



Faith for Earth Youth Council: Action Plan

A Coalition of young people representing diverse religious and spiritual perspectives to enhance their engagement during global environmental governance processes.

Coordinated by UNEPs Faith for Earth Coalition in collaboration with the Faith Thematic Working Group under Children and Youth Major Group (CYMG) to UNEP

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Core Principles

Youth 2030 places young people at the heart of UN Reform:

“...the UN must intensify its evidence-based advocacy, policy engagement, partnership and programme efforts ... to **prioritize, invest in, engage and empower young people.**”

- Priority Areas of the UN Youth Strategy, Youth2030

UNEP's Medium Term Strategy (2022-2025) credits the youth as catalysers for: public support, advocacy, raising ambition and political will; enhancing access to environmental information and public awareness; and promoting inclusive dialogue and participation. Youth of faith are essential to enhance these efforts through dialogue. Their participation is key for building a network based on a human-centered design for peace, justice, and a healthy planet. This network is a space to convene like-minded individuals, communities, and institutions to uncover the role of values, culture, and spirituality as a driver for action, share opportunities, and address challenges in the spirit of peer exchange and solidarity.

With this understanding of youth inclusion as core to the creation of a Faith working group, the Youth aims to uphold the following additional principles:

- Inclusivity and diversity: in membership and structure, ensuring adequate representation from different stakeholder groups, geographical regions;
- Transparency: in all processes, including the operational strategy and activities, to ensure an informed and equitable decision-making process;
- Gender-based Equality: placing gender equality at the heart of our engagement, the Youth Council strives for inclusive representation and uncovering unique gender-based challenges, with an aim of overcoming them through mutual cooperation;
- Intergenerational Solidarity and coordination: Past, present, and future generations depend on the earth. Successful and equitable intergenerational relations and partnership is key for inclusive multilateral action, and for overcoming ageism;
 - Religious and spiritual actors draw elements of their identity from nature, and in turn, most traditions confer a divine duty to protect it. Strengthening dialogue, particularly between young faith leaders and High-Level Faith leaders will transform the extent of youth engagement at the community and institutional level. For example, demonstrated at the Confluence of Conscience on 6-7 November 2023.
- Ethical Leadership: Youth of faith already hold leadership positions. Values-based advocacy and action demonstrate renewed potential for behavioural change expanding outreach to the world's faithful. Youth of faith are uniquely entrusted with a duty to promote peace, harmony and solidarity offering this in their advocacy efforts.

Introduction

UNEPs Faith For Earth Coalition (2017 - present)

Faith for Earth was established by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in 2017 as a specialised programme aimed at enhancing the engagement of Faith-based Organizations (FBOs) and the larger faith community in taking action towards the triple planetary crises, consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030.

The Faith for Earth Youth Council

Faith for Earth launched a Youth Council in 2022 to convene faith-youth groups globally engaged in the movement on religion, spirituality, and the environment.

The purpose of the Council is to ensure that young people of faith are mobilised and represented to make positive interventions in international fora, particularly on the key areas of work like climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and chemical and waste pollution.

Insitutionalising faith-youth engagement under the CYMG Faith Thematic Working Group

In 2023, The Chair and Co-Chairs of the Youth Council sought to formalise a partnership with the Faith Thematic Working Group for the full participation of faith-youth groups within the larger CYMG priority and outcomes.

Previous coordination meetings include:

- Global Youth Environment Assembly Thematic Consultation: Youth and faith-Based Engagement in February 2021; and
- Youth Council: A Forum for Environmental Action at UNEA 5.2 in 2022.
- Youth of faith at the COP28 Faith Pavilion: Intergenerational Responsibilities and Action.



Action Plan

- ✓ **CONVENE YOUNG FAITH LEADERS GLOBALLY AND DRIVE ENGAGEMENT AT THE GLOBAL POLICY LEVEL**
- ✓ **PROMOTE PEER-TO-PEER EXCHANGES AND NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES**
- ✓ **PROMOTE UNEP CAMPAIGNS, PROGRAMMES, ACTIVITIES, AND RESOURCES**
- ✓ **PROMOTE ADVOCACY EFFORTS FOR POSITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE**
- ✓ **INSTITUTIONALISE FAITH-YOUTH ENGAGEMENT UNDER THE FAITH THEMATIC WORKING GROUP, CYMG TOWARDS THE FULL PARTICIPATION OF FAITH-YOUTH GROUPS AT UNEA AND OTHER POLICY-INFLUENCING SPACES.**

The United Nations Environment Assembly

The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) is the highest policy-making body on the environment. The Children and Youth Major Group (CYMG) to UNEP is the official representative of the Youth Constituency to UNEP and UNEA.

