance and participation do not translate into immediate, or even short-term, economic and technological effects. Thus, the principal outcomes for young people in this policy proposal are the formal codification of their long-term interests as a guiding principle (intergenerational equity) and the success or failure of the accelerated global implementation effort on which their future climate and economic stability depends.

4.2. Issues related to the *Global Stocktake*¹⁹—Decision -/CMA.7

Based on the analysis of the document “Decision -/CMA.7”,²⁰ a technical decision that establishes the modalities for the implementation and review of the outcomes of the Global Stocktake (GST), the Paris Agreement’s primary mechanism for raising ambition, the impact on youth is indirect but significant. This impact operates through the principles of inclusion and process effectiveness, notably through the institutionalisation of accessible channels to scrutinise and influence the implementation of the Global Stocktake outcomes. While the decision does not introduce youth-specific measures, it safeguards young people’s right to participate in the technical follow-up of the Agreement’s most important ambition-raising mechanism.

19. **The Global Stocktake (GST)** is the most important periodic assessment mechanism under the Paris Agreement. It functions as a collective “check-up” of global efforts to address climate change. Its primary role is to assess collective progress towards the Agreement’s long-term goals and to drive more ambitious action.

20. See: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma7_4a_4b_10h_GST_auv.pdf.

1. Guaranteed channel for contributions and advocacy: The decision institutionalises processes through which young people can formally present their views. Paragraph 6 invites “observers and other non-Party stakeholders” — which includes accredited youth groups (YOUNGO) — to submit inputs on the implementation of the GST outcomes to the new “United Arab Emirates Dialogue”. This provides a recurring and structured opportunity for young people to put forward analyses, challenges and demands related to ambition and implementation directly within the UNFCCC process.
2. Focus on key enablers critical to young people’s futures: The dialogue is mandated to focus on finance, capacity development and technology transfer as key enablers (paragraph 2). The availability of these means of implementation is directly linked to the quality of education, the creation of green jobs and the technological opportunities that will be available to young people, particularly in developing countries.
3. Influence on the next ambition cycle (second GST): The outcomes of these processes feed directly into the next policy cycle. The summary reports of the dialogues (paragraph 7) will serve as inputs to the second Global Stocktake (paragraph 9). Through substantive engagement, young people can help shape the evidence base that will inform the next round of national climate plans (NDCs), which will determine the world’s trajectory towards 1.5 °C during their adult lives.

4.3. United Arab Emirates just transition work programme

The decision set out in the document “United Arab Emirates just transition work programme” (FCCC/PA/CMA/2025/L.14)²¹ formalises a foundational work programme that explicitly integrates youth concerns into the global framework for a just transition towards a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy. The key points affecting young people are outlined below:

1. Explicit recognition of critical stakeholders for inclusion: Young people are explicitly mentioned alongside children as essential groups whose participation is vital. Paragraph 12(d) states that “broad and meaningful participation” should involve “children and youth” in order to enable pathways for a just, effective and inclusive transition. This is not a peripheral reference, but a core principle of the required “multisectoral, people-centred, bottom-up and whole-of-society approaches”.
2. Centrality of education, skills and future labour markets: The decision makes a direct connection to young people’s economic futures, as highlighted in paragraph 12(g), which emphasises the critical importance of “education and skills development systems”, including upskilling and reskilling to meet labour market needs, and explicitly calls for consideration of “future workers”. This requires national just transition plans to take into account the preparation of the next generation for quality jobs in a green economy.

21. See: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma7_5_UAE%20JTWP_auv.pdf.

3. Protection of rights and intergenerational equity: The text anchors the entire work programme in a rights-based framework that includes young people. The preamble recognises obligations related to the rights of “children” and to “intergenerational equity” (page 1). It further reinforces that pathways for a just transition must respect, promote and fulfil these rights, explicitly referring to children and intergenerational equity (paragraph 12(h)), thereby providing a legal and ethical basis for advocating youth-centred policies.
4. Protection against the risk of being “left behind”: Recalling that the overarching objective of the just transition is to “leave no one behind”, this is reflected for young people through: (i) consideration of the needs of “unemployed persons and future workers” (paragraph 12(g)); and (ii) efforts to maximise job creation and ensure that “no one is left behind” through access to technology (paragraph 12(s)). This framework seeks to protect young people from the socio-economic risks of the transition (for example, unemployment in declining industries and regions) while actively maximising their opportunities.
5. Formal channels for future influence and implementation: The decision establishes concrete mechanisms through which youth contributions and concerns can be institutionalised: (i) it emphasises inclusive participation in future dialogues, including through interactive formats, ensuring an ongoing platform for youth voices (paragraph 14); (ii) it invites Parties to consider just transition pathways in national plans (NDCs, NAPs), which are the principal policy vehicles on which youth advocacy can focus; and (iii) it decides to develop a “just transition mechanism” for cooperation and capacity development (paragraph 25), with an operationalisation process that includes an invitation for submissions (paragraph 26), providing a new, dedicated UNFCCC process in which youth groups can engage to help shape support programmes.
6. Linkages to broader enabling factors: Outcomes for young people are tied to the success of cross-cutting support systems identified by the decision as essential: (i) **finance and cooperation** (paragraphs 21–23), where increased grant-based finance and enhanced capacity development for developing countries are critical to creating conditions in which young people can access green jobs and quality education; and (ii) **technology and innovation** (paragraph 12(s)), with access to technology acting as a lever for job creation and directly shaping the future employment landscape for young people.

