

MEA Youth Network for Action (MYNA) Ideas and Visions

1. Introduction

Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) states that “it is imperative that youth from all parts of the world participate actively in all relevant levels of decision-making processes because it affects their lives today and has implications for their future”.

Though youth have the energy, skills, and interest to contribute to decision making on issues of environment, they are challenged by social, structural, financial, and political barriers among others to have an effective voice in decision making. Considering the current and emerging environmental challenges youth are among the most vulnerable to negative impacts of environmental degradation. Though they have the interest and intent to make positive changes in the way we deal with environment and participate in decision making that will impact their future lives and livelihoods, youth are not equipped with appropriate knowledge, technical capacities and skills required to address the challenges as well as turn the tide on using environment to create livelihoods and securing the development paradigm.

Participation of youth in environmental decision-making has been attempted using several approaches, ranging from building capacities to ensuring their participation in decision making. The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development includes specific goals and targets that have an impact on the youth, and that require the contribution of the youth in building resilience in communities. The set of targets entails water and sanitation; access to affordable, reliable modern energy; resilient and safe cities; sustainable consumption and production patterns; biodiversity and management of forests and the use of science, technology, and innovations in facilitating youth engagement, development, and resilience.

Given the socio-cultural and economic contexts of how youth perceive environment and deal with challenges, it is important to take a decentralized approach to their engagement. Working with youth, through local and national levels and where available through regional networks will come handy in addressing environmental challenges that need specific solutions and hands-on action.

2. Youth Engagement and MEAs Implementation

UNEP is coordinating implementation of a multi-year, multi-country programme on strengthening environmental governance in Africa, Caribbean, and the Pacific regions (APC regions). As a part of this, there has been an intent to engage with youth at both strategic and programmatic levels. This strategy is an attempt to provide a long-term, focused support to engaging with youth to raise their 'voice' on environmental governance issues, including making them aware of their responsibilities to deliver on the decisions made at national level, for example through the multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), as well as be more actively shape the priorities and negotiations that leads up to making the decisions.

3. Activities and Approaches

This youth engagement strategy aims for the involvement, representation, and participation of youth in environmental governance matters. It aims to create an enabling environment that enhances their capacity development, resilience innovation and participation.

4. Key Objective and Information

Objective:

Establishing a MEA Youth Network by and for youth to:

- Connect different MEA related youth Networks enhancing interdisciplinary exchange, capacity building and collaboration and empowering youth to address different environmental issues in an innovative, holistic manner.
- Empowering and supporting the strengthening or creation of non-existing or loosely existing youth networks related to a certain MEAs.
- Increase engagement in decision-making processes and procedures related to the different MEAs (including the facilitation and strengthening of direct work and relationship between youth network and the MEA secretariats).

CONNECT – EMPOWER – ENGAGE¹, form the three core pillars of action driving all our further youth related plans and work.

¹ More Information:

- Actions under YETI Alumni Network were built on the same 3 pillars
 - The EU Youth Strategy and the EU Youth Action Plan focuses on the same three core areas of action
- Rational behind this alignment: Enhancing cooperation and funding opportunities

