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**PARIS 2015**

UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE

Commonwealth Youth  
Expert Group Meeting on  
Climate Change

**Policy Recommendations  
and Voluntary Commitments**

JUNE 2015



# Contents

<b>3</b>	Preamble
<b>4</b>	Executive Summary
<b>6</b>	I. Strengthening Global Partnership and Citizens' Participation in Climate Change
<b>8</b>	II. Enhancing Research on Climate Change and Enabling Access to Information and Data
<b>10</b>	III. Strengthening the role of the United Nations Alliance on Climate Change Education, Training and Public Awareness by considering young people's needs and expectations
<b>12</b>	IV. Adapting Climate Change Responses to Human Health, Gender and Human Rights
<b>14</b>	V. Realising Youth Employment and Youth Entrepreneurship through Climate Change
<b>16</b>	VI. Empowering Citizens and Youth in Disaster Risk Reduction, Recovery and Resilience
<b>18</b>	VII. Building the 'Blue Economy' and Sustainable Ocean Governance for Citizens' Wellbeing
<b>20</b>	VIII. Reinforcing Young People's Role in Climate Finance and Providing them with Skills
<b>22</b>	IX. Achieving a 100% Renewable Energy Future with Sustainable Energy Access for All
<b>24</b>	X. Other Important Matters

# Preamble

For young people around the world, climate change means a lifetime of vulnerability to unpredictable and increasingly climate risks. Despite bearing the least responsibility for the conditions accelerating climate change, young people will and already face the most consequences. They have to work with others in unison not to stand as victims, but as those who aim for climate and social justice, because survival is not negotiable, and never will it be!

We are a group of fourteen young experts and practitioners in climate change representing eleven Commonwealth nations who gathered together in London, United Kingdom, from 9-11 June 2015 during the Commonwealth Youth Expert Group Meeting on Climate Change. The meeting aimed to formulate key recommendations and voluntary commitments for a post-2015 climate change agenda through a youth lens. It was convened by the Commonwealth Youth Climate Change Network (CYCN) with support from the Youth Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth Youth Council (CYC), and placed under the celebration of 'A Young Commonwealth' as the 2015 Commonwealth's theme.

We represent the billions of young people who are concerned and affected worldwide by climate change threatening our lives, our families, and our common future. Our gathering has proven that young people can unite and work together across nations, cultures and differences to support decision-makers in reaching an ambitious climate agreement with a legal force that will benefit the world today and future generations tomorrow. We hope our recommendations and voluntary commitments will be taken forward by world leaders and Heads of Commonwealth nations, and be included in their pledges in the lead up to and during the 21st Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21). We are committed to contribute to a sustainable post-2015 global agreement on climate change and to work towards limiting global warming to 1.5 degree Celsius, achieving 100% renewable energy, and protecting both the environment and our communities from climatic impacts. We ask world leaders and Heads of Commonwealth nations to hear our voice and act upon the following recommendations, and we invite our peers, all stakeholders and the international community to take concrete actions leading to sustainable solutions.

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# Executive Summary



“Young people deserve more than just being engaged in climate change policy or action; they need to be empowered and equipped with the necessary skills to act as equal partners in the global response to climate change. This should be our main goal given their creativity, energy and uniqueness.”

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**Jean Paul Brice Affana Affana,**  
27, Cameroon

We are a group of fourteen young experts and practitioners in climate change representing eleven Commonwealth nations who gathered together in London, United Kingdom, from 9-11 June 2015 during the Commonwealth Youth Expert Group Meeting on Climate Change. We hope our recommendations will be taken forward by world leaders and Heads of Commonwealth nations, and be included in their pledges in the lead up to and during the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). We are fully committed to make the following recommendations happen.

We see the upcoming COP21 as a relevant opportunity to **strengthening global partnership and citizens' participation in climate change**. Hence, we recommend the **creation of a Global Partnership on Climate Change under the auspices of the UNFCCC** to serve as an independent body that strengthens the role of civil society in implementing global climate change responses with meaningful citizens' participation. Furthermore, the Partnership could play a key role in mobilizing funds for global climate change solutions in support to the Green Climate Fund and other financial institutions.

**Enhancing research on climate change and enabling access to information and data** are two necessary steps to empower citizens' action on climate change. For achieving that, we recommend the **creation of a Youth Vulnerability Index on Climate Change and Disasters**, which can be a mapping tool highlighting the existing and various impacts of climate change and related disasters on children and youth, including those that are marginalised and with disabilities. The Index can be accessible both online and offline in youth friendly ways.

We believe that a **strong consideration of young people's needs and expectations within the United Nations Alliance on Climate Change Education, Training and Public Awareness will help strengthening its role**. We recommend a commitment from Commonwealth Member



States, other governments and donors to the sustainability of the Alliance through the provision of significant financial resources, institutional endorsement with Article 6 national focal points, and support to the capacity of young people to deliver educational and awareness raising campaigns at local level, while also setting up focal points where needed.

In order to **adapting climate change responses to human health, gender and human rights**, we recommend the **establishment of a United Nations Joint Programme on Gender, Health and Human Rights within the UNFCCC process** which can help achieve five key objectives, including: (i) improve gender-responsive climate action and policy, (ii) develop appropriate mitigation and adaptation measures, (iii) support governments to integrate direct and indirect responses to climatic impacts on health in their national development policies, (iv) provide research evidence as a basis of understanding climatic impacts on gender, health and human rights, and (v) protect victims of climate change and disasters from human rights abuse, mainly during extreme weather events and conflicts.