The outcomes materialised in this decision are substantive, as it goes beyond rhetorical recognition to integrate young people into both policy design principles (participation, skills and rights) and implementation mechanisms (national plans and a new mechanism) within the just transition agenda.

In turn, the document opens up opportunities through both the newly established “just transition mechanism” (paragraph 25) and the forthcoming review of the work programme, which provide clear entry points for youth groups (such as YOUNGO) to advocate for youth-dedicated components, capacity-building workshops and monitoring indicators. At the same time, the outcome provides a powerful policy tool to support advocacy for inclusive national strategies that invest in the next generation.

4.4. Decision relating to the Sharm el-Sheikh Dialogues and Pathways²²

Based on the draft decision relating to the Sharm el-Sheikh Dialogues and Pathways,²³ the analysis below sets out the main outcomes affecting young people. While the document does not explicitly refer to youth, its inclusive and participatory approach creates significant potential entry points for youth climate advocacy and engagement, particularly in relation to finance, justice and implementation.

1. Recognition of equity and intergenerational justice: The text reaffirms that the Paris Agreement should be implemented in a manner that reflects equity and common but differentiated responsibilities, which implicitly supports intergenerational justice and provides a normative basis for youth advocacy in climate finance and policy.
2. Space to influence how financial flows are defined: By acknowledging the lack of a common interpretation of Article 2.1(c) (“making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development”), the decision leaves room for young people and other stakeholders to influence how this objective is defined and implemented.
3. Safeguards for developing countries and vulnerable groups: The document’s emphasis on NDCs, country-driven strategies and the need to avoid additional burdens on Parties, particularly developing countries, indirectly benefits young people in vulnerable regions by helping to ensure that climate finance does not exacerbate existing inequalities, and therefore does not negatively affect future generations.

4.5. Report of the forum on the impact of the implementation of response measures²⁴

Based on the analysis of the decision containing the “Report of the forum on the impact of the implementation of response measures”,²⁵ a document relating to a specialised technical forum focused on assessing the socio-economic impacts (both positive and negative) of climate policies, the most significant outcome is the explicit integration of youth impacts into the structure of these assessments. Specifically, paragraph 23(g) explicitly encourages Parties to engage stakeholders in assessing policy impacts and to take into account “intergenerational equity ... and the needs of ... youth”. Furthermore, Activity 9 of the

22. The Sharm el-Sheikh Dialogues and the Pathways are, in fact, two distinct but complementary initiatives that were established at COP27 (2022) in Egypt. They are presented together because their overarching objective is to accelerate climate ambition, albeit with different focuses and formats. While the Sharm el-Sheikh Dialogue seeks to “deliver on what has already been pledged and to pledge more” (mitigation), the Pathways focus on “charting the roadmap to get there” (adaptation). Together, they represent the post-COP27 effort to bring greater concreteness and urgency to both essential pillars of climate action: reducing emissions and preparing for unavoidable impacts.

23. See: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/CMA7_10g_SeS%20Dialogue_AUV.pdf.

24. The primary objective of Decision -/CMA.7 on the Forum on the Impact of the Implementation of Response Measures is to operationalise and guide specialised technical work to assess impacts, minimise negative effects and maximise the socio-economic benefits of the implementation of climate policies.

25. See: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/CMA7_14_RM_auv.pdf.

forum's workplan defines the objective of "identifying and assessing impacts ... taking into consideration intergenerational equity ... and the needs of ... youth". Through these provisions, the youth perspective is formally embedded in the methodology for evaluating climate policies.

In turn, the core mandate of the forum and of the Katowice Committee of Experts on the Impacts of the Implementation of Response Measures (KCI) is to support Parties in minimising negative impacts and maximising positive outcomes of climate policies. By including youth as a specific group, the decision requires that analyses take into account: (i) future employment effects (paragraph 24(b)) of mitigation measures on young people and future workers; (ii) education and skills needs (paragraph 22) to ensure that the workforce, including youth, is prepared for the transition; and (iii) youth-specific vulnerabilities and opportunities in economic diversification plans (as referenced in Activity 7).

The decision **creates recurring opportunities for the participation of interested young people**, including by inviting "observers and non-Party stakeholders" (including youth groups) to submit views on topics for the annual global dialogues on response measures (paragraph 18). It also enables participation in the annual global dialogues themselves (paragraph 16), which are to be held in a hybrid format, thereby providing an accessible platform for youth engagement and advocacy.

The work of the forum also feeds directly into **the key national instruments that shape climate action**, with Parties encouraged (paragraph 23(a)) to integrate consideration of the impacts of response measures into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and long-term strategies.

Equally relevant is the **decision's explicit linkage between impact assessment and education systems**, which are ultimately central to youth development and their integration into future labour markets, as reflected in the following paragraphs:

- Paragraph 23(e): which encourages Parties to develop educational curricula, including technical and vocational training, to enhance skills in climate planning and impact assessment; and
- Paragraphs 25 and 26: which focus on capacity development for reporting on impacts, including the development of skills among young researchers and policymakers.

