

OUTCOMES OF THE ACT #FORNATURE FORUM YOUTH VOICES FOR NATURE: ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE IN TIME OF COVID19



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Ane Serreli, Youth Delegate, Norwegian Children and Youth Council



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Objectives of the Townhall

Consider how environmental governance will look in times of COVID19 and its recovery, taking into account the reinforced conviction of young people to hold their governments accountable for steering economic reconstruction after COVID-19 according to environmental guidelines. Outline the thematic priorities of young people for UNEA-5 and their

expectations when it comes to broader and structural involvement of children and youth in political processes in the lead up to Stockholm+50.

Outcomes of the Townhall

A diverse audience including a wide range of young people from all over the world took part in the

townhall, which was a youth-led event in collaboration with UNEP and the UNEA-5 Presidency, held in the follow-up to the Virtual Youth Environment Assembly

The townhall focused on two segments: building back better from COVID-19 and mainstreaming the role of young people in UNEA processes towards the 50th anniversary of UNEP - crosscutting with the changing landscape of environmental governance

Questions ranged from how youth movements can be better supported to the role of governments, private sector, and UN conventions in mainstreaming the voices of young people to act for nature.

One clear message was that while COVID19 recovery packages are focusing on economic relief, the sustainability aspect cannot be left behind. Similarly, Nationally Determined Contributions need to adopt a whole-of-society approach.

Climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation are a form of “shadow” pandemics and need similar levels of action. Delayed COPs must not translate into less ambitious actions. Young people continue to face barriers which are structural, financial, and political among others and the landscape for civil society participation is shrinking. It is essential to give right-holder communities a seat at the table and be inclusive by design.

How we treat the young people of today is a precursor to global governance and political leadership in the next years.

Role of UNEA and its importance needs to be increased and further mainstreamed. This also includes mainstreaming the core work of UNEP, such as MEAs, regional work, etc. The Executive Director of UNEP stated in her closing remarks: "capacity development has to be at the core of building back better". It is therefore important that youth engagement is included systematically during the regional consultations, at UNEA and during Stockholm +50.

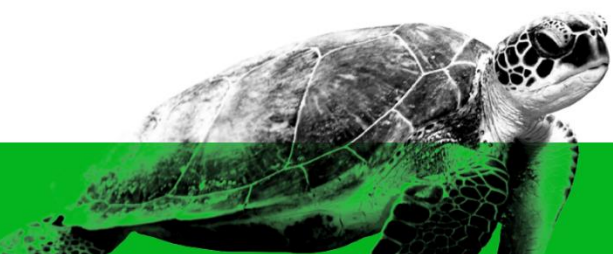
Watch the townhall [here](#)

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Key messages to the UN Environment Assembly

- Calling upon Member States to ensure young people’s priorities and views are included in the priorities of UNEP. UNEP’s current draft of the Medium-Term Strategy of lacks any reference to youth engagement. Therefore, Member States are requested to support a new short section on youth engagement in the new Medium-Term Strategy.
- UNEA-5 needs to show global political leadership towards a sustainable recovery post COVID-19. This political leadership must harness ambitious commitments from member States and businesses.
- We emphasize UNEP’s need for better communication and mainstreaming of Multilateral Environmental Agreements and UNEP’s regional work. Communication and engagement go hand in hand, and one does not exclude the other
- Member States and UNEP have to work together towards a systematic approach outlining the minimum requirements of Member States' nature conservation activities and support the setting of milestones.
- The ministerial declaration of UNEA-5 should include a section on youth engagement – the Major Group for Children and Youth will provide further inputs on this.
- Invite Member States or a group of member States to support a UNEA resolution on empowerment and engagement of children and youth.
- The Stockholm+50 process must have early and structured involvement of Major Groups and Stakeholders. The Major Group for Children and Youth welcome the note on Stockholm+50 and the mention of a youth preparatory meeting. Furthermore, the MGCY is planning a series of on-the-ground and virtual youth consultations in the lead up to Stockholm+50 and are grateful for the leadership of Sweden and Kenya



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