



# COP28 UAE

## Roundtable Dialogue on “Children, Youth, Peace, and Climate Security”

June 27, 2023

*UAE Mission to the United Nations, New York*

### **Background:**

While climate change is rarely the primary cause of conflict, it can exacerbate underlying vulnerabilities, compound existing grievances, and disrupt peacebuilding efforts. Children and youth have been at the forefront of global climate action and are actively working for peace and security in their communities. Although children and youth will be the most impacted by climate change, they continue to be excluded from formal decision-making processes. From a nexus lens, many countries most vulnerable to **climate change** have **young populations**.<sup>1</sup> **Nearly half of the world’s children live in countries most vulnerable to climate change.** It is precisely these settings that are also affected by **conflict and protracted humanitarian crises**.

Recognizing the critical role of children and youth in global climate action and peacebuilding, it is crucial to involve them in decision-making processes. In this context, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), as the host of COP28, is committed to ensuring the meaningful engagement of children, youth, and other marginalized groups in the COP process this year. As a country with a young population, the UAE has long emphasized the importance of youth in leadership positions and most recently appointed H.E. Shamma Al Mazrui as the Youth Climate Champion (YCC) and a part of the COP28 Presidency leadership team, with a mandate to mainstream youth participation and voice in the COP28 process and mobilize substantive policy and programmatic outcomes for young people in multiple areas. COP28 will also dedicate thematic days called “Relief, Recovery and Peace Day” and “Youth, Children, Education and Skills” to address these pressing issues.

In June 2023, the UAE assumed the presidency of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and has, in the past, urged other member states to explore ways for meaningful youth participation to increase peacebuilding efforts, undertake a Triple Nexus (humanitarian-development-peace) approach and last year, explored the linkages between climate finance and peace and security. Across its engagements in international fora, the UAE consistently underscores the importance of enabling meaningful child and youth participation in decision-making processes and addressing climate impacts in fragile and conflict-affected areas.

**In light of the above, the COP28 Presidency team co-organized an event at the Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations, together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).** The participants included member states, UN agencies, youth, academia, and international non-governmental organizations working on children, youth, peace and security, climate action, and climate security. At the center of the discussion was **meaningful child and youth participation**. Young climate activists and peace builders from Cyprus, the

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<sup>1</sup> [The climate crisis is a child rights crisis](#)

Philippines, Somalia, and a COP28 International Youth Delegate from South Sudan shared their experiences, interventions, and hope regarding the peace, security and climate nexus and how COP28 can support this agenda.

### **Key takeaways:**

#### **1. What are the interlinkages between intergenerational climate action, peace, and security?**

- The Institute for Economics and Peace Ecological Threat Report 2022, highlights a significant correlation between countries facing the greatest ecological risks, being the least peaceful, and having the world's youngest populations.
- Critically, 43.3 million children were forcibly displaced by the end of 2022, and almost 60% were internally displaced by conflict and violence.<sup>2</sup> During last year, the number of refugee and asylum-seeking children hit a new record number.
- The young generation and generations to come will bear the brunt of climate change, facing exacerbated effects on food systems, water availability, energy insecurity and forced migration.
- Climate change, prevention and peacebuilding actions thrive in parallel and have gained increased attention in the last decade. UN agencies, such as UNDP, encourage much more significant investment in youth inclusion in policy and decision-making processes to address these interrelated challenges across generations.
- Young climate activists and peace builders face severe consequences when working in their communities, including forced disappearance, unlawful arrests, intimidation, lack of public safety, and close monitoring by authorities, especially when speaking against their government or expressing criticism publicly.<sup>3</sup> Implementing mechanisms to safeguard and protect children and youth who engage in these spaces is crucial.

#### **2. How can children and youth participation be enhanced and supported across the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus and climate decision-making spaces?**

- Co-creating inclusive spaces and processes is essential for meaningful youth engagement in policy and decision-making to promote intergenerational solidarity and enhance resilience against ecological threats. Policy dialogues such as these are critical in ensuring practical interventions are included in the COP28 process.
- Embracing inclusive, socially equitable, and environmentally sustainable approaches to peacebuilding yields more effective and enduring results. Short-term emergency responses without investing in sustainable development hinder the prospects of children and youth, underlining the importance of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus in mitigating risks from climate and conflicts.
- Viewing climate-induced migration as a lens and as the human face of the multiplier effect is crucial to address the challenges faced by vulnerable communities, including children and youth, particularly in the context of peace and security.
- Raising awareness and enhancing knowledge about climate, peace and security interlinkages among communities impacted daily by climate change and conflict is essential, while at the same time recognizing that knowledge and training come both ways. This requires dedicating time, resources,

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<sup>2</sup> Number of displaced children reaches new high of 43.3 million

<sup>3</sup> Urgent need to protect young climate activists

and capacity for awareness-raising efforts, bridging the divide between global and local discussions while ensuring language used is adapted to the context.

