

## Youth Task Force of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030)

### Background & Mandate

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), in March 2019, through intergovernmental resolution A/RES/73/284<sup>1</sup> proclaimed 2021-2030 as the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (hereafter UN Decade)<sup>2</sup>, *“with the aim of supporting and scaling up efforts to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems worldwide and raise awareness of the importance of successful ecosystem restoration”*.

The UNGA further invited a range of actors, including governments, civil society, academia, among others to contribute to the Decade; and stressed the importance of full involvement of various stakeholders:

*“Stresses the importance of the full involvement of all relevant stakeholders, including women, children according to their evolving capacities, young people, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and local communities, in the context of the Decade at all levels.”*

Pursuant to the resolution, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations - the lead agencies for the UN Decade - prepared a Strategy<sup>3</sup> for the Decade that was launched in September 2020. The Strategy reflected inputs from virtual and on-ground youth consultations in 21+ countries, which were carried out throughout 2019 and 2020 via a Youth Paper on Ecosystem Restoration<sup>4</sup>. The Strategy elaborated the need and intention to actively engage youth groups, through the section *Partnering with Youth*, and invited Children and Youth Organizations accredited with UNEP to facilitate the engagement of youth organizations and advocates for the UN Decade. This process will be open to all organizations accredited to UNEP, and to youth-led and youth-focused organizations formally established and accredited to other UN agencies.

In December 2020, the UN Decade Coordination Group approved the establishment of a *UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration Youth Task Force*, as an advisory and consultative youth mechanism for the UN Decade on matters related to youth. The Youth Task Force should be as self-organized as possible, in line with the ‘New Power’ approach of the UN Decade strategy. These Terms of Reference therefore builds upon views and perspectives shared by youth groups across different parts of the world on how they envision a *fit-for-purpose* structure to enable meaningful participation and engagement of the younger generation, in line with the principles of *with and for young people* of the United Nations Youth Strategy and specifically its cross-cutting theme of *Climate and Environmental Action*.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/73/284](https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/73/284)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.decadeonrestoration.org>

<sup>3</sup> <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/31813/ERDStrat.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

<sup>4</sup> [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gcPRnQjiWhCGZ18z5nSu7J9pJt8hmb3j-2Xa\\_ybcQQs/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gcPRnQjiWhCGZ18z5nSu7J9pJt8hmb3j-2Xa_ybcQQs/edit)

## Purpose

The #GenerationRestoration Youth Task Force will advise on and facilitate youth engagement in the context of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

## Functions of the Task Force

The Task Force serves provides advisory and supportive functions to the UN Decade:

- ✓ **Policy and Advocacy:** Collective and meaningful participation of young people in official and formal avenues of policy design, implementation, monitoring, follow-up and review of governance of Decade at all levels.
- ✓ **Youth Action:** Provide young people with an inclusive platform that encourages them to lead, join, showcase and share innovative and effective actions aimed at addressing the needs of children and youth related to ecosystem restoration.
- ✓ **Space for Discussion:** Provision of platforms and opportunities of dialogue with political decision makers, as well as among youth of different rightsholder groups.
- ✓ **Knowledge and Capacity Building:** Facilitation of capacity building processes and activities for young people aimed at enhancing understanding, knowledge and skills in relation to the focus areas of the UN Decade and its technical and political processes and organs.

## Composition

### #GenerationRestoration Youth Task Force

The Youth Task Force is part of the coordination of the UN Decade while maintaining inclusivity and representation with regards to its composition and policy positions and recommendations.

It is composed of representatives / focal points<sup>5</sup> from 1) youth constituencies/counterparts of UN processes/avenues related to ecosystem restoration 2) youth constituencies/counterparts of UN agencies involved in the UN Decade (*Lead and Collaborating Agencies*)<sup>6</sup> 3) representatives from person-centric and minority youth stakeholder groups 4) youth/youth groups identified through a public application process, 5) youth that are part of the UN Decade Advisory Group as deemed relevant by the co-chairs as well as youth focal points from UNEP and FAO. The composition of the Task Force should reflect gender-parity and regional balance. The term of members is 2 years and re-appointment is possible for 2 times.

