

## **Youth Statement on Quality Climate Education**

We, 227 national youth delegates of the Mock COP Mock Education Ministers' Summit from 89 countries, have come together to raise ambition for quality climate education.

We are facing unprecedented challenges as the climate emergency and ecological crisis worsens, and we believe quality climate education can not only help us understand the crises we face, but can equip us to tackle them and build a just, equitable, sustainable future.

Yet, our current education system is failing us. It is not preparing young people to face the effects of the climate crisis nor to understand solutions to the climate crisis, biodiversity collapse and large-scale environmental degradation. Our governments are not taking sufficient action, so we have taken it into our own hands. This statement is the culmination of delegates' country statements on climate education and puts forward the first-ever unified youth definition of quality climate education alongside our asks for world leaders to act on.

We urgently call for our Education Ministers to take meaningful action to implement and advance quality climate education.

### **The state of global climate education**

We know from our own experiences, and those of our peers, that climate education worldwide is inadequate. We are left with an education system unable to prepare us to face the climate crisis or to understand its solutions.

Where climate education does exist, it is optional, limited to a few selected subjects, unreliable, simple and generalised, often offered only to older students or those with specific qualifications, and almost never covers the solutions to the climate crisis. Our teachers are not supported or trained to deliver climate education, nor provided with relevant materials and resources that are proven to be free from fossil fuel industry influence. Due to the lack of formal quality climate education, in many countries climate education lies in the hands of NGOs and civil society organisations. In some countries it is being led by young people who are taking it upon themselves to teach themselves and their peers in the absence of anything else.

Whilst some countries have developed policies around climate education, we still need to see these implemented on the ground.

Worryingly, the climate crisis is also materially disrupting the education and learning experience of young people, as floods make schools inaccessible; soaring temperatures worsen epidemics, impact student health and lead to closures; fierce winds damage infrastructure; and displacement from homes takes students away from their schooling. We need a climate-resilient education system, as well as quality education on the climate crisis.

### Our definition of quality climate education

For climate education to help us understand and tackle the climate crisis, it needs to be done properly. Poor or non-existent climate education leaves young people facing increasing levels of climate anxiety, uninformed about intergenerational injustices inherent to the climate crisis, and without the tools to critically question the solutions or economic and historical causes of the climate crisis. This is why we, as young people, have created the first unified youth definition of *quality* climate education.

#### Quality climate education should be:

- **Comprehensive.** Climate education should provide comprehensive teaching on climate change as well as cross-cutting environmental issues. It should cover the causes, consequences and solutions (including both mitigation and adaptation) of the climate crisis. It should include humans' impact on natural resources and biodiversity, environmental degradation, and delve into sustainable development.
- **Solutions and action-oriented.** Climate education should empower and equip young people with the knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to actively work towards a world that ensures the wellbeing of both people and the planet. Locally, nationally and internationally; individually and collectively. Educational institutions should highlight climate career opportunities across a range of sectors including policy, tech, non-profit, advocacy, research and organising.
- **Holistic and embedded across all disciplines.** Climate education should be integrated into all subjects, fostering interdisciplinary learning, and accessible to everyone by being embedded in compulsory education. This kind of teaching enables young people to develop a comprehensive understanding of the climate crisis, including its interconnected scientific, historical, political, economic, ethical and social justice dimensions. It should also provide holistic teaching on climate and environmental issues, covering the causes, effects, consequences, and solutions (including adaptation and mitigation).
- **Empowering us to decarbonise our societies and economies.** Climate education should teach us about the urgent need to mitigate carbon emissions to help prevent the worst effects of climate change. It should help young people see the range of

areas that need to be decarbonised, and equip them to understand how this can be done in a just way and how people can take action themselves.

- **Critical.** Climate education should give young people critical thinking skills, to be able question unequal and unsustainable economic and political systems and imagine fairer, more sustainable ways of organising our communities.
- **Inclusive of Indigenous and local knowledge.** Climate education should value and incorporate a wider range of knowledge systems, perspectives and ways of life globally. Especially the role of Indigenous communities as environmental stewards should be recognised and incorporated.
- **Intersectional and focused on climate justice.** Climate education should be intersectional and anti-racist, teaching young people to recognise the greater historic responsibility of the climate crisis of governments and corporations in the Global North, and the unequal burden of the climate crisis on already marginalised communities. It should highlight the historical and ongoing systems of exploitation and oppression that caused it, such as colonialism and capitalism.
- **Formal and monitored, but practical.** Climate education should be included in exams and assessments, but this must sit alongside practical 'real-world' application to equip young people with green skills for the future. It should be monitored and evaluated to ensure improvements keep being made.
- **Inclusive, adaptable and localised.** Climate education should be tailored in educational institutions based on their audiences and taking into account specific local and regional contexts. This includes acknowledging the importance of local and Indigenous cultures and practices.
- **Tailored to the modern era.** Climate education should make use of new ways to learn about climate solutions rather than relying too much on outdated science textbooks including free online platforms, community based projects, and experiential learning opportunities when possible.
- **Fostering a sense of global citizenship.** Climate education should encourage young people to recognise their place in nature and the world, and become active stewards of natural environments and shared finite resources, as well as foster a sense of mutual respect and solidarity with global communities.
- **Free from conflicts of interest.** Climate education should not be influenced and undermined by third party interests. Specifically, fossil fuel companies should have no influence over what young people learn about climate change and we must be aware of malicious tactics such as child-focused marketing or university research funding.
- **Delivered through experiential educational practices.** Climate education should benefit from educational tools beyond the classroom such as community projects, student initiatives, a deeper connection to natural spaces and outdoor learning, and experiential learning.