- Independent financial instruments are necessary to view and engage with children and youth as co-investors and co-partners in the agenda for peacebuilding and climate. Uncomfortable conversations and changes are vital for successful intergenerational collaborations.
- 3. How can COP28 leverage meaningful intergenerational partnerships for peace and climate security?**
- COP28 should address and highlight challenges and systematic barriers that children and youth face when it comes to their participation in the peace and climate security spaces. It is equally important to celebrate success, highlight the important work being done and recognize their contributions to societal change.
  - For indigenous people, there is no peace without climate justice. COP28 presents an opportunity to raise awareness of indigenous knowledge systems in disaster relief. Considering indigenous perspectives is essential when formulating an agenda on climate, peace and security, emphasizing the importance of thinking globally but acting locally.
  - Budgeting for the protection of children and youth is crucial, as young climate activists often face prosecution and harassment for their advocacy. When children and youth participate, a preventative approach must be adopted to address their protection needs and concerns.
  - Incentivizing partnerships with young people as important and equal partners, rather than merely beneficiaries, is necessary. Improved children and youth participatory approaches, particularly concerning intergenerational partnerships and climate justice, should be promoted.

#### **Recommendations and next steps:**

- **Integrate Children and Youth Concerns in Climate Financing:** To ensure that the needs and priorities of children and youth are effectively addressed, it is essential to integrate them within clauses that have clear binding measures, especially concerning climate financing. According to a recent study<sup>4</sup> by the Children’s Environmental Rights Initiative (CERI) coalition members, of all climate funds in the last 17 years, less than 2.4% were invested in any programs directed at children. COP28 can be leveraged to advocate for increased funding and targeted initiatives aimed at addressing the challenges of children and youth related to climate, peace and security.
- **Empowering Children and Youth as Agents of Change:** Recognizing the potential of children and youth as powerful agents of change is key. With strong backing from COP28, UNFCCC, and the UN Secretary-General, it is imperative to ensure that every delegation coming to COP includes children and youth as delegates and negotiators.<sup>5</sup> Empowering them with meaningful participation and decision-making roles will enable innovative and diverse perspectives, leading to more inclusive and effective solutions.
- **Shaping Thematic Days:** The key takeaways and recommendations from this dialogue report should play a pivotal role in shaping the COP28 two-week programming, such as “Youth, Children, Education and Skills” and “Relief, Recovery and Peace” thematic days. By incorporating these insights, the thematic days can prioritize the concerns and voices of children and youth, leading to more impactful discussions and outcomes that resonate with their specific needs and aspirations.
- **Engaging youth constituencies:** This report should be shared with YOUNGO, the Official Children

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<sup>4</sup> [Falling short: Addressing the climate finance gap for children | UNICEF](#)

<sup>5</sup> [COP28 UAE | Letter to Parties](#)

and Youth Constituency of the UNFCCC, to consider embedding this theme in the Local Conferences of Youth (LCOYS) and Regional Conferences of Youth (RCOYS). The report should also be shared with the Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security working group on Climate. Additionally, sharing the report with the Conference of Youth (COY) co-hosts for consideration with the recommendation to host a follow-up event focused on children, youth peace and climate security at COY can expand the discourse to engage more young leaders.

- **Convening Inclusive Intergenerational Dialogues:** Exploring opportunities to convene more in-person, online, and hybrid policy dialogues, bringing together more actors and stakeholders disproportionately affected by climate-related peace and security risks is vital. Leveraging significant events like the International Day for Peace, Regional Climate Weeks, and the Climate Ambition Summit.
- **Integrating Peace and Climate Security elements into the International Youth Climate Delegates Programme (IYCDP):** To promote a better understanding of the linkages between climate, peace and security among young climate advocates and peacebuilders, options for integration of the theme into the IYCDP capacity-building process for the 100 delegates will be explored.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> COP28 UAE | Youth International Delegates