



YOUTH AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

COP29 ROUNDTABLE

28 October 2024



Introduction

In the running up to COP29, from 11 to 22 November 2024 in Baku, Azerbaijan, the EU Delegation to Bangladesh and the Embassy of Sweden in Dhaka co-organised at the EU Residence a COP29 roundtable on “Youth as Agents of Change”. The aim of the roundtable was to share and discuss the EU position for COP29 and to learn from 18 Bangladeshi youth climate leaders about their priorities and concerns and how they see their own contribution to climate action in Bangladesh and abroad.

The roundtable was hosted by the EU Ambassador, H.E. Michael Miller, and Swedish Ambassador, H.E. Nicolas Weeks, accompanied by the Italian Ambassador, H.E. Antonio Alessandro, and high level representatives from Denmark, France, Germany and the Netherlands. After setting out the EU position and a first reaction by the youth leaders, the participants broke up in smaller groups, discussing the following four areas: 1. Adaptation and Loss and Damage; 2. Financing - including the New Collective Quantified Goal; 3. Nationally Determined Contribution and Long Term Strategy; 4. Green energy Transition - including energy efficiency, renewable energy and the phasing out of fossil fuels. The roundtable then reconvened with a discussion on the main conclusions and outcome of the four groups, followed by closing remarks by the EU and Swedish Ambassadors and two of the youth leaders.

The roundtable was followed by a reception with the youth leaders, high level representatives from the Team Europe Initiative on the Green Energy Transition, including the EU Member States, Norway and Switzerland and European Financial Institutions, as well as Bangladeshi officials, NGOs, think tanks and research institutions. H.E. Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Adviser to the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, and the Ministry of Water Resources, joined the reception as Chief Guest, engaging directly and at length with the youth.

The conclusions and recommendations by the participating youth climate leaders could be summarised as follows:

Adaptation and Loss and Damage

- **Adaptation vs mitigation:** Currently 50% of the climate financing should be allocated to adaptation and 50% to mitigation. Given the increasing climate impacts, there should be a stronger focus on adaptation (70-30%).
- **Use of the funding in Bangladesh:** in Bangladesh the allocation for adaptation is about 20%. It was recommended to increase this to 40%. Bangladesh needs a clear and specific framework for implementing and operationalizing climate funds. Accountability mechanisms should ensure transparency in fund utilization.
- **Increased focus on grassroots organisations and youth:** Currently, funds primarily go to governmental agencies and large NGOs, with limited access for grassroots organizations and youth groups. It is recommended to allocate funding directly to grassroots organizations to support bottom-up movement building.
- **Loss and Damage:** Increased funding and research, in particular for Loss and Damage (L&D) issues is necessary.
- **Need for better definitions, calculation methods and assessments:** Current calculation methods for adaptation and mitigation financing often rely on rough estimates or “thumb rules.” There’s a need for standardized and clear guidelines on how adaptation and mitigation financing should be calculated. Also, a clear detailed definition of L&D is needed, allowing for a distinction between L&D, adaptation, and mitigation funding. Climate vulnerability assessments are needed to better allocate L&D funds. Activities overlap between adaptation and L&D; e.g., rebuilding homes after a cyclone could be seen as either.

Climate Financing

- **Need for clear definitions:** "climate finance" and "sustainable development" are to be clearly defined, in order to be able to differentiate between development finance and climate finance. Significant funds are being invested in these areas, yet the distinction is often misunderstood.
- **Climate finance requirements:** Climate finance should be gender-responsive, needs-based (not simply to meet quotas), and grant-based.
- **More finance for adaptation:** It was recommended to double adaptation finance for more effective climate resilience.
- **From funding wars and fossil fuels to climate funding:** It was suggested to re-channel financing that currently goes into funding wars and fossil fuel subsidies to climate finance initiatives.
- **Empower youth:** Allocation of a portion of funds specifically for Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE), focusing on youth capacity building, education, and skills development. Youth should also be empowered by involving them in private sector climate solutions. Getting funding for youth organization from development partners is often difficult. Youth organisations need more support. Finance should support sustainable and innovative climate projects driven by youth.
- **Need for robust monitoring:** A robust framework is needed to track where funds are allocated and how they are utilized, both in the present and for future purposes. Developing mechanisms for accountability within recipient countries, especially Least Developed Countries (LDCs) receiving climate finance. These monitoring mechanisms should also ensure that youth-led climate projects are sustainable and impactful over time.

Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) and Long Term Strategy (LTS)

- **EU's climate goals and commitments:** The EU was viewed as an example for other regions, though improvements can always be made given the current climate crisis.
- **Support needed:** The EU should provide financial, technical, and expertise support to help Bangladesh achieve its NDCs and climate commitments.
- **Whole of society / coalition of stakeholders / regular dialogues:** A diverse coalition of stakeholders (including businesses and industries, civil society, government, NGOs, and embassies) should be created to foster a “whole of society” approach to NDC achievement, as the whole society is needed to meet the NDC goals. Regular, inclusive dialogues need to be facilitated between the various stakeholders and the government to ensure continuous engagement and to address climate impacts comprehensively. The EU is asked to help in facilitating such coalitions.
- **Institutionalise youth involvement:** Develop a formal mechanism to involve youth in the NDC process (implementation, revision, etc.) to ensure that their perspectives and contributions are integrated, in particular also in relation to NDC implementation and tracking.
- **Regional cooperation in South Asia:** Support regional cooperation in South Asia on climate issues, as a unified regional approach would strengthen South Asia's position in global climate discussions. The EU is requested to support, including as regards the creation of a regional platform.
- **Financial, Technical and Expertise support:** EU assistance is needed for providing free technology to enhance primary sector resilience in Bangladesh. EU can also play an instrumental role in supporting Bangladesh to implement its NDC through financial, technical and expertise support.

Green Energy Transition

- **EU position:** The youth leaders supported the EU's ambitious stance on reducing fossil fuel dependency, tripling renewable energy capacity, and doubling energy efficiency.
- **Green energy transition in Bangladesh:** Bangladesh's energy mix consists of only 4% renewable energy, and is relying on fossil fuels (oil, gas, and coal). The Climate Prosperity Plan targets 40% renewable energy by 2041. The fossil fuel dependency and high energy costs create challenges. The existing misconceptions about high renewable energy costs slow down progress. Balancing economic development with sustainable energy goals remains a significant issue. There is a need for transparency and public monitoring in energy transition efforts.
- **EU support:** EU support is requested to assist Bangladesh in reaching its energy transition goals outlined in its Master Plan and Climate Prosperity Plan, including through Global Gateway and Team Europe. The EU should meet its commitments to help Bangladesh moving away from fossil fuels towards a renewable, sustainable future.
- **EU support to youth:** Bangladeshi youth needs more capacity building, negotiation skills, training, and technical expertise from the EU. Improved access to finance for youth-led organizations in the renewable energy sector is critical. There is a need for long-term advocacy and awareness programs instead of short-term, ad-hoc projects. The EU should include youth in renewable energy processes for sustained engagement.
- **Regional energy connectivity:** Support for creating regional and global alliances to strengthen renewable energy transition initiatives.

Closing remarks by the youth

In their closing remarks, the youth thanked the EU and Sweden for providing the platform to share their perspectives. They emphasised the importance of an ongoing dialogue to be followed by action to meet the critical climate goals. They acknowledged the challenges faced by Bangladesh, from economic constraints to the increasing impacts of climate change, but highlighted the hope and determination within their generation to be indeed agents of positive change.

With only five years left to achieve the Paris Agreement targets, they urged global solidarity and pointed to the EU as a key ally in this mission. The youth also highlighted the need for easier access to financing for youth-led initiatives, streamlined processes to support their efforts, and improved visa accessibility to enable participation in international forums. They called for practical steps to continue these conversations and move towards actionable, inclusive solutions. They urged for a clear definition of climate finance, not only loan based but also grant based finance, right based and accessible and gender responsive climate finance. Better transparency on the financing is needed.

Financing from the Global North should not hinder the right to development for any country. At the same time, the right to development should address the most vulnerable. Young people are eager to see climate justice achieved for Bangladesh and beyond. More formal integration into government negotiation processes, could enhance their involvement. Providing young people with better access to information and resources would enable them to play a more impactful role in advancing climate action.

Way forward

The European Union and Sweden proposed to continue this climate dialogue **“Youth as Agents of Change”** between youth climate leaders and the Team Europe members, with the next meeting focusing on the outcome of COP29 and concrete ideas for further collaboration.