It is possible to **transforming climate change into opportunities for youth employment and youth entrepreneurship**. We recommend the provision by Commonwealth member states, other governments and relevant institutions of adequate financial resources and capacity support to young entrepreneurs for **the creation of youth-led Climate-Smart Agriculture, low-carbon and social enterprises** which align expertise, skills, innovation and competence towards low-carbon and 'green' economies in agricultural transformation, climate change mitigation and adaptation and development.

Disasters pose a huge threat on the lives of world citizens today more than ever before. **Empowering citizens and youth's ability and action in disaster risk reduction, recovery and resilience** could be achieved. We encourage the UNFCCC Secretariat to mobilise parties to the Convention towards the enforcement of Article 48(e) of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 adopted in March 2015 by the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction which calls for international organisations and treaty bodies, and international financial institutions at the global and regional levels to support developing countries, at their request, in the implementation of the Framework, with youths' support.

Building the 'Blue Economy' and sustainable ocean governance can enable citizens' wellbeing. **The formulation and implementation of national policies which enable sustainable ocean governance and the 'Blue Economy' address youth unemployment and job creation** by small states' governments that we recommend to world leaders, can also have indirect action on other social issues affecting young people, such as migration, limited access to information and technologies, participation in crime, lack of participation in governance and policies, etc.

**Access to climate funds by governments can be built up on young people empowered role in climate finance if they are provided with necessary skills and participation spaces.** We recommend that the Commonwealth Climate Finance Skills Hub which is to be agreed by Heads of Commonwealth governments at their meeting in Malta in November this year includes within its structure youth desks both at the headquarters and at the regional nodes level, as well as a youth representative to be part of the Hub's governing body.

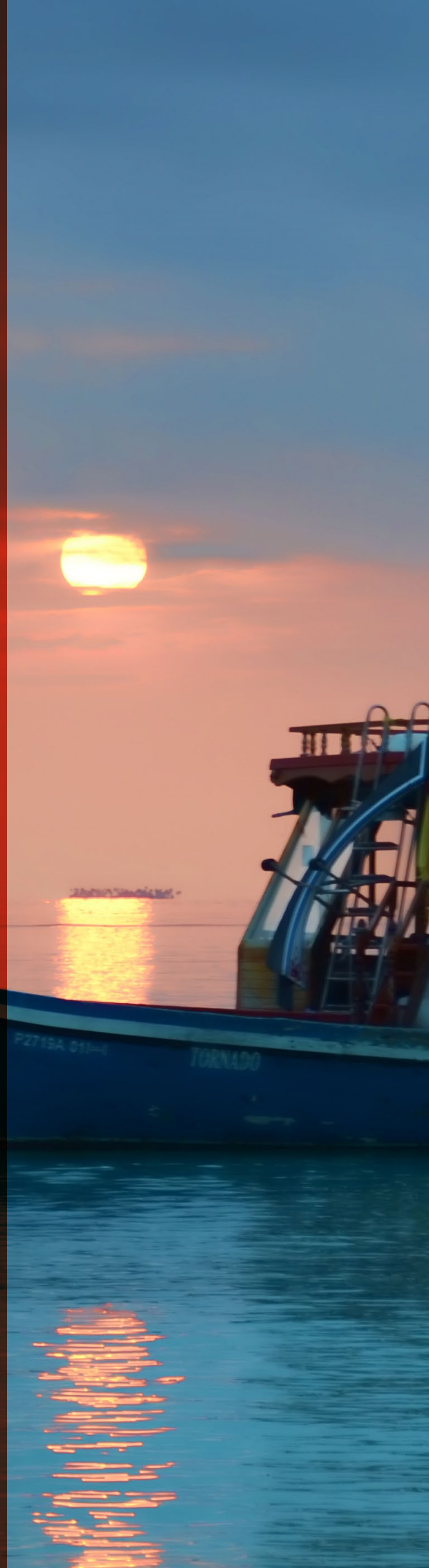
We ask world leaders to commit at COP21 to achieving a 100% renewable energy future with sustainable energy access for all. We recommend that **Parties at the UNFCCC take strides to acknowledge, in a legally-binding agreement, that the long term goal of phasing out fossil fuels and transitioning to 100% renewable energy by 2050 is essential and urgently needed.** We also recommend putting young people at the centre of promoting the use of renewable energy within communities all around the world, building their capacities to do so.

We commit to a sustainable post-2015 global agreement on climate change and to be working towards limiting global warming to 1.5 degree Celsius to protect both the environment and our communities from climatic impacts. We ask Heads of Commonwealth nations and other world leaders to hear our voice and act upon our recommendations, and fully include us, our peers, all stakeholders and the international community to take concrete actions and solutions.



“My parents talk about the beautiful country that we live in. Now I only see small pieces of it, which is enough to make me happy, but because the climate is changing I would not have anything to show my children. They have the right to live the wonderful life that I am lucky to live before our beautiful country finally becomes no more. The damage, you are doing right now, is making our life unbearable. Politicians, would you commit murder, when you know it is wrong? Cannot you just sacrifice a little for the greater good?”

**Mohammed Axam Maumoon, 20 Maldives**



# I. Strengthening Global Partnership and Citizens' Participation in Climate Change

Tackling climate change requires proper and well coordinated collaboration between relevant institutions, decision makers, private sector and civil society. However, despite the efforts of the international community and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), unfair and non-legally-binding decisions and agreements towards global responses to climate change within the UNFCCC processes threaten these responses and heavily limit the capacity of civil society to hold governments accountable to their promises. Strengthening the participation of citizens, including children and youth, to combat climate change could lead to stronger and successful responses and to better coordinated efforts across the globe.

