

International Inclusion of Youth in the Climate Agenda

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Federative Republic of Brazil

The Federative Republic of Brazil finds climate change and global warming to be an important part of the sustainable development goals, but emphasises the importance of the other SDGs including goal 8 on Decent work and economic growth, amongst others. Since the presidential election in 2018, the government has shifted the focus away from the extensive commitments of the preceding government and curbed the inclusive position of civil society in policymaking and oversight, and lower the previous ambitions. However, while the current president pledged to withdraw from the Paris Climate agreement during the election campaign, he has yet to make good on this promise.

While the current president has decreased the climate change mitigation ambitions somewhat, he has done so from a high level of commitment. The previous government pledged to limit greenhouse gas emissions with 43% by 2030. This was to be done through a mix of different policies, mainly with a fivefold focus on a) raising the share of renewable energies to 45% of the energy mix, b) increasing energy efficiency by 10%, c) achieving net zero illegal deforestation by 2030, d) compensating for GHG emissions from legal suppression of vegetation, and e) reforesting 12 million hectares of forests and restoring 15 million hectares of degraded pasturelands. Since the inauguration of the current president, the implementation of these pledges has been limited and a new course with focus on agribusiness in the amazon, and a shift in focus away from preservation. It seeks to establish itself as a regional leader in South America, both economically and politically and therefore seeks economic development as an important policy, ahead of climate change mitigation.

Brazil sees great potential in youth engagement in the political process, and with this aim in mind established the National Youth Council with a mandate to formulate and propose guidelines for government action aimed at promoting public youth policies. Brazil further finds that youth has a role in the decision-making processes through the creation of youth councils responsible for participation and representation of young people, though it firmly believes this should be done through government agencies. Brazil has not run a UN Youth Delegate programme as it sees national youth inputs to be more representative of the governments position.

People's Republic of China

The People's Republic of China recognises the importance of adapting national economies to the sustainable development agenda and sees climate change as an important challenge to the world community. And while China has experienced a tremendous economic development, it is still not on a par with the western countries in its economic clout and emissions, even though it is the world's largest emitter of GHGs. This is due to the country's large population and the rapid industrialisation it is going through. As such, it considers economic development to be of utmost importance for the political agenda.

China recognises it has an important role to play on the international stage as regards climate change, and international solutions to this issue, and has therefore found its place in international environmental negotiations due to the absence of other previous leading countries in the arena. Further, China operates a large bilateral agreement with the European Union as relates to the development of strategies for greenhouse gas emission reductions, and a large emissions trading scheme. China wants to reach a level of 20% of total primary energy supply to be non-fossil fueled by 2030, and pursues this target by massive investments in renewable energies. This strategy is further pursued abroad, where the Chinese government has been funding infrastructure projects across the developing world, primarily in Africa, where China in 2009 pledged to build 100 clean energy projects in Africa. China therefore recognises the importance of clean and renewable energy in providing a reliable energy source for the development of the African and developing economies.

China's political system does not consider the input of youth in high regard, a stance that is mutual. As such, china considers the main focus should be on youth inclusion in the economy to provide the economic development and rise in living standards that previous developed countries have achieved.

Kingdom of Denmark

The Kingdom of Denmark recognises the massive dangers climate change and global warming poses to the world, and sees climate mitigation as essential for the prosperity of future generations. While Denmark is considered one of the richest countries in the world, thus denoting it a developed country, its emissions sum to less than 0,15% of the world's emissions. Its main concern is therefore to establish international reductions in emissions for their to be an overall effect.

Denmark has set a target to cut emissions by 40% by 2030 through an increased focus on renewable energy and energy efficiency. Further it is the country's aim to achieve a fossil free energy and transport sectors by 2050. However, Denmark takes a scientific approach to climate change mitigation and therefore established the Climate Council, an independent academic body that were to advise government on climate change mitigation strategies through, e.g., publishing a report at least every fifth year including recommendations for the government with long term aspirations. Further, to ensure the international community sees equal importance in the climate agenda, the government hosted the 2009 COP15 in Copenhagen, to speed up international responses. Denmark also sees business as a part of its climate change mitigation efforts, and therefore established a Green Transition Fund to support the development of new business models, product innovation, re-designs and promoting sustainable materials.

The Danish government sees the youth as an important part of not just climate change mitigation, but also a lot of other international issues, and has therefore, mandated the Danish Youth Council to run a UN youth Delegate programme, which elects six Youth Delegates who participate in a range of international forums, including the ECOSOC Youth Forum and the Annual Session of the General Assembly. The Danish Youth Council further runs an active international profile with many international projects run through its member organisations. It further facilitates all youth wings of the political parties and aids them in organisational matters and in promoting the importance of youth in finding solutions for the national and international problems.