Taken together, **these provisions ensure that the effects of the green transition on youth employment, education and economic opportunities are not overlooked in official assessments**. They also provide a clear space for youth advocacy groups to engage on technical issues, requiring climate policies not only to reduce emissions but also to actively secure a viable and equitable future for the next generation.

4.6. Matters pertaining to the Standing Committee on Finance (SCF)²⁶

The effects of “Decision -/CMA.7: Matters relating to the Standing Committee on Finance (SCF)”;²⁷ on young people are indirect but fundamentally critical, as its decisions guide and prioritise the allocation of climate finance resources. Four key aspects are highlighted below:

1. Oversight of the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG): The decision mandates the SCF to undertake preparatory work for the biennial report on collective progress towards the new climate finance goal (from 2028 onwards). The ambition and delivery of this goal will determine the scale of resources available for the green transition, adaptation, and loss and damage in developing countries — potentially amounting to trillions of dollars over the following decade. Young people in these countries have the most at stake, as this finance is essential for building the climate-resilient infrastructure, enterprises and labour markets they will inherit.
2. Tracking the doubling of adaptation finance: The SCF is mandated to prepare a report on the doubling of adaptation finance (in line with the Glasgow Climate Pact) for CMA10 in 2028. Adequate adaptation finance is a direct determinant of the safety and resilience of the communities in which young people live, and will shape the living conditions and economic stability of the next generation.
3. Institutionalisation of accountability for financial pledges: By requiring these specific reports and progress updates, the decision strengthens the accountability framework for climate finance. For youth advocates, SCF reports become essential reference tools for holding developed countries accountable for their commitments. Reliable data and monitoring are prerequisites for effective advocacy, enabling young people to point to officially documented gaps in finance delivery.
4. Indirect influence through broader SCF guidance: The decision requests the SCF to take into account guidance arising from other relevant CMA decisions. This includes decisions that may contain youth-relevant elements, such as those relating to the Just Transition Work Programme or the Global Stocktake, which emphasise intergenerational equity. This creates a potential, albeit not guaranteed, channel through which youth-centred principles may inform the SCF’s technical work on tracking climate finance.

26. The primary objective of this decision (Decision -/CMA.7 on Matters relating to the Standing Committee on Finance) is to guide and authorise the technical work of the Standing Committee on Finance in monitoring the implementation of the key financial commitments under the Paris Agreement. It is a procedural and technical decision that serves to activate and steer the UNFCCC’s financial monitoring architecture.

27. See: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/CMA7_10a_SCF_auf.pdf.

4.7. Decisions related to multilateral climate finance instruments²⁸

The decisions relating to multilateral instruments established to finance climate-related projects and investments, as well as their governance and management structures,²⁹ did not introduce new guidance specifically related to youth. The sole exception is the welcome expressed for the adoption by the Board, in its 2026 workplan, of “(a) an analysis of the draft policy on the participation of active observers in Board meetings and related proceedings, and a proposal for guidelines on advisory forums for engagement and communication with stakeholders, including consideration of women, youth and Indigenous Peoples, in accordance with the Fund’s Governing Instrument”.³⁰

However, a broader overview is required to capture the overall landscape of the main multilateral climate and environmental funds, in order to understand how, and to what extent, they formally and operationally support youth engagement and intergenerational accountability.

At one end of the spectrum, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) has established the strongest and most explicit mandate for youth inclusion. Although its original governing instruments did not refer to youth, the GEF has implemented a binding Stakeholder Engagement Policy that requires the inclusion of young people in project design and has made “enhancing youth engagement” a core objective of its current replenishment cycle.³¹ This policy-based approach ensures the consistent consideration of younger generations across its portfolio, even though the principle of intergenerational equity remains largely implicit within its long-term environmental objectives.

By contrast, the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Adaptation Fund (AF) present divergent models grounded in national ownership. The GCF’s founding instrument makes no explicit reference to youth, and its approach is decentralised, relying on accredited implementing entities to determine the extent to which young people are included in individual projects. This has resulted in uneven practices across the portfolio, notwithstanding the GCF Secretariat’s facilitation of voluntary youth dialogues.

The Adaptation Fund, however, has developed a pioneering hybrid model. While empowering countries through Direct Access, it has formally codified “intergenerational equity” as a core principle within its Environmental and Social Policy. This creates a

28. Related to the decisions “CMA 10a – Matters relating to the Standing Committee on Finance”, “CMA 10b – Guidance to the Green Climate Fund”, “CMA 10c – Guidance to the Global Environment Facility”, “CMA 10d – Report of the Fund for responding to Loss and Damage and guidance to the Fund for responding to Loss and Damage”, and “CMA 10e – Matters relating to the Adaptation Fund”, which aim to provide guidance to the financial instruments established and governed through international climate negotiations.