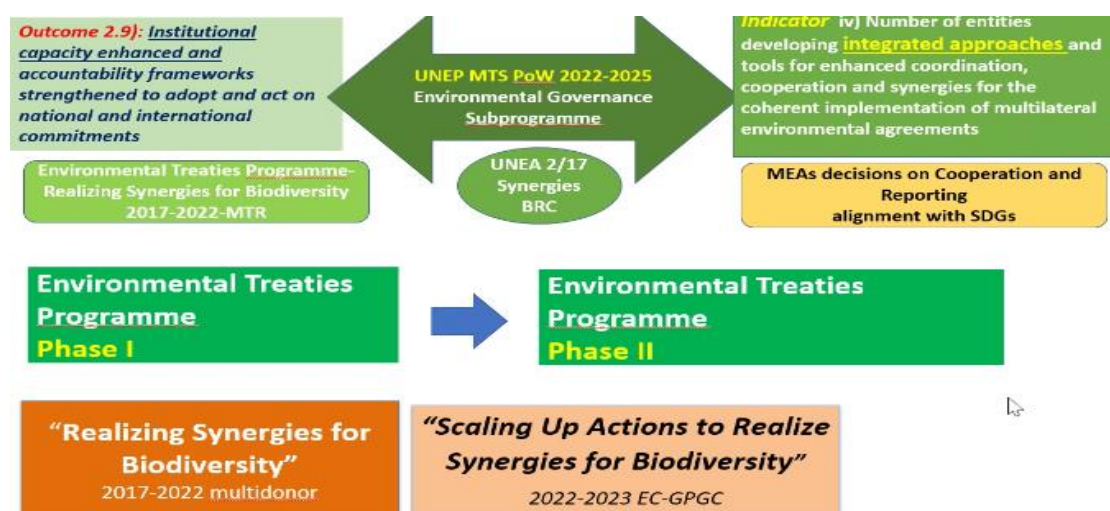
3 Pillars Guiding Youth Engagement Action and Plans

The following section provides an overview on how the three guiding pillars could be implemented and translated into concrete actions, complemented by personal suggestions based on experiences of establishing the YETI Alumni Network.

CONNECT: Facilitating peer-to-peer interchange, support, and capacity building among different MEA youth networks by establishing common communication channels such as Telegram or WhatsApp and one email group.

☒ *Personal suggestion:* Centralization of all communication is key, the less channels, the better.

EMPOWER: Providing a variety of selected resources and materials that can be accessed and used by all networks on a voluntary, needs based manner. These resources are made accessible in a **Knowledge Management Platform (KMP)**, which provides a centralized, consolidated space for all these materials. Key information and updates around youth work



and new accessible resources relevant to MEA Secretariats as well as the youth network are provided on a regular basis.

ENGAGE: Strengthening and facilitating the relationship between the MEA related youth network and the related MEA secretariats to increase engagement in decision-making processes and procedures related to the different MEAs. Moreover, providing information and updates on latest engagement and application possibilities for the youth network while supporting the increase of engagement (possibilities) in relation to the work, implementations, and decision-making processes of different MEAs.

5. Key considerations and Implementation Ideas

In the following section key considerations and implementation ideas are listed to facilitate the development of a road map and action plan for expanding the youth engagement work:

- **Opening a Knowledge Management Platform (KMP)** for joint access (& contribution) on youth related work across MEAs
- **Developing a coherent and shared theory of change²**
 - Structural understanding of root causes into a vision of structural, systemic change enabling to directly uproot it.
 - Shared strategic culture enabling effective coordination and progress towards material wins.
- **Identifying key regional (youth) partners and leads**
- **Finalizing mapping of key stakeholders** (youth networks and MEA Secretariats) and
- **Identifying key (youth) partners and focal** points on a regional and thematic level
- **Developing an effective infrastructure and structural set-up of the wider youth network.**
- **Developing a visual identity and branding** of the expanded youth engagement work and the MEA wide network. This also involves finalizing a name for the Network.
- **Establishing a webpage:** Either update ACP MEAs 3 Webpage and/or develop a Webpage within the [UNEP Youth Website](#) providing key details about the network to increase visibility (liaise with Juan Pablo Celis Garcia)
- **Organizing information session and training on effective youth engagement** (and not youth washing) with Juan Pablo and related colleagues for all MEA Secretariats

For more information

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² More Information: Inspired by the report and mapping of the current climate youth movement of the Green Economy Coalition & Climate Vanguard, highlighting the importance of a common theory of change in youth-driven networks. **The YCM does not currently have a shared and coherent theory of change.** There is often little analysis about what the current economic system is, how it operates, and how it reproduces itself. Consequently, a variety of visions emerge about the kind of change that YCM groups are fighting for.