### #GenerationRestoration Youth Task Force: Partners Coalition

In addition to the above, a *#GenerationRestoration Youth Task Force: Multi-Stakeholder Partners Coalition* would be constituted and coordinated by the Task Force with UNEP and FAO, subject to available resources. The Coalition could comprise focal points for youth/civil society/leads from the UN Decade's *Lead and Collaborating Agencies* and further *Global Partners, Supporting Partners*, multilateral organisations, relevant civil society and youth-serving organisations. The members of the Group would be invited to joint calls, deliberations and networking moments to

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<sup>5</sup> The listing (and its order) is a classification for informational purposes and does not imply a strict delineation or hierarchy

<sup>6</sup> These include youth counterparts who may already not be covered under 'UN processes/avenues related to ecosystem restoration'

support and collaborate with the work of the Youth Task Force. Meetings of the Multi-Stakeholder Partner Coalition will be organized by UNEP/FAO based on advice from the Task Force, and minutes of the meetings will be made publicly available.

## Methods of Work

### General Coordination

The Task Force is chaired by three co-chairs identified within the Task Force for a term of 2 years (non-renewable). One of the Chairs should be a representative from a youth organization accredited to UNEP in the Children and Youth Major Group<sup>7</sup>; and one representative from a youth organization/group linked to FAO. Building on the provisions in the UN Decade Strategy, the Youth Task Force is facilitated by youth focal points from the core team of the UN Decade lead agencies (UNEP and FAO), who participate in the Task Force meetings 'ex-officio'.

### Meetings

The Task Force may meet via bi-monthly meetings virtually, or on a needs-basis. Quorum is reached when at least one-third of the members of the Task Force are present, together with the Co-Chairs or their representatives. Issue / task specific / sub-group meetings may be organized as needed with prior approval of the Task Force. Joint meetings with the Partners Coalition can be held in conjunction with the Task Force.

### Decision-making

All decisions are taken through consensus.

### Substantive Positions

As part of its work, the Task Force may produce substantive policy positions / recommendations. These positions must not override the positions of the involved youth constituencies. The Task Force may also designate leads for specific advisory roles such as communications, policy, etc. The policy positions and recommendations will not be considered as policy positions of UNEP or FAO, or other UN entities that might be involved in the Youth Task Force; however, any position and recommendation from the Task Force will be brought to the attention of the UNEP/FAO Coordination Group of the UN Decade for consideration.

### Youth Representation in Decade Advisory Group and further avenues

The three Co-Chairs of the Youth Task Force will also be invited to join the UN Decade Advisory Board as members. The Task Force will also be consulted by UNEP and FAO for future nominations of further youth representatives to the Advisory Board. Representatives can be suggested to UNEP and FAO from the composition of the Task Force or an open process, or both. The Task Force can also advise on any inter-agency youth structure on the Decade if /when constituted by UNEP and FAO.

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<sup>7</sup> The Children and Youth Major Group at UNEP currently includes 34 accredited organizations. For the purpose of these TORs, the nomination of a Task Force member is fulfilled by the elected Global Coordinators of the CY Major Group and/or additional lead(s) they designate through an internal process.

## Annex

### Further elaboration on identification

In addition to the representatives from the youth constituencies linked to the themes of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and UN partners, the Task Force will also comprise youth advocates / groups that are identified through an open application, nomination and selection processes. It is recommended that the membership of the core Task Force does not exceed 25 people.

- Appointments for the representatives from the formal youth engagement constituency /counterpart will be made in consultation with the respective youth coordinators / focal points of each constituency/counterpart, see table 'Composition Listing' below. In the case where the appointments reflect major regional or gender imbalance, UNEP and FAO will ask for voluntary adjustments.
- The open call will be conducted with the Children and Youth Major Group organizations accredited to UNEP, and with FAO counterparts. The selection of the applicants will be conducted through a due process involving a selection committee. Members will be selected considering geography, gender and type of expertise (elaborated in next section) to keep a well-balanced set of inputs and views.
- UNEP and FAO may also decide, in consultation with the Co-Chairs of the Task Force, to nominate representatives from specific groups / organisations whose work is relevant to the Decade.

### Invitation to the Task Force

Invitations to join the Task Force will be issued by the UN Decade Coordinator, based on the initial list below (Composition Listing). The list of members of the Task Force will be made publicly available on the UN Decade website.