29. (i) Standing Committee on Finance – *Decision -/CMA.7: Matters relating to the Standing Committee on Finance* (https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/CMA7_10a_SCF_auv.pdf); (ii) Green Climate Fund (GCF) – *Decision -/CMA.7: Guidance to the Green Climate Fund* (https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/CMA7_10b_GCF_auv.pdf); (iii) Global Environment Facility (GEF) – *Decision -/CMA.7: Guidance to the Global Environment Facility* (https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/CMA7_10c_GEF_auv.pdf); (iv) Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage – *Decision -/CMA.7: Report of the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage and Guidance to the Fund* (https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/CMA7_10d_FRLD_auv.pdf); and (v) Adaptation Fund – *Decision -/CMA.7: Matters relating to the Adaptation Fund* (https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/CMA7_10e_AF_auv.pdf). These decisions aim to provide guidance to the climate finance instruments established and overseen through international climate negotiations.

30. See Paragraph 7 (e): https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/CMA7_10d_FRLD_auv.pdf.

31. GEF Stakeholder Engagement Policy (2022), e GEF-8 Programming Directions.

binding requirement for projects to avoid imposing disproportionate burdens on future generations, positioning the AF as a benchmark for the formal operationalisation of long-term responsibility, even as youth engagement continues to be guided primarily by broader stakeholder consultation requirements.

As the most recently established entity, the Loss and Damage (L&D) Fund currently sits at the lower end of this spectrum in terms of formal commitment. The text of its founding decision contains only a single procedural reference to the consideration of youth within a future policy on stakeholder engagement. It has yet to establish operational policies, dedicated funding windows, or articulated principles on intergenerational equity. While its inherent purpose—addressing climate impacts—would benefit future generations, this remains an implicit assumption rather than an explicit guiding operational mandate, leaving the Fund’s substantive commitment to youth and intergenerational responsibility still to be determined.

The situation of these financing funds illustrates a critical lesson: funds that develop strong and explicit operational policies—such as the GEF’s policies on youth engagement and the Adaptation Fund’s policies on intergenerational equity—create enforceable frameworks for inclusion. By contrast, reliance on decentralised and voluntary approaches can lead to fragmentation and inconsistency. The trajectory demonstrates that, while founding instruments often lack specificity, subsequent policy decisions are decisive in translating broad mandates into accountable practice. In this regard, the Loss and Damage Fund stands at a strategic crossroads, with a unique opportunity to innovate and adopt a more ambitious approach. By deliberately integrating best practices from existing funds—requiring youth inclusion, as the GEF does; embedding intergenerational equity as a safeguard principle, as the Adaptation Fund does; and designing accessible small-grants modalities for youth-led organisations—it can avoid a slow and incremental evolution. The current window for the submission of guidance to its Board is therefore critical to ensuring that the needs and rights of the generations most affected by loss and damage are adequately addressed.

4.8. The Belém Technological Implementation Programme

The *Belém Technology Implementation Programme*³² is an operational programme adopted at COP30 with the objective of accelerating the development and transfer of climate technologies to developing countries, with the explicit aim of supporting the implementation of their nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and adaptation plans. The Programme is to be implemented in an inclusive manner, recognising the specific needs of vulnerable groups, including youth.

This document represents a significant and direct outcome for youth, as it explicitly integrates their needs into a core operational programme under the UNFCCC technology pillar. The main outcomes affecting youth are as follows:

1. Inclusive and mandatory inclusion as beneficiaries: Paragraph 6(c) stipulates that the Programme shall be implemented in a manner that “recognises the special

32. See: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma%207_11c_TIP_AUV.pdf.

needs and circumstances of children, youth, persons with disabilities and local communities". This makes consideration of youth a mandatory element in the design and implementation of the Programme.

2. Focus on capacity-building and future skills: The Programme is designed to build capacities in climate technology. Elements set out in paragraph 8—such as strengthening national innovation systems (8(b)), building capacities for project development (8(d)), and integrating technology priorities into national policies (8(c))—are directly linked to the creation of educational pathways, technical skills and green employment opportunities for youth, particularly in developing countries.
3. Structured channels for participation and contribution: The decision establishes formal avenues for youth engagement: (i) paragraph 11 establishes annual global dialogues during sessions from 2027 onwards, with broad stakeholder participation, providing a recurring platform for youth voices; (ii) paragraph 12 invites "observers and other non-Party stakeholders" (including youth groups such as YOUNGO) to submit annual inputs on topics for the global dialogues on technology implementation; and (iii) paragraph 16 establishes regional dialogues, which may be more accessible to youth organisations at the national and local levels.
4. Linkages to national climate action plans: As the Programme's primary objective is to support the implementation of nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and national adaptation plans (NAPs) (paragraphs 1, 2 and 5), and as it requires an approach responsive to youth needs, it ensures that the technological components of these national plans—which will shape future economies—take youth considerations into account.
5. Emphasis on inclusive and equitable access: The principles set out in paragraph 6 ensure that the Programme pursues equitable outcomes. By being "gender-responsive" and recognising the needs of youth, it seeks to prevent digital exclusion and technological inequality from disproportionately affecting young people, particularly those in vulnerable communities, by distancing them from the benefits of climate technologies.

4.9. Decision relating to the provision of financial and technical support to Parties that are developing countries for reporting and capacity-building

This technical decision focuses on strengthening the Enhanced Transparency Framework (ETF),³³ which constitutes the system for tracking climate action and support. Its relevance for youth materialises through the reinforcement of national systems and the generation of essential data for accountability.