The Youth Environment Assembly (YEA) gathers young people from around the world at one of the largest youth-focused environmental events giving youth the necessary tools to understand the processes and negotiations of UNEA and take action to tackle major global challenges.

The Faith Thematic Working Group.

- Faith Thematic Facilitator convenes youth of faith globally; maintains a growing and inclusive mailing list of faith-youth groups.
- Uplifts faith-inspired voices within the larger youth constituency in environmental governance processes, meetings, documents.
- Assesses the quality of faith-youth engagement with an aim to build momentum, capacities, and skills.
- Participate or coordinate with interfaith thematic working groups, such as on nature and biodiversity, pollution, and others.
- Disseminate information from CYMG to the faith-youth network and larger interfaith network.
- Convene faith-youth groups towards establishing a set of key priorities and areas of interest/intervention at UNEA and other meetings.

UNEP Youth Programmes and Initiatives

UNEP offers a range of Youth Programmes and Initiatives, including resources to engage and educate youth globally.

The Youth Council will be the main vehicle for mapping faith-youth organisations and work programmes globally, introducing them to these valuable Programmes and Initiatives.

Annual Events / Activities

Annual observances are an opportunity to engage with the global community in commemoration of that day, usually around a theme. Examples of values-based approaches by young people of faith will raise awareness about how critical planetary concerns are being addressed, promote sustainable practices, and advocate for policy changes - driving commitment to action.

Green Faith Festivals	Several
World Interfaith Harmony Week	February
World Environment Day	5 June
World Youth Skills Day	15 July
International Youth Day	12 August
World Mental Health Day	10 October
Human Rights Day	10 December

Note: this is a non-exhaustive list of suggested annual activities.

GREEN FAITH FESTIVALS

Every faith tradition has a set of important events that that commemorate annually, for example, All Souls or All Saints Day, Ramadan, Yom Kippur, Diwali, and hundreds more.

Guidelines on Green Faith Festivals propose some ways in which holy days can be a source of inspiration to drive positive environmental actions.

Consider:

- High-impact virtual or in-person events.
- Clearly define the objectives for commemorating the day, including values-based motivations.
- Draw attention to the environmental sciences - facts that underly environment-related challenges, particularly their effect on faith communities.
- Be solution-oriented by discussing how faith actors are leading by example.
- Provide resources, events, and networks that enable interfaith collaboration that demonstrates creativity, innovation, and strong partnerships.

WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK 1-7 FEBRUARY

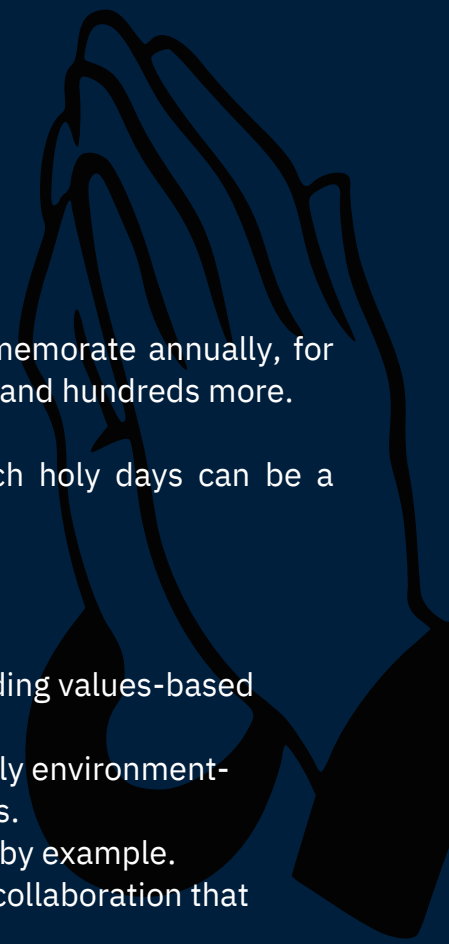
World Interfaith Harmony Week, observed during the first week of February, was adopted by the UN General Assembly to promote mutual understanding and interreligious dialogue as core tenants for a culture of peace. Activities that promote the spread of interfaith harmony and goodwill are common.

Highlights:

- Roots of friendship - Mariam meet Maria
- Harmony in a World in Crisis - World Interfaith Harmony Week 2023 included a focus on environmental preservation.

Consider how youth of faith can engage during World Interfaith Harmony Week by:

- Announcing key partnerships and projects
- Promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue for the environment
- Promoting inclusivity in terms of representing the different religious backgrounds
- Discussing how faiths can engage in environmental peacebuilding
- Exploring intergenerational equity for climate action
- Presenting art displays and competitions based on the annual theme
- Highlighting common values around religion, spirituality, and the environment.



WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY – 5 JUNE

World Environment Day is the largest platform for outreach promoting environmental awareness and positive action For People and the Planet.

Highlights:

- [CYMG Virtual Youth Environment Assembly in 2020](#)
- [UNEP CYMG World Environment Day Toolkit](#)

Engage:

- Host events that demonstrate how youth of faith contribute to the annual theme
- Promote environmental awareness and outreach by sharing the WED Playbook/Toolkit
- Lead programmes and initiatives within your faith community
- Build partnerships at the global and local levels connecting young faith leaders to NGOs, the private sector, scientists, etc.

WORLD YOUTH SKILLS DAY – 15 JULY

World Youth Skills Day, celebrated on 15 July observes the importance of equipping young people with skills for employment, decent work, and entrepreneurship.

Young people, as catalysts for change, are at the center of commitments for the skills and opportunities needed to build a prosperous and sustainable world for all.

Highlights:

On 17 July 2023, the Permanent Missions of Portugal and Sri Lanka to the United Nations, in collaboration with UNESCO, ILO, and the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, engaged Member States, young experts, social partners, teachers, educators, and various stakeholders on enhancing the skills of teachers, trainers, and youth to pave the way for a transformative future. [Read more about Youth Envoy.](#)

Consider:

- Collaborating with UNEP under the [Youth Programmes & Initiatives](#)
- Explore formal, and promoting non-formal education opportunities, including through faith-owned institutions. For example, values-based education exploring religious principles on the environment to strengthen moral and spiritual responsibilities towards issues of consumption and lifestyle.
- Explore how youth of faith are engaged gainfully employed in green jobs.
- Promote green skills and practices
- Identify access barriers to the world of work, ensuring that skills gained are relevant, recognized and certified.

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY – 12 AUGUST



International Youth Day is commemorated on 12th August offering young people around the world an opportunity to raise awareness and mainstream the need for youth engagement in various sectors.

Highlights:

- 2023: Green Skills for Youth: Towards a Sustainable World
- 2022: Intergenerational Solidarity: Creating a World for All Ages
- UN Inter-Agency Network in Youth Development

The UN Major Group for Children and Youth, together with the Religious Advocacy Initiative, Youth for Peace International, Youth Core Group on Atrocity Prevention, International Youth Centre-Malaysia, and the Asian Youth Peace Network co-organized a webinar that showcases different youth-led initiatives and engagements in the issues of peace and security titled “Young People Leading in Peace and Security”.

Consider:

- Faith-specific days dedicated to the youth and how to place environmental action as a priority e.g. World Youth Day, Sikh Youth Symposium, and others
- Advocate for meaningful youth representation within faith-led institutions and communities
- Convene young people of faith to identify technical expertise, skills, and interests locally
- Discuss the challenges young people face, aiming to be solution-oriented
- Identify key partners within the local, national or global faith network to support measurable goals, aspirations, and projects
- Encourage interfaith cooperation and collaboration.

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY - 10 OCTOBER

World Mental Health Day raises awareness of mental health issues around the world to mobilize efforts to increase support for, and address, mental health.

UNEP highlighted the impacts of noise, air and chemical pollution on mental health and well-being. There is a growing concern about the impact of the triple planetary crises on emotional distress due to anxiety, depression, grief, and suicidal behavior.

Highlight:

- Explained: How climate change affects mental health
- Spirituality, global warming, and grief: How clergy can help tackle climate anxiety

Consider:

- Explore how the triple planetary crises affects youth of faith at the local levels. Compare drivers of climate anxiety and ways to support communities.
- Raise awareness about climate change and mental health, through formal and non-formal education programs and workshops
- Determine how faith-owned institution can support communities i.e. mental health and climate anxiety workshops in houses of worship, the power of meditation and mindfulness, etc.
- Get the Youth involved in mental health trainings. One Resilient Earth hosts training sessions online. Read more about it.
- Encourage social, religious, and spiritual leaders to undergo training and skills building to support the youth in dealing with mental health, including resulting from climate change.

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY- 10 DECEMBER

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) sets out the fundamental human rights to be universally protected, commemorate annually on Human Rights Day.

Highlights:

- OHCHR and the “Faith for Rights” framework
- Youth and Human Rights
- Call to Action for Human Rights: Rights of Future Generations

Consider:

- Building awareness of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment
- Institutionalise a rights-based approach to environmental action
- Advocate for evidence-based policies and procedures that safeguard rights.
- Voices challenges, particularly of minorities with the support of faith communities and institutions.