South African Youth Statement to COP24

We, the youth of South Africa, emphasise the urgent need to build a climate resilient South Africa. We applaud, and support the strides made by the South African Government with regards to climate change, including the creation of the Climate Change Bill, and endorse Civil Society’s statement on COP24. The youth stress the need to act on climate change prior to the 2020 implementation of the Paris Agreement. In light of the upcoming UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP24), and aware the pivotal role the South African government has, and continues to play on the international platform, the youth would, thus, like to put forward the following recommendations:

Stakeholder Participation:

We applaud the South African government on their recent strides in increasing youth participation in international Climate Change meetings by adopting two youth delegates to attend COP Conferences. Whilst this is a step in the right direction, we stress the need for a shift in selection process of the official South African Youth Delegate. We suggest the creation of a panel, consisting of volunteers from of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and leaders in academia for the reviewing process of potential youth applicants, to allow for a more transparent and inclusive selection process. Furthermore, whilst this inclusion is critical for climate change negotiations, it must be recognised that simply allowing for young people to attend such meetings is insufficient. The South African Youth Delegate needs to be provided with training and exposure to the climate change discourse and negotiation processes. As such, we recommend the implementation of clear and decisive policies and collaborations with different youth-based entities, to train selected young people, and put forward clear expectations that government has for these youth delegates.

We recognize the need for policies to be simplified and readily accessible for ordinary citizens to easily understand, and effectively engage on. In the spirit of the Talanoa Dialogue, we stress the need to include more voices from the marginalized and most vulnerable groups such as women and youth in policy making, whilst considering the clash between National Climate Change Stakeholder meetings and the South African school calendar, and the location of the stakeholder meetings which disadvantage community leaders from rural communities.

Capacity Building:

Guided by Articles 11 and 12 of the Paris Agreement on capacity building, we call on the inclusion of youth-friendly, accessible mechanisms to educate young people on the adverse effects of climate change and capacitate them to create solutions to this global crisis. We call upon government to support initiatives, that exist outside of key policy windows, to create a culture of continuity with regards to climate change. The need for increased Global South participation cannot be ignored.

We commend the Global South Scholarship for Youth led by YOUNGO and suggest that such initiatives be fully supported by the South African government. Furthermore, we encourage the establishment of such initiatives at a regional level as to allow for the quality inclusion of young African voices in climate change meetings. We insist the government to advocate for this on a national and global level to further strengthen this youth-led, youth-focused initiative, allowing for the voices from the Global South to be acknowledged and incorporated internationally.
Finance:

The success of the Paris Agreement is largely dependent on climate finance; hence, we note that it should be at the forefront of planning and action. We emphasise that the modalities of climate finance must be those which follow the guidelines for reporting on climate finance under article 9.7 of the Paris Agreement. Furthermore, we demand South African government to follow these guidelines, and especially consider their NDC in national climate plans (such as the proposed Climate Change Bill). As the NDCs establish the process in which climate goals are put into action, we discern that climate finance is paramount to achieving any climate goals set out in the Paris Agreement as well as national policy. Therefore, in COP24, the climate specific components of the support to developing countries must be agreed to be reported as climate finance under article 9 of the Paris Agreement.

Additionally, we advocate for climate finance which is accessible to the most vulnerable countries and minority groups, including youth, that have projects which address climate change. Furthermore, we motivate for the monetary support of scientific research into sustainability and adaptation and mitigation practices – thus strengthening the Science-Policy Interface.

Loss and Damage:

We urge the establishment of fund related to countries experiencing loss and damage as a result of natural disasters related to climate change at this Conference of the Parties meeting. We stress the importance of considering these effects on small island developing states, who face the possible disappearance of their territory due to increasing sea levels. Ahead of COP 24, loss and damage from climate change remains a key area to be discussed and measured for progress. Many vulnerable communities around the world, specifically small island developing states, face irreversible impacts which need urgent attention. The COP 24 South African delegation should consider developing a clearer understanding of how loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change affects particularly vulnerable communities. Government should further promote a solid risk management approach (assessment, reduction, transfer, retention) by strengthening the position of South Africa and other African nations within the five-year Warsaw International Mechanism work plan on Loss and Damage by launching the clearing house on risk transfer. Finally, we encourage government to enhance data and research on the risks of slow onset events and their impacts, and identify ways forward on approaches to address slow onset events associated with the adverse effects of climate change with specific focus on potential impacts on livelihood and non-economic typologies.

Adaptation

We commend the South African government who, through the aid of the Green Climate Fund, has managed to start projects that have assisted South Africa to adapt to the impact of climate change, bearing in mind that adaptation and mitigation work hand in hand. However, we insist South African government needs to further study the effects of climate change on the most vulnerable minority groups, such as disabled people, and how best we can assist them to adapt to climate change. We appeal to the South African delegation to advocate for safe and viable solutions for minority groups to adapt to climate change at an international level.
Furthermore, we need adequate plans on education for climate adaptation. When NDCs and NAP’S are developed, climate change education has to be one of the cross-cutting activities. There should be updated curriculum and technical syllabus, particularly in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and social sciences. Climate adaptation would mean responding to the current climate landscape that potentially changes lifestyles, as such climate education is adaptive to climate change, yet is not an exhaustive measure.

**Scaling up NDCs**

The Climate Action Tracker (CAT) assessment of 2017 and Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) suggest in their findings that the NDCs as commitments of all countries are not adequate to meet the Paris Agreement goals. This is the very reason why the NDCs need to be scaled up. They need an urgent review and adequately enhanced ambitions.

The IPCC special report talks about how the world is already suffering from global warming and it explains how global warming jeopardises the SDGs and further induces poverty and inequalities. Cognizant of the 2018 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and the conclusion that the “world is off-track”; we call upon South Africa to take a lead on sustainability practices. The IPCC Special reports exclaims that the prevention of global warming above 1.5°C will fail; “Without strengthened contributions to decarbonization and commitment from countries, institutions, and communities to equity and fairness, pathways to 1.5°C will not allow to reach the Agenda 2030 objective to leave no one behind”. This is a clear call for more ambitious NDCs.

We are look forward to a favourable outcome from COP24 and a good adequate and strong Paris Agreement rule book which reflect parties commitment to the promises made in Paris in 2015.

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Compiled by the members of the South African Institute of International Affairs Youth Policy Committee and the South African Youth Climate Change Coalition.

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