33. See: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma7_7 ETF_auv.pdf.

The main outcome for young people is the strengthening of the core transparency and accountability systems that underpin all climate policies. While not youth-specific, this work is fundamental to creating a data-driven and accountable governance environment in which young people can effectively advocate for their interests and verify whether actions align with commitments. The decision provides a technical entry point for youth to press for reporting practices that are more inclusive and sensitive to intergenerational considerations.

In this regard, building national capacity for evidence-based policymaking is a critical element. By addressing challenges related to institutional capacity, data systems and technical expertise for reporting (paragraphs 4 and 5), the decision reinforces the evidence base in developing countries. More robust national transparency systems are a prerequisite for the design of effective climate policies, including those targeting youth employment, education and a just transition. Improved data lead to better-informed and appropriately prioritised investments, which decisively shape the future being built for younger generations.

The creation of formal channels for stakeholder input is another outcome that can be leveraged. The decision provides that activities involving stakeholder engagement are to be incorporated as part of the process. Paragraph 9(c) invites Parties to submit views on challenges related, inter alia, to “stakeholder engagement” in the reporting process. This establishes a formal channel through which youth groups can advocate for their inclusion in national transparency processes and for the use of age-disaggregated data to track intergenerational impacts.

4.10. Decision relating to the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA)³⁴

The “Decision -/CMA.7: Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA)”,³⁵ which includes the *Belém Adaptation Indicators* annexed to the decision, presents several positive and tangible outcomes for young people, as it explicitly integrates their needs into the global framework for measuring and achieving climate resilience. The key elements are as follows:

1. **Mandatory age-disaggregated data (including youth):** The most concrete outcome appears in paragraph 1(a) of the Annex, which explicitly refers to “children and youth” as a social category for the disaggregation of adaptation indicators. This means that, when Parties use these voluntary indicators to track progress (for example, access to water or food security), they are encouraged to disaggregate data by age, rendering visible the specific vulnerabilities of young people and the impacts of adaptation actions on their lives, both in national and global reporting.

34. The GGA is a component of the Paris Agreement established to guide and strengthen global capacity to address the impacts of climate change, with the aim of promoting climate resilience and reducing the vulnerability of countries, ecosystems and communities—particularly those most affected—through actions such as national planning, the implementation of concrete measures, and access to finance, technology and capacity-building, while consistently taking into account principles such as intergenerational equity and social justice.

35. See: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma7_8a_gga_auv.pdf.

2. Explicit recognition of youth as contributors to adaptation: Paragraph 10 of the decision emphasises the importance of recognising “the contributions of children, youth (...) to adaptation”, framing young people not only as those affected by climate impacts, but as essential actors in building resilience. This validates their role in community-based adaptation and innovation.
3. Integration of intergenerational equity as a cross-cutting principle: Also in paragraph 10, the decision refers to “intergenerational equity” as a fundamental cross-cutting consideration for the GGA. This provides both an ethical and operational principle to guide Parties’ planning, ensuring that long-term resilience delivers concrete benefits for future generations.
4. Influence on national planning and reporting: The decision invites Parties to integrate the Belém Indicators into key national processes (paragraph 12), including National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). The inclusion of age-disaggregated data and intergenerational equity within these indicators provides youth advocates with a clear lever to ensure that national plans address youth-specific vulnerabilities (for example, youth unemployment) and opportunities.
5. Structured channels for future inputs and reviews: The decision establishes follow-up processes, such as the Belém–Addis Vision on Adaptation and the Baku Adaptation Roadmap, which include inputs from Parties (paragraph 30). Youth constituencies and organisations can use these channels to provide inputs on the implementation of the indicators and to ensure that the adaptation agenda continues to respond to intergenerational concerns.

4.11. Sharm el-Sheikh Mitigation Ambition and Implementation Work Programme³⁶

In the “Decision -/CMA.7: Sharm el-Sheikh Mitigation Ambition and Implementation Work Programme”,³⁷ the outcomes affecting young people are not direct, but they are strategically relevant in indirect ways. The decision establishes a technical work programme aimed at scaling up mitigation action, and its implications for youth arise through opportunities linked to the economic transition, inclusive engagement, and the sectoral focus of the programme’s work.

1. Access to green job opportunities in key sectors: The decision highlights the focus of the work programme on the forestry and waste/circular economy sectors in 2025, underscoring their co-benefits for job creation and poverty eradication (paragraph

36. A technical and facilitative mechanism established at COP27 with the urgent objective of increasing ambition and the implementation of mitigation action during this critical decade. It operates through global dialogues and investment-focused events that promote the exchange of experiences and sectoral solutions (such as forests and the circular economy), without imposing new targets on countries. Instead, it encourages international cooperation, access to finance, and multi-stakeholder engagement to accelerate the transition towards low-carbon economies.

37. See: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma7_6_MWP_auv.pdf.

13(g)). This focus helps steer international dialogue and potential financing towards sectors with strong employment potential, particularly in sustainable forestry, waste management, recycling innovation, and the formalisation and mechanisation of informal roles and processes involving waste pickers.