## Our asks to Ministers for quality climate education

We need our Ministers to act and implement the policies necessary to advance quality, accessible climate education globally. These are our asks:

- **Teach our teachers.** Our governments should provide teachers with training and professional development opportunities on climate education. Teachers need to feel equipped to deliver quality climate education and be supported as professionals to make decisions informed by their experience and disciplinary knowledge.
- **Invest in climate education.** We need to ensure there are sufficient teaching materials, resources, time and teachers to properly deliver climate education.
- **Include young people and teachers.** Young people and teachers need to be meaningfully consulted and included as equal partners in designing, implementing, and evaluating interventions and policies to support climate education.
- **Collaborate.** Environment and Education Ministers need to collaborate to build effective policies to implement quality climate education. Community, civil society, NGO, trade union and international actors and perspectives should be consulted, listened to and incorporated, too.
- **Promote global climate justice and access to education.** Wealthier countries<sup>1</sup> that are most responsible for the climate crisis should provide climate finances to those least responsible as part of their loss and damage reparations. This will support the development of, and access to, climate education and build climate-resilient education systems to prevent the loss of access to education as countries adapt to the inevitable effects of the climate crisis.<sup>2 3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wealthier countries are considered as those which outrank the global average GDP per capita, defined by the International Monetary Fund - IMF as "Advanced Economies"

<sup>2</sup> Wealthier countries (namely, the Advanced Economies) are expected to fund the environmental resilience and adaptation of the Educational Systems from non-developed countries with a 0,005% of their annual GDP.

<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, all present delegations have agreed upon the implementation of the so-called "Tobin Tax", conceptually similar to the EU financial transaction tax (EU FTT) which impacted financial transactions between financial institutions charging 0.01% among derivative contracts and 0.1% against the exchange of shares and bonds. Such, in our point of view, will be extremely helpful to reduce inequalities between the Global North and the Global South.

## **Our checklist for quality climate education**

We will use the following questions as a checklist to evaluate policy on climate education in our countries. This will keep Ministries of Education accountable on their progress towards improving climate education and help us identify which countries are effectively raising ambition and leading the way.

### **- Quality climate education.**

- Does the country have compulsory climate education?
- Does the country have climate education integrated within the main curriculum subjects?
- Does the country have climate education at all levels of education?
- Is there reference to encouraging critical thinking and real-world application?
- Is there a focus on a solutions approach to climate education?
- Does climate education include the causes, impacts and consequences of the climate crisis?
- Is there reference to using accurate and up-to-date science?
- Is climate education framed holistically, referencing the social, political, economic, scientific, historic, eco and ethical elements?
- Is there inclusion of climate justice?
- Is there inclusion of physical health, mental health and wellbeing, such as climate anxiety?
- Do national guidelines establish a clear definition of basic climate literacy for younger students, including climate science, lived experience, urgency and solutions?
- Is there inclusion of a variety of voices and knowledge systems in climate education, including but not limited to Indigenous Communities?
- Is there reference to supporting educational institutions to tailor climate education depending on the audience and local and regional contexts?
- Is there commitment to monitoring and evaluation of climate education domestically?
- Is there commitment to review the implementation of climate education?
- Is there commitment to providing students aged 16+ with an abundance of opportunities to learn about and engage in climate policy solutions specifically?

- **Teach our teachers.**
  - Is climate education integrated into initial teacher training?
  - Are there ongoing professional development opportunities on climate education for teachers?
- **Invest in climate education.**
  - Is there the inclusion of sufficient long-term domestic funding for climate education?
- **Include young people and teachers.**
  - Is youth voice included in the design, implementation, and evaluation of climate education?
  - Are teachers and/or education unions involved in the design, implementation, and evaluation of climate education?
- **Collaborate.**
  - Is there reference to collaborating with other government departments?
  - Is there reference to collaborating with community, civil society, NGO, trade union and international actors?
- **Promote global climate justice and access (climate) education.**
  - Is there a commitment to international funding for climate education, from wealthier countries to countries least responsible and most impacted by the climate crisis?

***WE ARE READY TO***  
***Raise ambition for climate education***