## **We recommend:**

- The creation of a Global Partnership on Climate Change under the auspices of the UNFCCC to serve as an independent body that strengthens the role of civil society in implementing global climate change responses with meaningful citizens' participation. This body could ensure that citizens are included and represented within all climate change actions and decision making processes, hence improving government's transparency and accountability, which are crucial elements of democratic governance and central to development goals.
- Furthermore, the Partnership could play a key role in mobilizing funds for climate change solutions in support to the Green Climate Fund and other institutions, by connecting donors and encouraging them to invest in climate change solutions. As a result, the Partnership could hold governments and donors accountable to their funding promises and help putting in place suitable sanctions to those that do not fulfil agreements they have committed to.

## **Our Commitment:**

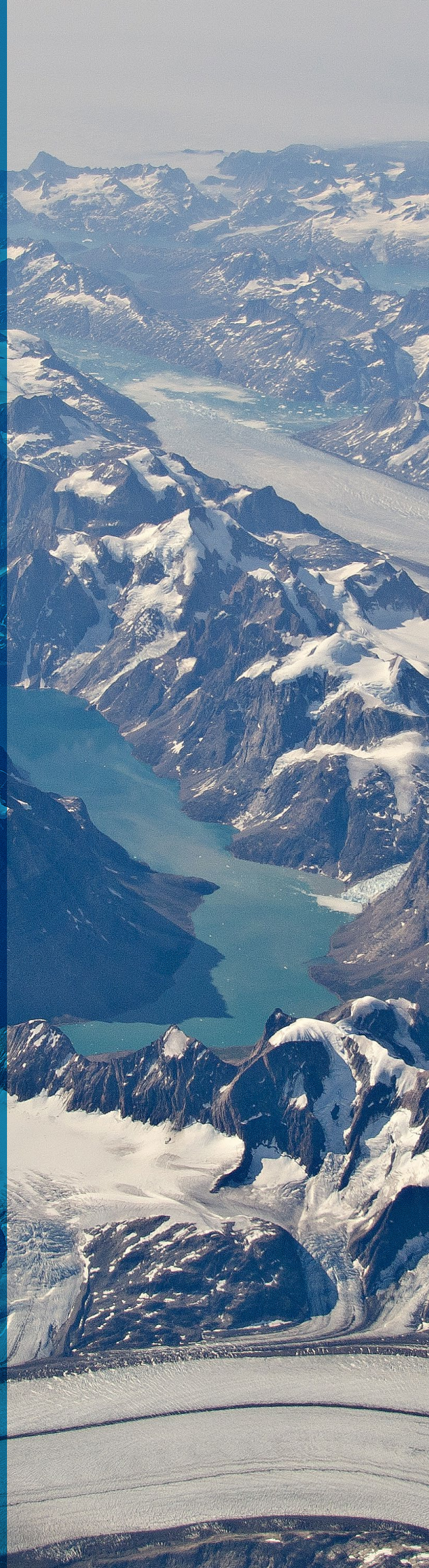
We commit to work with Commonwealth Member States, other governments, the UNFCCC Secretariat, the Commonwealth Secretariat and civil society in formulating a proposal towards the creation of a Global Partnership on Climate Change following an agreement at COP21.





“In 2001 when I started school the sea ice used to freeze over to the next island, maybe for 2 km. My family and I used to walk to that island but now, 8 years later, the sea ice is only frozen for 500 m and it is unstable so we, even the great hunters, don’t know when it’s safe. I don’t want the ice to disappear because most of the Greenlandic culture is on ice, especially sea ice. If all the ice disappears you can say the Greenlandic culture disappears too.”

**Ivalu Christensen, 19, Greenland**





## II. Enhancing Research on Climate Change and Enabling Access to Information and Data

The acquisition, interpretation and accessibility of evidence, data and information for all citizens about climate change are the primary conditions in generating a wider understanding of its realities. This can help actions guided by governments, the private sector and civil society. Promoting research and enhancing access to findings and data can contribute to demonstrate citizens' vulnerabilities and increase their level of awareness and action as well.

### **We recommend:**

- The creation of a Youth Vulnerability Index on Climate Change and Disasters, which can be a mapping tool highlighting the existing and various impacts of climate change and related disasters on children and youth, including those that are marginalised and with disabilities.
- Making the Index accessible both online and offline in youth friendly ways so that it can provide evidence and projections in the short and long terms on the specific impacts and consequences. It can be used for planning youth involvement in climate change responses and disaster risk management and preparedness worldwide and across vulnerable countries.

### **Our Commitment:**

We commit to work with our peers, Commonwealth Member States, other governments, the UNFCCC Secretariat, the Commonwealth Secretariat and civil society actors in creating a Youth Vulnerability Index on Climate Change and Disasters following an agreement at COP21. We also commit to mobilise our peers in providing necessary data and evidence to the Index, using youth friendly methods and tools to collect and share information from rural and urban youths.

### III. Strengthening the role of the United Nations Alliance on Climate Change Education, Training and Public Awareness by considering young people's needs and expectations

Article 6 of the UNFCCC stipulates the promotion of education, training and public awareness on climate change in a quest to reducing illiteracy amongst citizens. The implementation of Article 6 is a long-term process that requires a dynamic structure to support national efforts and mobilise relevant actors. The creation of the United Nations Alliance on Climate Change Education, Training and Public Awareness under the coordination of the UNFCCC Secretariat in 2012 offers an enormous opportunity to empower citizens' knowledge on climate change while also giving them a key role to play. The Alliance can only deliver successful results when it is fully supported by governments, the private sector, donors, and civil society constituencies. Strengthening the Alliance and giving an important role to children and youth in this process entails the strong consideration of their needs, demands, aspirations and exact vulnerabilities.