2. Formal channels for contributions and advocacy: The decision maintains and encourages structured opportunities for non-Party stakeholders to influence the work programme. Paragraphs 16, 17 and 19 invite “observers and other non-Party stakeholders” to submit views on: (i) the continuation and effectiveness of the work programme; (ii) suggested topics for future global dialogues; and (iii) specific opportunities and challenges related to each dialogue topic. This provides a recurring platform for young people to advocate for issues such as youth entrepreneurship in the circular economy or just transition pathways for young workers in high-emission sectors or those indirectly affected by mitigation measures.
3. Emphasis on inclusive and multi-stakeholder engagement: The decision calls for strengthened “inclusive engagement ... of participants” (paragraph 5(a)) and highlights the “important role of multi-stakeholder engagement” (paragraph 13(h)). This reinforces the expectation that mitigation solutions should involve all societal actors, creating an opening for youth to claim space in regional and national discussions linked to the work programme.
4. Project financing opportunities: The programme’s core “cooperative matchmaking function” aims to support Parties in accessing finance (paragraph 5(c)). For youth-led start-ups, entrepreneurs or community-based mitigation projects, this represents a potential, albeit not explicitly defined, pathway to connect with investors and multilateral development banks invited to participate in these events.
5. Recognition of social dimensions and just transition: The decision recognises the “social dimensions of waste management, including the formalisation of the role of informal workers” (paragraph 13(f)), which is directly linked to youth employment concerns. The shift towards a circular economy requires ensuring that labour rights are upheld and that quality jobs are created, rather than perpetuating informal and precarious work, which disproportionately affects younger populations.

4.12. Belém Gender Action Plan 2026-2034³⁸

Although the Belém Gender Action Plan (GAP) 2026–2034³⁹ focuses primarily on advancing gender equality, its framework clearly recognises the intersectional identities of young

38. The **Belém Gender Action Plan (GAP)** 2026–2034 is the strategic framework adopted at COP30 to integrate gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls across all UNFCCC climate action. It establishes priority areas and concrete activities for capacity-building, balanced participation, policy coherence, gender-responsive implementation with adequate resources, and monitoring and accountability. The Plan places explicit emphasis on the collection and use of data disaggregated by gender and age, in order to make visible the specific needs and contributions of young women.

39. See: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/COP30_14_Gender_AUV.pdf.

women and girls and requires the collection of data disaggregated by age. This creates powerful co-benefits and specific pathways for youth empowerment. This requirement will, for the first time at this scale, make the distinct vulnerabilities, contributions and needs of young women and girls statistically visible across climate planning, financial tracking and impact assessments.

The Plan repeatedly identifies “all women and girls” as both beneficiaries and agents of change. Activities under Priority Area A (Capacity-building) focus on strengthening the evidence base on the differentiated impacts experienced by women and girls and on their role as agents of change, which inherently includes young people. In the same vein, Activity A.3 aims to engage “men and boys as agents ... and strategic allies”, thereby directly involving young people in the gender equality agenda.

The Plan creates additional concrete opportunities for youth development through its activities, notably:

- **Activity A.3.2:** promotion of education, training and awareness-raising campaigns at regional and national levels.
- **Activity B.1.8:** a call for workshops to strengthen leadership skills and participation among all women and girls, providing direct capacity-building for young women leaders.
- **Activity D.2.1:** support for the participation of women and girls in science, technology, research and development, opening career pathways within the green economy.

On the financing front, by promoting gender-responsive budgeting (D.1) and gender-responsive climate finance (D.4), the Plan seeks to channel resources towards projects that benefit women. When combined with age-disaggregated data (D.7), this creates a mechanism to advocate for financing programmes specifically targeted at young people, particularly young women, including for entrepreneurship, adaptation initiatives and green jobs.

Activities under Priority Area B aim to enhance women’s participation and leadership in delegations and decision-making through training, mentoring (B.1.3) and travel support (B.2). This opens pathways for young delegates, researchers and advocates to engage more substantively in climate negotiations and technical bodies.

5. CONCLUSION

Drawing on an analysis of the official COP30 documents, it can be concluded that the Belém Conference represented a significant and structural advance in the integration of youth into the architecture of global climate governance. The outcomes go beyond rhetorical recognition, establishing operational mechanisms and technical mandates that have the potential to transform youth participation from an ethical principle into a measurable and accountable component of climate action.

The most concrete and transformative outcome is the institutionalisation of age-disaggregated data at the core of two critical pillars: adaptation and gender equality. The adoption of the Belém Adaptation Indicators, which explicitly list “children and youth” as a category for disaggregation, and the insistence of the Belém Gender Action Plan on the collection of data “disaggregated by gender and age”, together create, for the first time, a methodological obligation to make visible the differentiated impacts of climate change and response policies on youth. This provides an essential evidence base for advocating targeted policies.

Beyond statistical visibility, youth have been explicitly recognised as a stakeholder group with specific needs within key technical processes. The just transition work programme and the mandate of the Forum on the Impact of the Implementation of Response Measures require that socio-economic impact assessments take into account “intergenerational equity” and the “needs of youth”. This means that the effects of mitigation policies on future employment, education and economic opportunities for young people must be systematically assessed and addressed, directly linking climate action to the economic security of the next generation.