Dominican Republic

Being a small island nation in the Caribbean, the Dominican Republic is highly vulnerable to the effects of global warming and climate change. As such, its main focus is on adaptation efforts as opposed to mitigation, which is also due to the country only emitting 0,7% of the world's total GHG emissions. The Dominican Republic has experienced significant economic growth over the past years, some years having the highest growth rate on the western hemisphere. For this reason it is ready to drive national adaptation efforts and take a leading role in international negotiations.

The Dominican Republic's focus on climate change adaptation has been centred around resilience and capacity building in the sectors that have been a driver of economic growth. As such, it has placed a large focus on integrated and adaptive watershed management and initiatives to reduce climate vulnerability in agricultural, tourist and marine coastal areas. It further focuses on improving energy efficiency across the country and include renewable energy, both conventional and non-conventional to lower its overall emissions, to live up to its contribution to achieving global GHG emission reductions. Further to this end, it works on deploying cleaner transportation alternatives to further reduce its GHG emissions.

The Dominican Republic places great importance on including youth and building ownership and agency in youth. The Ministry of Youth has the aim of providing effective coordination and involvement of youth indecision-making, e.g. through 11 municipal youth councils which serve as consultative and advisory boards for government and private sector organisations for the inclusion of youth. Further, all high school students are required to complete 60 hours of service to their communities before being allowed to graduate. It has also run UN Youth Delegate programmes in the past. It therefore looks to include youth in different international forums and proposes the same is done in both local, national, regional and international decision-making.

Federal Republic of Germany

The Federal Republic of Germany is one of the richest countries in the world, with a large industrial economy resulting in it emitting just shy of 2% of world GHG emissions. It recognises the importance of taking climate action, but emphasises that this should be done on an international level, and with respect to the different national economies. As such, while Germany has focused on emissions reductions, having set an initial target of 40% reduction by at least 2020, and further reductions beyond, it focuses on a sustainable refocusing of its economy in a broader sense than just GHG emissions.

Germany set a target of 40% emissions reductions by 2020 in the early 2000s, and stepped up its targets when it in 2016 adopted climate targets for individual sectors. The federal government does not believe that a broad law or agreement across all sectors of the economy and seeks a large degree of collaboration with industry, while recognising that a broader view is necessary. Further, due to its large degree of heavy industry, it looks favourably on emissions trading as a solution for lowering overall, global emissions reductions, by buying GHG emissions permissions from countries which are exceeding their commitments for reductions.

Germany finds youth participation as a strategically important aim, and therefore seeks youth involvement through consultation processes prior to international forums, for their views to be expressed in these forums. It also runs a larger youth delegate programme, with two youth delegate representing Germany in the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly. It also supports the participation of German youth in international conferences and youth summits. Domestically, the government implemented Youth Check together with youth organisations and civil society stakeholders to review proposed federal policies to ensure they are in line with the interests and concerns of the younger generation. Germany therefore emphasises the important resource youth can have in a consultative capacity.

Republic of Ghana

The Republic of Ghana only recently became a lower middle-income country, as it started exporting crude oil. Its geographic position and designation as a country with a low GDP per capita therefore puts it in a position where climate change adaptation and mitigation both is of high importance, together with economic development and the precipitation of prosperity amongst all its people. With a population of three times that of the Dominican Republic and 6 times that of Denmark, its modest emissions of 0,7% of global GHG emissions puts its per capita emissions in the very low end.

Ghana has focused its climate change policies on ensuring a climate-resilient and climate-compatible economy while still achieving sustainable development through equitable low-carbon economic growth for Ghana. It has therefore made efforts to translate climate change into the national planning and budgeting guidelines. On these bases, Ghana has focused on five main areas in its climate change policies: 1) agriculture and food security, 2) disaster preparedness and responsiveness, 3) natural resource management, 4) equitable social development, and 5) energy, industrial and infrastructural development. Under these five focus areas, Ghana has implemented a household solar rooftop subsidy programme to disseminate renewable energy solutions and promote energy safety, implemented a sustainable transportation programme, and distributed liquefied petroleum gas for domestic cooking lowering emissions.

Ghana sees youth as an important and considerable resource in active climate change mitigation, by including 20.000 young people in an ambitious forest plantation programme as part of the process of restoring degraded lands in the country. This followed the publication of the Country's first national youth policy In 2010 which provided a framework for the proliferation of youth activities. It has also increased the number of young parliamentarians to include youth in national decision making, just as it runs a youth observer programme for a single person to represent Ghana's youth in international negotiations under the UN. It sees itself as a beacon for other African countries to base their policies upon and looks to fill the shoes of the late Ghanaian Secretary General of the UN, Kofi Annan, in taking its place in international negotiations.