#### **We recommend:**

- Commitment from Commonwealth Member States, other governments and donors to the sustainability of the Alliance through the provision of significant financial resources, institutional endorsement with Article 6 national focal points, and support to the capacity of young people to deliver educational and awareness raising campaigns at local level.
- Mainstreaming the participation of children and youth in the Alliance activities by the UNFCCC Secretariat and all members by considering their needs, demands, aspirations and specific vulnerabilities to climate change.
- Furthermore, we recommend that the Commonwealth Secretariat joins the membership of the Alliance to demonstrate the strong commitment of Commonwealth Member States to the implementation of Article 6 of the UNFCCC, and work with others in mainstreaming the participation of young people through funding and human resources (national focal points).

#### **Our Commitment:**

We commit to continue volunteering as Agents of Change to inform, educate, engage and mobilise our peers and other citizens in climate change, and to work with our respective Article 6 national focal points in developing and implementing national plans and activities.





"I was once selected to participate to a workshop on the UNFCCC process as part of a group of young people, especially from developing nations. That was a good opportunity to build up my knowledge and receive significant skills. We were asked to carry out research once back home with a number of resources available on Internet, and to train our peers through sensitization and mobilization. When I went home, I could not access all the materials due to limited and expensive Internet access. It was a challenge for me to download these resources, use or share them. I thought about other participants from developing nations and contacted a few. They told me that they faced the same issue, in addition to the complex language of the materials. We were all frustrated! It can be very difficult to create a change when you can even not access all the information you need. This is the reality of many young people from developing nations that are interested to play a key role within the UNFCCC process but cannot at all."

**Yvette Ampaire, 29, Uganda**





“300 km north of the town that I grew up in is Port Augusta, the home to two of Australia’s dirtiest coal fired power stations. The local community faces a 50% higher chance of dying from lung disease than anyone else in the country. Every day we are exposed to this and our lives are being threatened. Sick of this, we sought out cleaner solutions for powering the state and find solution to save our life, our health. But we can’t do this alone, without strong collective efforts. We need our government and other partners to work with us on this issue.”

**Kelly Mackenzie, 26, Australia**



## IV. Adapting Climate Change Responses to Human Health, Gender and Human Rights

Demographic trends and various studies show strong linkages between human health, gender perceptions, human rights and climate change. In a changing climate, mainstreaming gender, addressing reproductive health needs and protecting human rights could be left behind, while, they affect countries' abilities to adapt to climate change. According to a survey conducted by UNFCCC (2010), climate change potentially represents a major threat to the health and socio-economic stability of young people – particularly in developing countries, where 80% live. The intensification of extreme weather events is likely to be a major factor affecting the health and safety of many youth living in these areas (UNEP, 2011). Impacts of climate change also affect women with the poorest being the most vulnerable – 70% of the world's poor are women. Even though women are disproportionately affected, it is increasingly evident that involving them in all decision-making processes on climate action is a significant factor in meeting climate challenges and achieving long-term solutions. In fact, women play a crucial role in climate change adaptation and mitigation actions worldwide, while also being victims of conflicts. In addition, preventing human rights abuse and protecting them in an event of climate impact or disaster still remains complex to achieve, especially in vulnerable nations.

### **We recommend:**

- The establishment of a United Nations Joint Programme on Gender, Health and Human Rights within the UNFCCC process which can achieve objectives such as: (i) improve gender-responsive climate action and policy focusing on mitigation, adaptation, capacity-building, technology development and transfer, (ii) develop appropriate mitigation and adaptation measures that integrate impacts on health, family planning and reproductive health needs, (iii) support governments to integrate direct and indirect responses to climatic impacts on health in their national development policies, (iv) provide research evidence as a basis of understanding climatic impacts on gender, health and human rights to help slow population growth and reduce health and women's vulnerability to climate change, and (v) protect victims of climate change and disasters from human rights abuse, mainly during extreme weather events and conflicts.
- That the Joint Programme helps enhancing longer-term mainstreaming of women in climate change policy and decision-making processes by calling for governments to allocate one third of their delegations to women at UNFCCC meetings so that they can hold higher negotiator positions and play a key role in global climate change negotiations and research.

### **Our Commitment:**

We are committing to empower young people's understanding of the linkages between health, gender, human rights and climate change. We are also available to work with all UNFCCC constituencies, the UNFCCC Secretariat and the Commonwealth Secretariat in developing a proposal for the establishment of a United Nations Joint Programme on Gender, Health and Human Rights following an agreement at COP21.

## V. Realising Youth Employment and Youth Entrepreneurship through Climate Change

A study conducted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2015) highlights that almost 74 million young people (aged 15–24) were looking for work in 2014, with the youth unemployment rate reaching 13.1% — which is 3 times the adult unemployment rate. The study recognises that the amount of entrepreneurs increases following the rate of youth unemployment. This demonstrates how young people care about exploring new areas for job creation and entrepreneurship. Looking at innovative approaches brings us into a reflection on how climate change could offer opportunities for youth employment, and entrepreneurship, while also reducing youth migration from affected regions. With their creativity and uniqueness, young people can develop entrepreneurship initiatives that promote environmental conservation and natural resources protection, while also generating good incomes. Climate change and related opportunities such as the ‘Green Economy’ and ‘Blue Economy’ can have unexplored potentials for achieving global youth entrepreneurship and employment through job creation in these fields. For this to happen, suitable capacity support, training, funding and policies are needed.

