

For Fair Participation of Children, Adolescents, and Youth in Socio-Environmental Governance

Preamble: Recognizing that children, adolescents, and youth are not merely passive actors in the face of the planetary triple crisis climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution but, in addition to being among the most vulnerable to its impacts, they are key actors in establishing long-term solutions; their participation must be effectively, inclusively, and intersectionally incorporated into decision-making processes at local, regional, and global levels to guarantee democracy and contribute to protecting the right of every person, of present and future generations, to live in an environment that ensures their health and well-being. Therefore, children, adolescents, and youth:

- 1. Affirm that the full, equitable, inclusive, effective participation with a gender perspective of children, adolescents, and youth in socio-environmental decision-making is a right and an indispensable condition to achieve effective governance in the face of the planetary triple crisis.**

Therefore, we propose the following recommendations:

- Incorporate binding mechanisms that guarantee genuine, diverse, effective, and non-symbolic participation of children, adolescents, and youth in the formulation, implementation, monitoring, and follow-up of socio-environmental policies, negotiations, and decision-making spaces, as a fundamental axis to maintain spaces with binding decision-making capacity, supported by legal and budgetary mechanisms that guarantee their real and permanent inclusion, especially for children, adolescents, and youth from different social, cultural, ethnic, and economic backgrounds.
- Implement continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that ensure transparency and accountability, ensuring participation is more than symbolic and translates into concrete actions that recognize children, adolescents, and youth as rights holders and active agents in capacity building, including the implementation of participatory, inclusive, and culturally relevant methodologies from an early age, in both educational and community spaces, using digital tools to broaden reach and representation
- Avoid tokenism and instrumentalization, as limiting practices for authentic and meaningful participation; involvement must be free of coercion and manipulations that distort the genuine expression of participants.
- Facilitate the necessary financial and logistical support to guarantee their safety, well-being, and effective participation in multilateral decision-making spaces, removing economic and access barriers.
- Strengthen intergenerationality, which implies a profound transformation of socio-environmental governance spaces. In some processes, children, adolescents, and youth are often considered as a homogeneous group, which invisibilizes their diversity. Recognizing this plurality is essential to advance towards fair representation. Likewise, there is an urgent need for proactive commitment with leaders from areas most affected by climate change and armed conflicts.

- 2. Affirm the importance of decentralization and territorialization of governance as key to reducing inequalities.**

Therefore, we propose the following recommendations:

- Decentralize the processes of management, decision-making, implementation, evaluation, and monitoring of socio-environmental public policies, promoting effective coordination among multiple actors, consolidating collaborative governance spaces that favor shared responsibility and collective construction. In this sense, designing socio-environmental public policies from the perspective of those who do not perceive the reality of a region is almost like doing it without a clear vision of the context; therefore, a planning process is required that allows the design of long-term strategies that extend beyond the government that created the policy.
- Rethink traditional notions of State and sovereignty in the face of challenges posed by the global climate crisis, integrating plural approaches that recognize the diversity of territorial governance forms, particularly in States threatened by territorial loss, while strengthening territorial sovereignty as a fundamental condition to reduce inequalities, ensure a fair distribution of benefits, and contribute to regional and global stability.
- Consider the creation of spaces with voting rights and decision-making power.
- Promote the creation of observatories established as networks of collaboration and cooperation among diverse actors, whose central purpose is to promote a concrete regional and global agenda for climate action and just transition, as well as to generate effective accountability mechanisms by governments and private actors, both globally and locally.

3. Affirm the importance of corporate accountability and regulation.

Therefore, we propose the following recommendations:

- Establish a clear and robust regulatory framework that ensures corporate actions do not compromise the rights of future generations, adopting a climate justice approach and integrating children, adolescents, and youth as key actors in the design, implementation, evaluation, and oversight of public strategies addressing this need. Create auditing and evaluation processes in which youth play a fundamental role, ensuring companies comply with rigorous sustainability standards that prioritize human rights and environmental protection. Require companies to face significant and corrective sanctions for their contributions to environmental degradation, to guarantee a culture of corporate responsibility and sustainability.

4. We affirm the need to guarantee protection and security for environmental defenders.

Therefore, we propose the following recommendations:

- It is imperative to recognize nature as a rights-holder and protect human rights defenders on environmental issues. In this regard, each State has the duty to provide a safe and supportive environment so that especially children, adolescents, youth, groups, and bodies of society working on human rights and environmental issues can act without threats, obstacles, or insecurity. To strengthen this commitment, it is fundamental to implement specific protection protocols, with an approach based on the Escazú Agreement, ensuring their physical, emotional, and psychological integrity in contexts where violence is a daily reality.
- Generate support networks for climate defenders, facilitating access to justice and reparation mechanisms. These networks should be backed by international organizations and foster intergenerational and transnational cooperation in the defense of environmental rights.
- Promote critical education on human and environmental rights.

5. We affirm the importance of training and education spaces that guarantee democratic access to socio-environmental information.

Therefore, we propose the following recommendations:

- In accordance with the Escazú Agreement, it is a priority to guarantee democratic and timely access to complete, reliable (relevant), and adequate (intercultural) information, as well as maximum transparency in decision-making and processes to ensure a fair, equitable, and inclusive participation process. Authorities, entities, and/or competent bodies must ensure that socio-environmental information is reusable, processable, and available in accessible formats, with no restrictions on its reproduction or use.
- Promote technical and political training spaces for informed participation and decision-making.
- Strengthen leaderships with diverse and intersectional perspectives so that children, adolescents, and youth have a real role in public policy construction and environmental governance at local, national, and international levels.
- Democratize access to information through education and awareness, strengthening capacities in rights, leadership, and environmental management, as well as promoting the autonomy of youth initiatives to define their priorities and methodologies.

Children, adolescents, and youth call for urgent climate action and ambition from governments, international organizations, and civil society at global, national, and local levels. We call on all states and actors to take priority measures to confront climate denialism and to ensure effective, inclusive participation with an intersectional approach of children, adolescents, and youth in socio-environmental policy management, guaranteeing their integrity and security in all aspects. Through intergenerationality, democratization, and decentralization, a just, equitable, inclusive, and resilient future will be built, where young generations not only inherit socio-environmental problems but also the skills, knowledge, and tools to not only solve them but also rebuild social fabric and recognize ecosystems as rights-holders. Likewise, it is key to establish clear indicators and effective monitoring mechanisms that allow periodic and transparent evaluation of the commitments made in this manifesto; only then will it be ensured that the proposed actions do not remain mere discourse but become reality.