Republic of India

India sees global warming and climate change as the increasingly influential phenomena that it is and recognises the importance of tackling the issue in the near future. As India is a developing country with only a limited industrial base on which its economy stands, it sees economic development and poverty alleviation as the government's primary objective. It further notes, that while it is responsible for around 7% of global GHG emissions, its emission per capita is 70% lower than the world average, and 93% below that of other larger emitters, such as the United States.

India is ready to engage in international deliberations, and sees climate change negotiations as the place for it to increase its presence on the international stage. While its classification as a developing country relieved it from emissions reductions under the Kyoto Protocol, it has committed to reducing its GHG emissions with 20% by 2020. This target is pursued by doubling its investment in research and science to 2% of GDP to ensure solutions are found to the increasing global warming and sees this as a long term investment in its industry and economy. It has further established a National Clean Energy Fund to facilitate a transition to lower emissions from the increasing energy sector, and funds this fund through a newly introduced Carbon tax, thereby ensuring that whatever GHG are emitted the climate suffers the least. It does, however, note that the main focus is on poverty alleviation, though it recognises it is Low Carbon Inclusive Growth pathway that economic development and climate change mitigation is not mutually exclusive policies to pursue.

India also seeks to include youth in not just the economic sphere, for them to benefit from its economic development, but also in politics. The Young India Foundation is therefore running campaigns to get youth interested and engaged in politics, and especially to engage in the youth wings of the political parties. This is, however, hindered by the economic inequality that does not allow certain segments of society to focus on politics. As such, while work is being done to include young Indians in the political sphere, domestically or internationally through both the organisation Global Youth India or the Youth Delegate Programme, it faces hurdles that need to be alleviated prior to its full engagement.

Federal Republic of Nigeria

The Federal Republic of Nigeria recognises the problem of global warming and is looking to the international community to lower its GHG emissions, while recognising that innovation is important in adapting to a new economic model that does not strain the economy. Nigeria is the largest economy on the African continent and therefore ready to take on a role in mitigating and adapting to global warming. Though it is a large economy, its share of global emissions is small, constituting around only 0,7% of global emissions.

Nigeria has placed focus on climate mitigation and adaptation through the launch of its National Policy on Climate Change and Response Strategy(NPCC-RS) which explicitly itemises the comprehensive national goals of climate change mitigation. Under the Paris Agreement, Nigeria has committed to reducing its GHG emissions 20%, aiming at 45% conditioned on support from the international community, with its main focus being the Energy, Oil and Gas sectors, agriculture, power, and transport. To achieve its goals, Nigeria launched a sovereign green bond in 2017 to raise the capital needed to support climate related, renewable energy, energy efficiency and environmental projects, with large success, and is looking towards a new launch of further sovereign green bonds to scale up current activities. Nigeria has further looked to agroforestry for sustainable forest management, for increasing climate change mitigation.

When it comes to youth, Nigeria is actively focusing on increasing the participation of youth in political life, recently signing the “not too young to run” bill which lowered the minimum age required to run for office. Further, Nigeria has an active national youth council which seeks to increase the influence of Nigerian youth in national decision making, something the Nigerian government has favoured in multiple cases, as seen in an collaboration in the work against drug abuse. The National Youth Council of Nigeria further participates in international summits for youth and otherwise seeks to influence decision making through a democratically elected management team and council.

Republic of Peru

The Republic of Peru is one of South America's most prosperous countries and one of the fastest growing economies of the world. Its position puts it in a vulnerable position to the effects of climate change, and therefore sees climate action as an important international agenda. Though it is a prosperous country its GHG emissions, as a share of world emissions, sums to less than half a percent, at around 0,2%. However, its placement near the Amazon rain forest places it at the forefront of climate mitigation.

Peru published its first framework law on climate change in 2018, making its commitment under the Paris Agreement legally binding, but is still formulating its specific mitigation strategies. The baseline scenario for Peruvian reductions is 30% below business as usual levels in 2030. Peru has historically had more focus on adaptation than mitigation, but has recently refocused, to emphasise its mitigation efforts. Primarily among them is protection of forest carbon reserves and tackling emissions from key sectors. As such, it has pledged to reduce the deforestation rate to zero on 54 million hectares of primary forest, and increase its use of non-conventional renewables and hydroelectricity to at least 40% of national energy consumption. It further focuses on reducing emissions caused by inadequate solid waste treatment.