### **We recommend:**

- The provision by Commonwealth states, other governments and relevant institutions of adequate financial resources and capacity support to young entrepreneurs for the creation of youth-led Climate-Smart Agriculture, low-carbon and social enterprises which align expertise, skills, innovation and competence towards low-carbon and ‘green’ economies in agricultural transformation, climate change mitigation and adaptation and development.
- The Global Partnership on Climate Change, following its creation at COP21, to harness and fully sustain the development of a generation of young entrepreneurs in the above fields.

### **Our Commitment:**

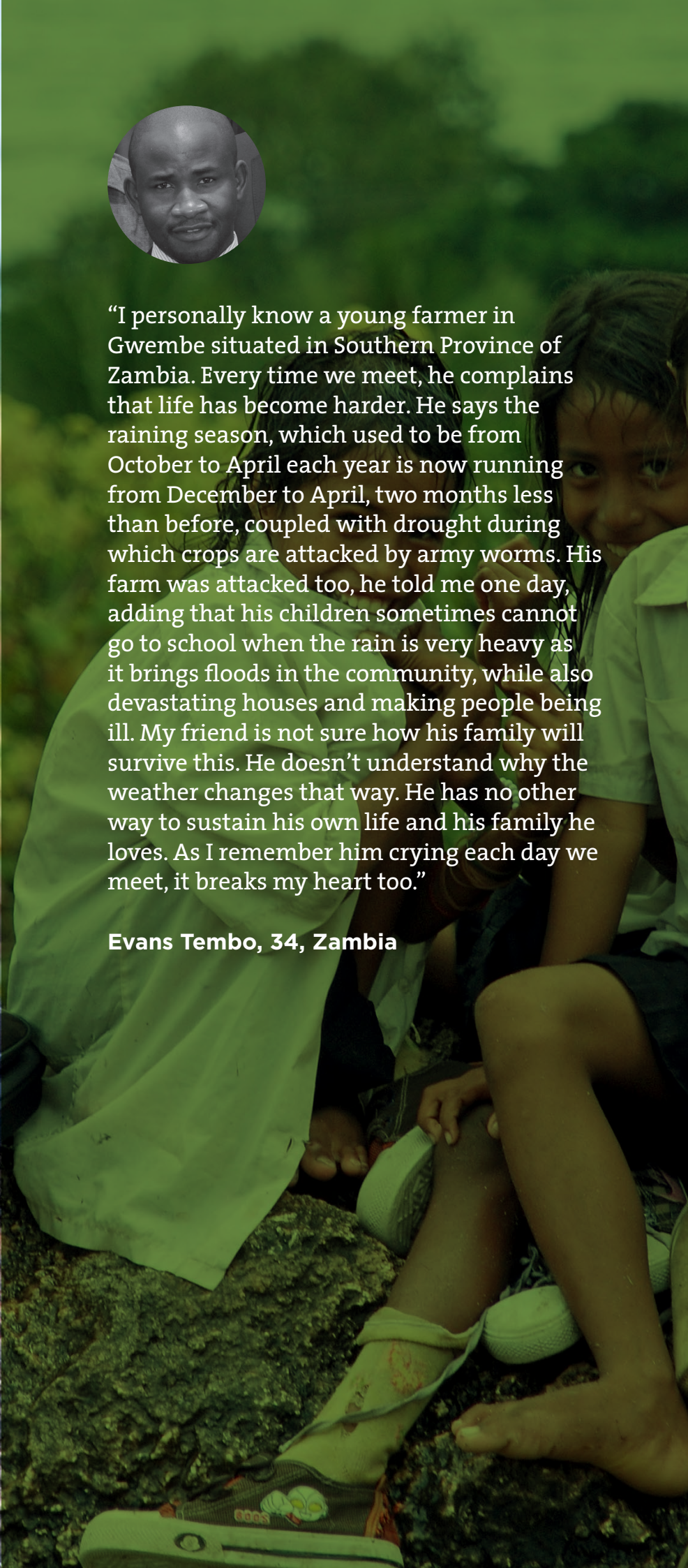
We commit to conducting training and capacity-building activities for the development of climate and incentive-based projects as well as low-carbon enterprises led by young people. We will also continue encouraging the promotion of youth-led climate resilient and low-carbon development innovations, and help mobilising funding and training resources for young people.





“I personally know a young farmer in Gwembe situated in Southern Province of Zambia. Every time we meet, he complains that life has become harder. He says the raining season, which used to be from October to April each year is now running from December to April, two months less than before, coupled with drought during which crops are attacked by army worms. His farm was attacked too, he told me one day, adding that his children sometimes cannot go to school when the rain is very heavy as it brings floods in the community, while also devastating houses and making people being ill. My friend is not sure how his family will survive this. He doesn't understand why the weather changes that way. He has no other way to sustain his own life and his family he loves. As I remember him crying each day we meet, it breaks my heart too.”

**Evans Tembo, 34, Zambia**







“In 2008, four hurricanes hit Haiti and in a period of just two months. Because of that all the schools in the country were closed for one month, so I could not go to school for a month. But the sad part is that I could not study because my home was affected. I was hurting for other kids like those living in Gonaïves City because they could not study because of the flooding and many of the schools were ruined. Think about your children!”