Formal pathways for participation and influence have also been created and/or strengthened. Initiatives such as the Belém Technology Implementation Programme and the Sharm el-Sheikh Mitigation and Implementation Work Programme establish standing invitations for non-Party stakeholders, including youth constituencies, to submit inputs and propose topics for global dialogues. While effective participation depends on the mobilisation capacity of youth actors, these channels provide predictable and legitimate entry points for advocacy within the policy cycle.

At the same time, the outcomes reviewed reveal important strategic gaps. References to youth are almost always made in conjunction with other groups (such as “children and youth” or within a gender context) or framed through broad principles such as “intergenerational equity”. No dedicated UNFCCC mechanism with earmarked funding for youth was created, nor were voting seats in decision-making bodies guaranteed. As a result, impact remains contingent on States’ political will to implement the guidance and on the organisational capacity of youth to press for its application, clearly illustrating the limitations of the COP governance and deliberative model.

COP30 provided youth with tools, but not guarantees of outcomes. The Conference delivered a powerful set of normative, methodological and procedural instruments that empower youth advocates. The challenge now lies in national implementation and strategic uptake. It falls to youth movements, civil society and progressive governments to use these new texts to demand that National Adaptation Plans, Nationally Determined Contributions and climate finance flows respond concretely to the needs and aspirations of the generation that will inherit a planet shaped by today’s decisions. The legacy of COP30 for youth will therefore be determined not by what was written in Belém, but by what is built from those words in the years ahead.

Finally, Table 1 synthesises a strategic assessment of how youth are addressed across different COP30 documents, with the aim of supporting action strategies for young people and organisations advocating for their interests in future forums linked to international climate negotiations.

Table 1. Strategic assessment of youth-related issues across the different COP30 documents

Document	Strengths	Gaps	Opportunities
1. Global <i>Mutirão</i>: Uniting humanity in a global mobilisation against climate change	- The integration of youth into the core political narrative—explicitly linking their future to the success of the Paris Agreement implementation cycle—is deep and substantive. - The explicit reference to intergenerational equity for children and youth in an operational paragraph constitutes a strong normative statement.	- It recognises youth as stakeholders, but does not require specific participatory mechanisms, dedicated funding sources, or formal spaces for youth within the COP process itself. - Influence is mediated through the general engagement of stakeholders and the application of the principle of intergenerational equity as considered by the Parties.	- The impact is intergenerational and future-oriented, rather than focused on empowering the participation of today's youth in immediate decision-making. - This “results” in a world that is 1.5 °C warmer and in the need for a just transition—both of which require direct action within the negotiations.
2. Issues related to the <i>Global Stocktake</i>	- The decision formalises and operationalises pathways for the continuous engagement of non-Party stakeholders during the technically complex implementation phase of the Global Stocktake (GST). - It moves beyond the one-off, highly political moment of the GST outcome towards the establishment of permanent annual forums for analysis and inputs. - By directly linking the outcomes of these dialogues to the next GST, it creates a tangible pathway for youth advocacy to exert cyclical, long-term influence on global ambition, aligned with intergenerational interests.	The language is typical of UN procedural decisions: it “invites” and “encourages” participation, but does not establish mandatory, youth-specific roles, guaranteed funding for youth delegates, or quotas for youth submissions. As a result, its impact continues to depend on young people's organisational capacity to navigate and leverage the process.	The call for inclusion (paragraph 15), together with the open portals for the submission of proposals, provides a powerful hook for advocacy. Youth groups can use this text to demand more prominent roles in the dialogues—such as designated speaking slots or co-facilitation roles—arguing that “meaningful participation” requires proactive measures.
3. United Arab Emirates Just Transition Work Programme	- Objectively recognises the integration of youth in both policy formulation (participation, skills development and rights) and implementation mechanisms (national plans and a new institutional mechanism) within the just transition agenda. - Places a clear focus on the “future of workers” and on education, explicitly linking the long-term impacts of climate change to youth employment prospects, skills formation and intergenerational economic security.	- Although the framework for inclusion is robust, its effectiveness ultimately depends on national implementation. - The decision <i>invites</i> and <i>encourages</i> Parties to act, but does not require specific quotas, dedicated funding for youth, or mandatory youth advisory bodies within national just transition planning.	- The newly established “just transition mechanism” (paragraph 25), together with the forthcoming review of the work programme, offers direct entry points for youth groups (such as YOUNGO) to advocate for dedicated youth-focused components, capacity-building workshops, and monitoring indicators.