Peru has recently put increasing focus on youth inclusion, launching its National Youth Strategy at the second National Youth Congress in 2012. The congress then elected a national committee to ensure the strategy was implemented sufficiently. Further, the Peruvian government established the SENAJU, a government body under the ministry of education which focuses on the involvement of youth in the political and social spheres. The youth focus has also been brought to the international arena, where Peru at several occasions have brought Youth Delegates to different international forums, including several sessions of the UN General Assembly.

Russian Federation

The Russian Federation finds climate change as an important international problem to tackle, and puts itself forward as it historically has focused on ecology, even going back to the Soviet Union. Russia notes that the solving the most important tasks requires the most serious and integrated approach, and sees the presidential decree as an important and effective way to ensure an ecologically sustainable path is implemented in all parts of society. While Russia is responsible for roughly 5% of global emissions, it does see opportunities in reducing this level.

Russia is currently reviewing the first legislation to allow for emission reductions and notably reviewing measures to sanction violations of national emissions targets. It is also currently reviewing whether to ratify the Paris Agreement, as it considers its international relations. AS it has not ratified the Paris Agreement, it considers its obligations to be less for the international community and focuses on its national obligations, through a science based approach. As such, it is currently conducting a thorough investigation of the carrying capacity of its forests to consider this as a source for climate change adaptation and mitigation, and will consider proper actions once this investigation has been conducted.

Russia sees incredible potential in an engaged youth and incentivises youth participation at universities and schools throughout the country. As such, the Russian state selectively choose engaged students and incorporates these in issues of the state, though it considers international issues best left at the hands of national governments and employees therein. However, other students and youth are often include in state organised events, such as youth parliaments, actively focusing on organisations such as Young Lawyers of Russia and the Russian Youth Union. As such, it seeks for students and youth to engage in political life, though large important decisions should be taken on the basis of undisputable facts.

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia sees climate change as an international issue which must be nuanced, and which cannot be used to undermine national economies in the pursuit of narrow national interests. As such, it noted with high importance the large uncertainty of climate science, as an unsound basis for large scale transformation of the international system. With a roughly 60% of Saudi exports stemming from oil and oil products, its economy is very vulnerable to large scale transformations of national energy systems, and therefore urges caution in the transformation of energy sectors.

Saudi Arabia sees current climate change mitigation projects in the world as a destabilising of the Saudi economy, and is therefore looking to diversify its economy thus lowering its reliance on oil and fossil fuel exports. While it is responsible for large parts of the world's oil exports it does not in itself have a high level of emissions, being responsible for just over 1% of global GHG emissions. As such, Saudi Arabia considers itself a representative of the special group of countries, whose livelihood is challenged due to global warming mitigation, and it therefore wants to emphasise the special conditions of it and other countries, and will stand ready to protect these countries' interests. With the oil and fossil fuel industry of so high importance for Saudi Arabia, its diversification strategy is led by the ministry of energy, mineral and natural resources, as this has the best knowledge of the impact of policies domestic and abroad.

Saudi Arabia considers youth an important resource and focuses on education as the main condition for a sustainable developed economy. It does, however, not consider it necessary to leave youth involved in the decision making, as this has historically been well maintained by the royal family. It does, however, let youth engage in international forums, as it has previously had youth delegates at the UN General Assembly.

Republic of Singapore

The Republic of Singapore, in being a small country with close links to the Asia Pacific States, urges urgent international action to mitigate climate change. While being commonly denoted a city state, Singapore has a small GHG contribution, responsible for only about 0,1% of global emissions. It is taking action in a consensual way both domestically with its industry, and regionally and globally. It hopes that this will be the meeting where urgent action is taken.

Singapore has been on the forefront on GHG emission reductions, switching 95% of its energy to stem from natural gas, and focusing on innovation in developing new solutions to this and other global problems. It established the National Climate Change Secretariat which develops and implements domestic and international policies and strategies to tackle climate change. It further runs an Energy Efficiency Fund which supports a wide range of energy efficiency efforts in the industrial sector, and requires companies with a high energy consumption to appoint an energy manager to ensure energy efficiency in all aspects of society. Further Singapore is focusing on providing and converting transport into public transport, and as part of this effort runs a vehicle Quota System, which limits the number of cars sold each year, currently to 0,5% of the current vehicle population. With such extensive measures in place, Singapore now looks for the developed and developing world to cut their emissions in an inclusive way.

