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Youth Constituency Submission to the Environmental Management Group (EMG) mid-term technical segment of the 27th Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) on the 30th June 2021

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This submission is made on behalf of the Children and Youth Major group of UNEP - the formal youth constituency on environmental governance in the UN; and seeks to highlight (i) updates and possibilities on youth participation in the EMG (ii) inputs on certain agenda items of the technical segment of 27th SOM, and (iii) provide information on youth engagement in certain policy processes. We as the youth constituency are delighted that - for the first time ever - youth are participating and providing inputs to EMG SOM, and believe this is a step toward inter-generational co-leadership and meaningful youth engagement.

Enhancing Youth Engagement in the EMG - possible next steps & activities

Constituting an EMG Youth Focal Points Group/Network (working title)

- In the coming months, ahead of the fall SOM of the EMG, the youth constituencies of the EMG's member agencies could convene to discuss the work of the EMG vis-à-vis our respective mandates.
- This can be in form of a self-organised *Youth Focal Points Group / Network for EMG* (working title) which will serve as space for dialogue and collective discussion for youth groups
- This would not be a new/complex structure but rather an informal dialogue convened to discuss and provide youth inputs the work of the EMG

Systemically engage youth as (standing) partners in the in IMGs and Task Teams

- We request the EMG secretariat and leads of various task teams / Issue Management Groups (IMGs) to engage youth and youth organisations actively in their respective work
- The youth constituencies linked to themes and lead agencies of various IMGs and TTs could be standing partners and facilitate engagement of a broad range of youth groups in the work of EMGs and TTs relevant to their work stream¹
- Possibilities for youth to co-lead / co-designs certain tasks or activities could also be explored
- Consider having youth speakers at nexus dialogues and other activities

Youth observer engagement in the meetings of the EMG

- We request that, building on the precedent of the 27th SOM technical segment, representatives from youth constituencies are invited to EMG meetings to recognise our role as an important stakeholder in environmental decisions and give young people the opportunity to act as a civil society stakeholder
- Additionally, youth could also submit inputs to the EMG meetings on relevant items in advance through the secretariat as appropriate

Self-organised Youth Pre-Meeting to the EMG SOM in September / October

- Children and Youth Major Group of UNEP is considering hosting a hybrid/virtual youth pre-meeting on the margins of the upcoming EMG SOM in September/October to provide space for youth constituencies and groups to prepare for the EMG meeting and showcase our common objectives. Concretely, such a youth pre-meeting could engage the above-mentioned Youth Focal Points and further youth groups and advocates
- With the COVID-19 pandemic, it is now easier and more usual for other stakeholders to join meetings virtually, although measures to ensure that youth in areas with poor internet coverage are vital
- We will be delighted to have support from the EMG secretariat for such a pre-meeting, including as expert speakers, supporting the capacity building sessions for youth, etc.

¹ Similar to the arrangements of the Task Teams in the Joint Working Group of the UN Youth Strategy Youth 2030

Possible funding support and engaging diversity of youth

- We request that, as appropriate, sufficient budget be allocated by the EMG for youth constituencies and youth-led organizations. Youth constituencies continue to be run on volunteer capacity in their engagement, for example we organized the virtual Youth Environment Assembly (YEA) preceding UNEA 5.1 in voluntary capacity with youth participants from more than 170+ countries
- Youth groups would hugely benefit from increased financial support and capacity building to amplify their voices and outreach and ability to contribute to driving the required transformation changes called for by science
- It is important that young people from all over the world, including young women, indigenous youth and other marginalised communities, as well as community-based, grassroots, national, regional, and international organisations, can participate and be heard

Youth engagement for the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and the proposed new IMG

- Youth have been engaged in the process of the Decade since mid-2019. This includes several on-ground and virtual consultations, high-level events, policy papers, etc. Toward the end of the 2020, the Decade coordination group approved the formation of a Youth Task Force for the Decade
- This [background presentation](#) elaborates the history of engagement of youth in the Decade, including key components of the official *Youth Task Force* as also presented to UN agencies in May 2021
- We suggest that the new IMG should engage and invite contributions from the Youth Task Force and youth constituencies engaging in the EMG as appropriate
- As a follow-up for the official launch of the Decade, we hosted a series of consultations towards capacity building as well as creating awareness and amassed a tide of online protagonists calling for worldwide support to the Decade, especially on implementation and linking the national efforts

Regarding Stockholm+50

Youth Engagement Framework underway

The Children and Youth Major group of UNEP has been working in cooperation with the host of Stockholm+50 toward a possible youth engagement framework for Stockholm+50. This youth engagement framework would be coordinated by a Stockholm+50 youth task force (working title). Discussions are underway with the Stockholm+50 secretariat to further develop / finalize these arrangements in the coming weeks

On the proposed new Task Team on Stockholm+50

- We note the proposed new IMG on Stockholm+50. We suggest that, should the IMG be approved, it should constitute the youth constituency as a standing partner, so as to facilitate coherence and also active participation of youth in the work of the task team, including in events, papers, etc.
- Furthermore, we recommend that the duration of this task team is kept until July or September 2022, so as to ensure that outcomes from the work of task team feed into HLPF and/or the UNGA in 2022

Update on youth engagement in Chemicals and Waste pillar in the UN

The youth platform on chemicals and waste launched in February 2021 with the Secretariats of SAICM, BRS and Minamata Conventions. After consulting with the youth, secretariats, universities, NGOs and a few governments towards developing methods of meaningful youth engagement with the UN's work in chemicals and waste, the platform has found the following insights:

- There is an overall agreement that youth engagement in chemicals and waste is both important and beneficial. All parties seem to have either knowledge and/or structural gaps regarding effective and meaningful youth engagement.
- The first steps towards meaningful youth engagement have been identified as: cooperation, regular and open dialogue, training and capacity building, awareness raising, and strengthening youth organisations and networks. Currently, the most immediate need identified for fair, equal, diverse, just and meaningful youth engagement is financial support.

In addition to this work, the platform has been listening to the youth voice, engaging with secretariats and stakeholders across a variety of platforms, and raising awareness for meaningful (non-tokenistic) engagement in chemicals and waste. Children and youth disproportionately suffer the negative impacts of chemicals and waste, and should be included in the decision making process.

Annex

- [2021-22 Action Plan & Progress Report of the Children and Youth Major Group](#) as presented to the committee of permanent representatives (CPR) on the 7th May 2021
- Information regarding the virtual Youth Environment Assembly Feb 2021, in the lead-up to UNEA 5.1
 - [IISD-ENB reporting](#)
 - [UN press release](#)
- [Plans on youth engagement for UNEP@50 and Stockholm+50](#)
- [Background overview and aspects youth task force - UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration](#)
- Update documents from Chemicals Waste Youth Platform
 - [SAICM, UTC & CYMG of UNEP Communities of Practise Outcomes](#)
 - [Chemicals and Waste 'About us' document for executives](#)