**Marie Moïse Louissaint, 21, Haiti**



## VI. Empowering Citizens and Youth in Disaster Risk Reduction, Recovery and Resilience

In March 2015, the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Japan adopted the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. The Framework is the successor instrument to the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-2015. In fact, preventing disasters and building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters are two unconditional steps towards sustainable, inclusive and safe resilient societies and human settlements. Disasters can disproportionately affect Small Island Developing States (SIDS) due to their unique and particular vulnerabilities. SIDS belong to the world's most vulnerable communities on which disasters pose an important threat to the life of their citizens, and the effects of disasters, some of which have increased in intensity, have been exacerbated by climate change. There is a critical need to build resilience of small states, given their special case. Engaging young people and other stakeholders in the global response to disaster risk reduction, recovery and resilience should be considered as a priority given that they can all provide particular support through the implementation of existing frameworks and policies.

### **We recommend:**

- That the UNFCCC Secretariat mobilises parties to the Convention towards the enforcement of Article 48(e) of the Sendai Framework which calls for international organisations and treaty bodies, and international financial institutions at the global and regional levels to support developing countries, at their request, in the implementation of the Framework.
- That Commonwealth Member States and other governments join efforts with civil society and the Commonwealth Disaster Management Agency to support the UNFCCC Secretariat's action on disaster risk reduction, resilience and recovery, while also empowering the role young people can play here once provided with capacity support and in accordance with legislation, national practice and educational curricula, as stated in the Sendai Framework.

### **Our Commitment:**

We commit to partner with the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth Disaster Management Agency and other stakeholders and institutions in delivering training, capacity-building and research activities to provide young people with skills, tools and knowledge on disaster preparedness and recovery. We also commit to help elaborating and implementing disaster risk reduction policies within our home countries, and to developing and disseminating educational materials that strengthen the role of young people as active equal partners.





“Lionfish is a alien invasive specie in the Caribbean waters which is said to have ‘come into the Caribbean waters after escaping an aquarium following a hurricane.’ With its elongated spines and zebra stripes, it is considered somewhat exotic, and despite that it has gained quite a reputation for its insatiable appetite for large quantities of local fish species. As such marine researchers consider it a threat to the biodiversity of the marine ecosystem with long term impacts on marine eco-services. Many Caribbean governments launched intensive campaigns to reduce the expansion of the lionfish population in our waters. The campaigns generated quite a stir and some persons were initially fearful of the “big spiny fish” initially, others were intrigued by the idea of a fish that resembled a lion. As a part of these campaigns, people are being encouraged to eat more lionfish, hence restaurants are adding it to their menus and festivals feature it in cooking demonstrations or competitions. Active participation of young people in these initiatives is very helpful in curbing the growth of this fish population and making what could have been an environmental catastrophe into a tool for food security.”

**Ayesha Constable, 30, Jamaica**



## VII. Building the ‘Blue Economy’ and Sustainable Ocean Governance for Citizens’ Wellbeing

A large number of SIDS has an impressive biological diversity wealth which needs to be protected and safeguarded as a world patrimony. However, they also often have large ocean spaces that can be used for growing the ‘Blue Economy’ to provide livelihood, employment opportunities and food security to youths. It is important to ensure youths are safeguarding sustainable ocean governance while reaping the opportunities the ‘Blue Economy’ can provide, particularly now that oceans are facing increasing pressures as a result of climate change. Involving youths in this effort is crucial as they will be the bearers of change as well as suffer the consequences of climate change on oceans, seas and marine resources which impede SIDS’ sustainable development. Empowering the capacity of young people to protect SIDS’ biological diversity through job creation and entrepreneurship in agriculture, fisheries, bio-business and tourism development can help building sustainable ocean governance across small states.

### **We recommend:**

- The formulation and implementation of national policies which enable sustainable ocean governance and the ‘Blue Economy’ address youth unemployment and job creation by small states’ governments, with indirect action on other social issues affecting the youths, such as migration, crime, lack of access to information or technologies, participation in policy, etc.
- Providing young people across SIDS regions with specific knowledge, capacity and skills oriented towards the creation of jobs and youth enterprises which could help transform lives and communities by generating income and supporting SIDS’ national economies.

### **Our Commitment:**

We commit to help elaborate and implement policies which address youth unemployment and job creation through sustainable ocean governance and the ‘Blue Economy’ with support from our governments and relevant institutions. We also commit to develop and deliver training and capacity-building workshops on these topics among our peers across SIDS regions as we are aware that sustainable ocean governance and the ‘Blue Economy’ still remain unknown by a majority of young people across small states, hence limiting their ability to engage in them.

## VIII. Reinforcing Young People's Role in Climate Finance and Providing them with Skills

Despite the establishment of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and other financial institutions to fund global responses to climate change, climate finance continues to suffer from low allocation of resources. A number of developed countries did not meet their finance targets both on adaptation and mitigation or did not allocate funds to the GCF at all. The current trends in climate finance added to the lack of skills and capacity to mobilise resources continue to have an impact on the most affected populations — especially the young generations. If more funds are needed by the GCF through continued commitments from donors, new skills, projects and resources mobilisations strategies are also needed to fill the existing gaps and guarantee that suitable resources are made available to enable effective responses to the climate threat. Furthermore, many developing nations find these funds not accessible due to varying conditions and requirements, such as lack of capacity at the national level to meet the application standards, lack of a holistic view of the project cycle proposed, etc. A citizen driven monitoring and accountability approach to climate finance is not yet in place, which limits civil society, including young people's interest in the topic. However, the Colombo Declaration on Sustainable, Inclusive and Equitable Development adopted in 2013 by Heads of Commonwealth nations reaffirmed that achieving growth with equity and promoting sustainable development requires intensified efforts and could be achieved at national level through strengthened public administration and institutions, reinforcing accountability, and developing the necessary institutional capacity, knowledge and skill levels, particularly among young people. Therefore, young people need suitable skills and knowledge to play that role.

