

Position Paper of the Youth Forum

*Civil Society and Youth Forum for Mainstreaming Biodiversity for Wellbeing
13th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity
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Earth is experiencing multiple changes, and young people will have to face the consequences of the management choices made by others.

We as youth are positioned, active, passionate, informed, and - even more important - we are present. Over the past year the Mexican government organized 8 regional workshops to raise awareness among youth about mainstreaming biodiversity for wellbeing. The Mexican government also hosted a capacity building workshop where participants developed the program and content of the first Youth Forum before the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). These efforts culminated in three days of collaboration and hard work where youth, from over 16 countries came together to consolidate their position for the COP13. We participated in panel discussions, sessions to share best practices, and roundtable discussions about mainstreaming biodiversity across the five relevant sectors: agriculture, fisheries, forestry, tourism, and urban planning.

However, when considering biodiversity, one must think beyond these five sectors as human life is intrinsically linked to biodiversity, and the ecosystem services it provides. Cross cutting themes such as the rights of Indigenous peoples, women and gender issues, and youth engagement, should also be considered.

This document summarizes the challenges and opportunities, policy recommendations, and concrete actions that youth commit to contribute towards mainstreaming biodiversity. Youth play an integral role in contributing to the CBD, the implementation of the Strategic Plan, the Aichi Targets, and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs). This role should be fostered and promoted by parties.

Challenges and Opportunities

In order to address the needs of a growing human population, primary sectors (e.g. agriculture, fisheries, forestry) need to be planned in an integrated fashion. Without mainstreaming, these sectors are substantially impacting on biodiversity and could undermine efforts to halt the loss of biodiversity. These adverse effects must be addressed on the global level and governments need to take immediate action to avoid any negative impacts on biodiversity.

While this is a challenge at first -the human population growth rate is not slowing down-, meaning emerging challenges to identify and outline as they overcome. This also provides us with many opportunities, as long as communities engage and assume responsibilities. There are many current practices and institutions that can be the source of positive change towards CBD goals, and youth can play an integral role in galvanizing and promoting these possibilities.

The challenges that we face are not due to a lack of technological tools or action plans, but a lack of proper implementation or of access to tools and initiatives. It is crucial to differentiate when the matter is about insufficient funding, when it comes to financial inequality, and when it is about mismanagement.

Recommendations

In order to overcome the challenges stated above, and to take advantage of the related opportunities, we consider the following recommendations to be adopted:

- We encourage all parties to integrate spatial planning across sectors. Data analysis and management must be ecosystem-based, context-based, adaptive, strategic, and participatory with youth and the local community in order to promote resilience of communities and ecosystems.
- We recommend reinforcing or establishing alliances between science, technology, and local communities to develop innovative and context-based approaches, guide policies, and design tools focused on the efficient and harmonious use of biodiversity and natural resources.
- We recommend that youth be involved in the current efforts towards eliminating harmful subsidies, and increasing access to beneficial subsidies to small business owners and young entrepreneurs.
- We call upon governments to take urgent action to integrate formal and non-formal environmental education programs into NBSAPs, with leading participation of youth and civil society organizations, in order to foster a well informed youth population.
- We strongly suggest that urban, agriculture, and tourism planning, including its regulations, take special note of local biodiversity in multiple levels (e.g. ecosystem, species, and genetic diversity), in order to halt ecosystem fragmentation, ecosystem degradation, and Biodiversity loss.
- We strongly urge governments to guarantee the right of present and future generations to experience and feel part of biodiversity in any human community, both rural and urban. It is urgent to carry out landscape restoration within and around human settlements, allowing all sectors to operate in a coordinated and synergistic fashion.
- We demand that parties adopt practices that encourage and support their youth population when it comes to protecting and sustaining biodiversity, recognizing the central participation of youth in the local-community level; especially when it comes to indigenous communities members.

Commitments

- We are committed to maintain and promote the good practices implemented by previous generations and learn from identified mistakes. We must take advantage of the social, financial, and technological tools and platforms available in order to mainstream Biodiversity for wellbeing.
- We are committed to identifying, embracing, and transmitting the traditional knowledge from past to future generations. We must research and learn about practices that reinforce the sustainable development from the autochthonous and indigenous knowledge.
- In recognizing our unique capacity to create awareness among our peers, as well as targeting other population groups, we are committed to assuming an active role in communicating the importance of Biodiversity. This is a intergenerational opportunity to enable equitable involvement in the sectors mentioned above.
- We are committed to working with government bodies in order to protect and sustain Biodiversity on both a global and national scale. Only in working together can we hope to achieve the Aichi targets set out in the 2011-2020 Strategic Plan.

Conclusion

The process of the Youth Forum in the CBD taught us about the vast need of youth to be an active part of the negotiation, decision-making, and policy design processes. There is a wealth of passion and knowledge that needs to be tapped into, and this can only be properly channeled if the correct opportunities are presented to us.

We only have 4 years left to successfully achieve the Aichi targets, Only a joint effort can allow us all to achieve the desirable outcomes together. Youth, as part of every sector and economic and cultural activity, endorse and faces this challenge with proud beside the committed parties.

Aknowledgement

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