### Expertise and areas of focus

The Task Force, in addition to being balanced in terms of gender, region and representation of minority groups, will aim to comprise youth from various backgrounds. These factors can include, *inter alia*,

- Research / academia
- Action portfolio including on-ground action
- Policy expertise
- Entrepreneur / young workforce
- From a range of thematic focuses inter alia resilience, sustainable development, economic aspect, energy sustainability, social dimension, humanitarian groups etc.
- Range of groups, including informal youth groups of various scopes: grassroots, regional, international, etc.
- From person-centric and marginalised youth groups inter alia Indigenous youth, young migrants, refugees, young persons with disabilities, young people living with HIV, young people facing work and descent based discrimination, etc.
- Youth who have not previously engaged in the UN system /international processes together with youth with previous experiences
- Youth on frontline of degraded ecosystems, especially young people from climate vulnerable countries

## Communication protocol

Entity	Aspect of communication	Primary recipient	Additional group(s) to cc if any
Communication from lead agencies	Administrative / coordination aspect	Co-chairs / focal points	
	General information sharing	All TF	Co-chairs / focal points
Communication from member states	Requests for participation, speaking slots, others matters	Co-chairs / focal points	All TF as relevant; UNEP and FAO youth focal points
Communication from UN Decade Collaborating Agencies	Requests for participation, speaking, others matters, collaboration	Co-chairs / focal points	All TF as relevant; UNEP and FAO youth focal points

## Operations

The operation of the Task Force is subject to available resources. UNEP and FAO will endeavor to provide resources for the operations of the Task Force, through established formal channels, depending on available resources.

## Notice of Meeting

Unless otherwise agreed, notice of each meeting confirming the venue, time and date together with an agenda of items to be discussed and supporting papers, will be forwarded or notified to each member of the Task Force and any other person required to attend, no later than five working days before the date of the meeting. Task / issue specific meetings / working group meetings may be convened as required.

## Changes to the Terms of Reference

These Terms of Reference have been approved by FAO and UNEP in July 2021 can be changed upon request by the Task Force and with the approval of FAO and UNEP, through the UN Decade Coordination Group.

## Relevant background for youth in the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration

UN General Assembly, Res 73/284<sup>8</sup>

*6. Stresses the importance of the full involvement of all relevant stakeholders, including women, children according to their evolving capacities, young people, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and local communities, in the context of the Decade at all levels.*

10-year Strategy of the Decade<sup>9</sup>

There are over 54 (fifty-four) references to youth in the strategy, below are some key ones highlighted:

### ***Executive Summary***

*This UN Decade will inspire and support governments, UN agencies, NGOs, civil society, children and youth, private sector companies, indigenous peoples, farmers, women's groups, local communities and individuals globally to collaborate and develop the appropriate skill sets for catalysing and successfully implementing restoration initiatives across the world.*

*27. Youth organisations will be particularly instrumental in catalysing and maintaining a global movement given their presence at a local level, and their strong role in social media trends and activities. The involvement of youth in the UN Decade is critically important not only for the sustainability of restoration initiatives designed to last beyond the 21st century, but also for promoting intergenerational equity. The digital hub will consequently have sections for youth in which: learning materials on ecosystem restoration, tailored for different age groups and education levels, are provided; the perspectives and experiences of youth on restoration are published; youth champions leading restoration initiatives are showcased; and opportunities for raising finance for restoration by youths are presented. To foster organic support for The UN Decade among as wide a youth audience as possible, partnerships will be developed with social media organisations and influencers across a diversity of communities and platforms. Such partnerships will facilitate the empowerment and inclusion of youth in the ensuing global movement, as well as all other restoration initiatives under the umbrella of the UN Decade.*

### ***Partnering with youth***

*31. Young people are agents of change. This is evident in how youth have mobilised in recent years to support action on climate change and nature-based solutions. Youth organisations across the world are already championing the UN Decade and encouraging their members to catalyse ecosystem restoration initiatives. For example, over the period September to December 2019, youth consultations on the UN Decade were held in 25 locations, across 19 countries and five continents. There was unanimous support in these consultations from the hundreds of youth representatives for upscaling ecosystem restoration particularly because of its considerable potential for climate change mitigation and adaptation as well as improving the well-being of current and future societies. Youth representatives anticipate the world's youth uniting around the UN Decade through: participation in decision-making at national and international levels; their influence on social media trends; the running of campaigns; designing online and offline training programmes; their roles as young researchers and young professionals in the restoration-oriented workforce; and undertaking on-the-ground ecosystem restoration initiatives in their local neighbourhoods. Importantly, the core team is committed to responding to concerns raised by youth, and ensuring that the burden of responsibility for managing ecosystems sustainably is not carried by them, but by society as a whole.*

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<sup>8</sup> [https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/73/284](https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/73/284)

<sup>9</sup> <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/31813/ERDStrat.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>  
[www.unep.org](http://www.unep.org)