### **We recommend:**

- That the Commonwealth Climate Finance Skills Hub which is to be agreed by Heads of Commonwealth governments at their meeting in Malta in November this year includes within its structure youth desks both at the headquarters and at the regional nodes level, where youth workers can be hired and given the responsibility to mobilise and work with their peers in learning, capacity, training, internships and fellowships activities through the Hub.
- That the Hub helps achieve young people's increased understanding, knowledge, capacity, training and interest in climate finance by mainstreaming youth participation in its plans.
- A youth representative to be part of the Hub's governing body to ensure that young people's needs, demands and aspirations are considered within all decision-making process, and throughout the planning, implementation, monitoring and accountability of all activities.

### **Our Commitment:**

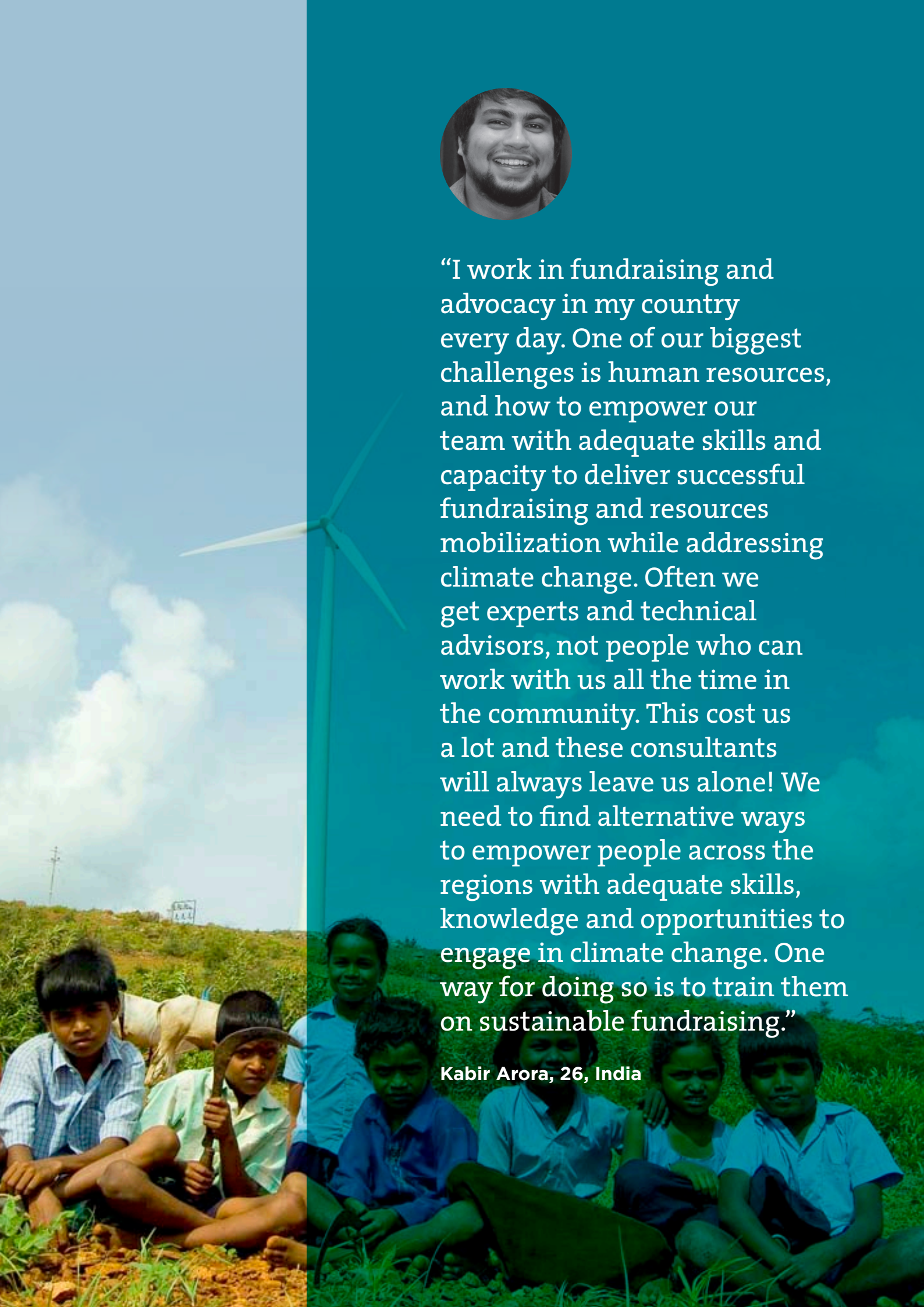
We commit to work with the Commonwealth Secretariat (through its Economic Policy Division and Youth Division) to mainstream the participation of young people in climate finance, and support the formulation of the Commonwealth Climate Finance Skills Hub's proposal through a youth lens which will enable the achievement of the specific recommendations above.





“I work in fundraising and advocacy in my country every day. One of our biggest challenges is human resources, and how to empower our team with adequate skills and capacity to deliver successful fundraising and resources mobilization while addressing climate change. Often we get experts and technical advisors, not people who can work with us all the time in the community. This cost us a lot and these consultants will always leave us alone! We need to find alternative ways to empower people across the regions with adequate skills, knowledge and opportunities to engage in climate change. One way for doing so is to train them on sustainable fundraising.”