Document	Strengths	Gaps	Opportunities
4. Report of the Forum on the Impact of the Implementation of Response Measures	- Requires that UNFCCC-led socioeconomic modelling and policy analysis explicitly account for intergenerational equity and the specific needs of youth. - Establishes a direct feedback cycle between specialised technical work (the forum/KCI) and national policy formulation (NDCs and NAPs), enabling youth engagement grounded in data and technical evidence.	- Retention of “encourages” rather than “requires” or “shall” language. - Effectiveness depends on Parties’ willingness to implement these guidelines and on the capacity of youth groups to provide the technical inputs required by the process.	- Explicit mention provides a powerful tool for participation. - Use of this text to demand seats at the table when national impact assessments are developed, to contribute case studies on youth unemployment, and to ensure that modelling of “just transition” pathways includes youth demographic data.
5. Issues related to the Standing Committee on Finance (SCF)	- Ensures the continuity of essential technical work to monitor the largest financial commitments undertaken under the Paris Agreement. Without this, promises made to youth regarding a financed transition would lack credibility.	- Contains no explicit references to youth, intergenerational equity, or funding targeted at youth-led solutions or capacity-building. - Does not require the Standing Committee on Finance (SCF) to consult or consider the specific needs of youth in its financial tracking methodologies. - Youth are not identified as stakeholders within this monitoring process.	- Youth groups can use these official reports as a powerful advocacy tool. - They enable calls for SCF methodologies to consider the intergenerational distribution of finance (e.g. what per cent is invested in long-term adaptation, education, and the creation of green jobs). - They enable technical inputs when the SCF invites submissions.
6. Belém Technological Implementation Programme	- This can be considered one of the most substantive and operational youth-related outcomes of COP30. - Requires the systematic consideration of youth within a high-impact, implementation-focused programme, supported by dedicated resources and reporting arrangements. - Establishes a clear and cyclical framework for engagement (annual submission of topics and annual dialogues) and accountability (annual reporting to the CMA), providing youth with a predictable structure for sustained and strategic advocacy.	- Although the mandate is clear, its effectiveness will depend on interpretation, operationalisation and the allocation of resources. - The decision does not specify a minimum share of funding for youth-led projects, nor does it require the inclusion of youth representatives in oversight or governance bodies.	- Explicit language provides a powerful tool for accountability. Youth can use paragraph 6(c) to require that project proposals financed under this programme demonstrate how they address youth unemployment, engage young innovators, or build youth capacity.. - Youth can also actively shape the agenda by submitting topics for the dialogues (paragraph 12).



Document	Strengths	Gaps	Opportunities
7. Decision on the provision of financial and technical support to developing country Parties for reporting and capacity-building	- Strengthening core systems—capacity, data and resources—that currently constrain effective climate governance constitutes a long-term investment in the institutional architecture that young people will inherit and upon which they will depend to ensure accountable and responsible climate action.	- A purely procedural document, with no explicit reference to youth, intergenerational equity or age-disaggregated data. - There is no mandate to ensure that the “engagement of stakeholders” referred to includes or prioritises youth organisations; participation therefore depends on their own initiative and on the openness of national governments.	- Youth can use the call for submissions on challenges related to stakeholder engagement (paragraph 9(c)) to formally advocate for the inclusion of youth representatives in national ETF processes and for reporting guidelines that require assessment of the distributive impacts of policies across different age groups.
8. Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA)	- The establishment of specific methodological guidance on age-disaggregated data within a formal UNFCCC decision represents an important step towards enhanced accountability. - Linkages to national planning (NAPs and NDCs) and to global stocktakes ensure that youth-focused data inform high-level policy decisions and the allocation of financial resources.	- The indicators and their disaggregation remain voluntary (“as appropriate and at their discretion”, paragraph 11). - There is no obligation for Parties to collect or report age-disaggregated data, which may result in inconsistent application and difficulties in aggregating data at the global level.	- Youth can now formally request that their governments apply these indicators and disaggregate data by age. - They can also use the reported data to highlight gaps in adaptation finance and in actions targeting young people.
9. Sharm el-Sheikh Mitigation and Implementation Work Programme	- The work programme focuses on mitigation sectors with high employment potential, which are directly relevant to young people’s economic prospects. - The repeated invitations for submissions from stakeholders provide a predictable and legitimate entry point for advocacy and the advancement of youth interests.	- There is no explicit reference to youth, children, or intergenerational equity. - Any impact on young people derives indirectly from the programme’s sectoral focus and from general inclusion clauses; youth needs are not a mandatory consideration. - There is no objective linkage to proactively prioritise or finance youth-led initiatives. Outcomes therefore depend on the capacity of youth groups to navigate complex institutional and procedural processes.	- The calls for submissions can be leveraged to consistently propose topics that highlight youth innovation (e.g. “Youth-led climate technology for methane reduction”). - Advocate for the work programme to develop specific guidance or case studies on the engagement of young entrepreneurs and workers in mitigation action.



Document	Strengths	Gaps	Opportunities
10. Belém Gender Action Plan (GAP) 2026–2034	- The integration of age alongside gender as a mandatory category for data disaggregation represents a historic step. - It enables “women” to be treated not as a homogeneous group, but as a diverse population, allowing policies to be tailored to adolescents, young women, and older women. - The plan’s operational design—through clearly defined activities, timelines, and assigned responsibilities—enables actionable accountability for youth advocates.	- The primary focus remains on gender, with age treated as an intersecting variable rather than as an independent analytical category. - There are no standalone outcomes or activities specifically designed for youth, nor measures that address issues such as intergenerational equity from a youth rights-based perspective.	- The plan provides a powerful legal and procedural hook. - Youth groups with a focus on women can use its mandates to call for national climate policies (NDCs, NAPs) to include age-disaggregated targets and for climate funds to allocate resources to youth-led, gender-responsive initiatives.

Source: Authors’ elaboration.

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