When it comes to youth Singapore emphasises the general consensual nature of Singaporean politics, which notably led to there not being any climate strikes in the spring, as opposed to the case in many other developed countries. Instead, youth is focusing on advocacy, learning, mentoring and networking to achieve its aims of taking climate action. These views are actively being engaged by the government run Youth Conversations initiative which seeks to better gauge the views and opinion of youth in Singapore. It further extends the youth participation internationally and played host to the 2018 UNLEASH sustainability conference for youth to develop ideas and projects to solve global problems. It further looks for other countries to establish such initiatives in the future.

Republic of South Africa

The Republic of South Africa has recently felt the impacts quite vividly when in mid 2017 and mid 2018 the city of Cape Town was only days from initiating water rationing. As such South Africa is looking to engage actively in the finding of solutions to mitigate climate change. Responsible for around 1% of global GHG emissions, South Africa sees room for improvement nationally, but urges fellow governments to engage with each other to reduce global emissions.

The government of South Africa is actively pursuing adaptation and mitigation efforts and have decided to put youth participation front and centre of these strategies, both nationally, locally, and at the level of different sectors. The main focus has recently been on Water management to mitigate against situations like the one in Cape Town. However, one key mitigation strategy is the GHG emission reduction, which the South African government is actively seeking through a heavy focus on substitution coal and oil based energy with renewable energy, while also stopping the rollout of nuclear energy. It further focuses on land use, land use change and forestry as a dual adaptation and mitigation strategy. South Africa has also introduced a Climate tax, the effects of which is still up for review, as it was introduced in early 2019. South Africa is also looking to raise awareness through campaigns in different forms and urges other countries to do the same.

South Africa is focusing on youth participation as a key aspect of climate mitigation, and to this end adopted a National Youth Policy to run from 2015 to 2020 to build capacity, integrate youth development into the mainstream of government policies, and strengthen a culture of patriotic citizenship. South Africa's history has shown the many dangers of exclusion and therefore places youth inclusion and participation at the heart of its focus in the National Development Plan, which also focuses on providing all youth with opportunities to engage in politics and social life on an equal footing.

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

The United Kingdom recognises the incredible problem facing the world, and recently declared a climate crisis to underscore the importance of the issue at hand. While the UK government has been attacked for using the ongoing departure from the European Union to lower environmental standards, the government recently legislated for a legally binding target of net zero emissions by 2050. It is therefore urgently taking the debate in international forums, and working to include all countries in this global problem.

The United Kingdom's pledge to net zero emissions in 2050 will mean an 80% reduction in emissions levels. Being responsible for only around 1% of global GHG emissions, the United Kingdom urges other countries to continue the work with reducing emissions. The UK has met its previous carbon budgets and are looking to outperform the budgets for 2013-2017 and for 2018-2022. Key to meeting these targets have been decarbonising the energy sector, which has been responsible for 75% of reductions so far. This has been supported by an evidence based approach with an independent body reporting to parliament on the progress of climate change policy implementation. The initial legislation of 2008 also established national natural capital accounts and other similar initiatives to support the creation of new markets for green goods and services.

For the UK youth inclusion is further an important focus area. Youth have been provided with the ability to participate in several international forums mainly for youth, such as the commonwealth and European Youth forums, but it has also been running a large UN Youth Delegate Programme with 12 youth delegates elected annually to represent youths interest. Most notably is the Youth Select Committee which is an official parliamentary body consisting of youth in the age from 15-18 which provides youth with the ability to oversee legislation relating to youth and provide its input to the legislators. As such it proposes that this initiative is considered broader, to ensure youth is included in decision-making.

United States of America

The United States of America has historically been a large emitter of GHG, but steps were taken in previous administrations to reduce these emissions. However, the current administration has focused more intensely on the competitive advantage and economic development of its industries than climate change mitigation. As such, the United States considers climate change to be little of an issue compared to other cross border issues.

The United States decided to withdraw from the Paris Agreement as it put considerable obligations on American industry which was not put on other of its commercial competitors, providing these competitors with an unfair advantage. It is therefore a prerequisite for the US that any obligation is shared evenly by all countries for it to enter into international agreements. While the USA considers climate change a potential problem it has serious concerns about the validity and reliability of the climate science and has therefore moved to ensure that any potential false information is unavailable on government websites. It has further focused more on economic development of sectors such as steel, coal and oil, to ensure its economy was competitive, while arguing that its production and extraction methods provided for cleaner versions than that of other countries.

The United States does not work actively to increase youth engagement at the federal level, though the grassroots political level is very vivid and alive. This grassroots engagement is often utilised in its development abroad where many initiatives backed by the US government focuses on youth inclusion and empowerment. It further supports the American United Nations Association in running a UN Youth Observer programme, which aims at engaging youth in the work of the UN. The US, therefore, sees youth work abroad as a cornerstone of development and empowerment, but considers youth engagement in decision-making as misguided.