**Kabir Arora, 26, India**







“In my country in the place I come from we have been affected by drought and famine so there is shortage of food in my country. With the shortage of food in my area the food becomes very expensive and sometimes I fail to go to school because maybe the money that is at home can only be used to buy food so it's either use the money to buy food or use the money for school. I think the politicians should come to an agreement and the developing countries and the developed countries should come together and find a way to help children who are suffering in these developing countries.”

**Laurine Millicent Oyodah, 20, Kenya**



## IX. Achieving a 100% Renewable Energy Future with Sustainable Energy Access for All

The Copenhagen Accord stated that the rise in global temperature should stay below 2 degrees Celsius as above which the world will suffer severe climatic impacts. The Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change also described present and projected future impacts, such as those on food security, sea level rise or ocean acidification, are occurring with more intensity than previously anticipated. These impacts will be disruptive for all countries; especially for the global poor and vulnerable peoples, as well as for youth, whose livelihoods and opportunities will be put at risk. These indications have led many to call for a rapid phase out of fossil fuels in order to decrease our global emissions, and a just transition to renewable to retain and expand energy access to all. In order to achieve deep emission reductions, action needs to start now with peaking of global greenhouse gas emissions no later than 2050. The UNFCCC recognises that youth have an increasingly strong social and environmental awareness, which has the power to transform our societies towards a low-carbon and climate resilient future. Young people are also key actors in raising awareness, running educational programmes, promoting sustainable lifestyles, conserving nature, supporting renewable energy, adopting environmentally-friendly practices and implementing adaptation and mitigation projects.

### **We recommend:**

- Country negotiators at COP21 in Paris to take strides to acknowledge, in the Paris Agreement, that the long term goal of phasing out fossil fuels and transitioning to 100% renewable energy by 2050 is essential and urgently needed. We encourage them to retain the principle of common but differentiated responsibility of countries in achieving this, putting in place legally-binding mechanisms to achieve this.
- Furthermore, we recommend to placing young people at the centre of promoting the use of renewable energy within communities through research and development of renewable energy solutions, engagement with media and their policy makers about the viability of renewable energy, including the co-benefits for jobs, growth and health in countries in order to prevent catastrophic climate change.

### **Our Commitment:**

We commit to join efforts to convince our communities, the media, the public and our decision makers on the viability and necessity for a just transition to 100% renewable energy as soon as possible, and no later than 2050. This will include talking to our community, business, faith and cultural leaders, encouraging them to speak to the media and to use their advocacy power. We also commit, in our home countries and internationally, to widening and strengthening civil society movement mobilising for climate action in the lead up to COP21.



“We are not here today to debate whether or not climate change is real. We are not here to debate whether or not human activity is contributing to that. These questions have been settled by science. We are here today as public health leaders, as policymakers, and as citizens of the planet to figure out what we are, in fact, going to do about climate change. That is the pressing question that stands before us.”

**Dr Vivek Murthy, Senior Surgeon,  
United States of America**





## X. Other Important Matters

### **Recognising world leaders' continuing support to young people to combat climate change**

We recognise and acknowledge ongoing support and efforts made by world leaders to engage young people as relevant stakeholders in addressing climate change and its impacts. Heads of Commonwealth Member States, like their peers in other world regions, continue to recognise the importance of getting young people actively involved in climate change related debate, policy and activities. In the Lake Victoria Commonwealth Climate Change Action Plan adopted in 2007, Heads highlighted their grave concern about the threat that climate change represents to human security and economic well-being, and reaffirmed their continued commitment to address serious deterioration of the environment as a threat to the well-being of current and future generations. They emphasized that effective action will only be possible with the willing support of the whole Commonwealth population, including women and young people. The Declaration of Port of Spain adopted in 2009 by Heads at their meeting in Trinidad and Tobago, emphasised the key role of partnerships within governments, civil society, youth and the private sector in forging a more sustainable and equitable future for all people, also recognising that to address the unprecedented combination of social, economic and environmental challenges facing the world would require international co-operation, sustained commitment and collective action. In 2013, Heads adopted the the Magampura Declaration of Commitment to Young People in Sri Lanka, placing the vital role that young people can and must play at the centre of sustainable and inclusive development, while also recognising that investing in young people today is the foundation for a prosperous and equitable tomorrow. Moreover, the Commonwealth's philosophy and focus on young people's development and empowerment promotes meaningful access to policy-makers, as a critical way to ensuring that young people's unique perspectives and ideas are heard and included in decision making and high-level debates. We appreciate these efforts and hope to increasingly engage with Commonwealth Member States and world leaders to pursue with them a better future for all.

### **Acknowledging the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on climate change**

We acknowledge the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that will be agreed in September this year to guide international development and cooperation for the next 15 years. We are pleased that the recently released draft of the SDGs has aspirational goals and intends to provide a reference for setting national priorities, in developing and developed countries. We welcome the Goal 12 to 'Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns', the Goal 13 to 'Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts', the Goal 14 to 'Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development', and the Goal 15 aiming to 'Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss'. We are fully aware that these goals as well as our recommendations and action points could only be achieved with meaningful participation of all stakeholders, including children and youth, women, people with disabilities and marginalised communities. As such, we commit ourselves and encourage our peers, governments and other stakeholders to support the planning, implementation, monitoring and accountability processes to achieving the SDGs as a whole, especially the Goals on climate change and other environmental issues.



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