



North America RCOY Youth Statement

Together for climate, we forge the path to a greener, resilient, and more equitable future, where every action matters, and every community thrives.

Authors:

Drafted by: James Paek, Arvind Kumar

Designed by: Karla Corsino

Supported by: Muqadas Batool, Damilola Oluwemimo

Reviewed by: Jessica Li, Yoko Lu, William Pallone, Leonardo Arauz, Dr. Mark Terry

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Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/rcoynorthamerica/>

Linkedin: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/rcoy-north-america/>

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INTRODUCTION

About RCOY North America

The RCOY North America, or Regional Conference of Youth in North America (“RCOY NA”), stands as a beacon of engagement and advocacy among North American youth. It marks a pivotal gathering preceding the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and holds official recognition from the children and youth body of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (YOUNGO). This virtual assembly, conducted from October 31 to November 1 under the banner RCOY NA, embraces the diverse landscapes of Canada, Mexico, and the United States, converging towards a Regional Declaration, a youth-led narrative aimed to be presented at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties (COP) 28, convening in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from November 30 to December 12, 2023. The youth declaration will also be contributed to the Global Youth Statement of YOUNGO, the youth constituency of the UNFCCC, which is prepared for the Conference of Youth (COY) 18 happening at the COP28 venue on November 26-28, 2023.

The primary objective of RCOY North America is to create a virtual space that invites children, youth, young adults, and allies to discuss, endorse, and foster sustainable innovations, initiatives, and solutions that resonate with the climate reality in North America. The impact of RCOY North America will resonate in the consultative reports en route to COP28, thus infusing the global climate dialogue with the vitality and vision of North American youth.

The thematic tapestry of RCOY North America intricately weaves the interconnections of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), serving as a cohesive framework underlying the discussions and actions throughout the conference. The trio of participating nations, each with its unique political, social, and climate nuances, enriches RCOY with a diverse and inclusive environment, reflecting the climate and social reality in the region through youth-led initiatives and discussions.

Leading up to this important event, a strong digital infrastructure has connected a vibrant network of organizations that expands allyship across regions. This network has evolved into a platform for dialogues, training, and actions that echo the regional climate imperatives and the global sustainability ethos.

The virtual pathway to RCOY North America 2023 was meticulously crafted to encompass an array of online activities, discussions, and capacity-building sessions that catalyze meaningful interactions among the youth. These engagements were structured to cultivate a culture of knowledge-sharing, innovation, and collective action, nurturing a community of informed, empowered, and motivated youth ready to contribute to the climate action narrative in North America and beyond.

All these concerted virtual efforts culminated in the monumental Regional Conference of North American Youth, which virtually convened between October 31 and November 1. This Conference emerged as a vital platform for youth advocacy, engagement, and innovation, providing a fertile digital ground for the exchange of ideas, experiences, and solutions tailored to the regional and global climate challenges. Through a blend of virtual plenaries, workshops, and interactive sessions, the Summit aimed to crystallize the collective aspirations, insights, and recommendations of the youth, thus crafting a substantive and impactful Regional Declaration for RCOY North America 2023.

PREAMBLE

We, the Youth,

We acknowledge that our Conference was held between October 31 and November 1.

We, the youth of North America, assert our right to a sustainable future. We demand a fair transition from fossil fuels and call for reparations for those disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis, both within our region and globally. Recognizing the escalating issue of climate-induced displacement, we advocate for the rights of climate refugees and honor their homelands and cultures.

In line with our discussions, we highlight the critical need for disaster risk reduction, support for migration and adaptation, and the integration of these elements into broader climate policy. We stand with all Indigenous communities in valuing and preserving their rich traditions, histories, and ecological knowledge, essential to our collective resilience.

We stand united across borders in the United States, Canada, and Mexico, recognizing the role our countries have played—and continue to play—in contributing to unsustainable economic models and climate injustice globally. We condemn the systemic militarization and oppression that disproportionately affect Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) across our region.

In Canada, the legacy of colonialism still presents stark disparities for Indigenous communities, manifesting in inadequate access to clean water, health care, and education, alongside ongoing environmental degradation of traditional lands. Efforts to address these disparities must involve the dismantling of systemic barriers and the active participation of Indigenous peoples in decision-making processes.

In Mexico, where a tapestry of Indigenous communities enriches the cultural landscape, there is a pressing need to rectify historical injustices. Marginalized populations often face environmental challenges compounded by industrial exploitation and inadequate social infrastructure, which necessitate a concerted effort to prioritize human rights and environmental stewardship.

In the United States, disadvantaged, marginalized, and vulnerable communities are disproportionately impacted by the effects of climate change. Gender equality, inclusive representation, equitable distribution of resources and investments, collaborative community response mechanisms, and comprehensive educational activities must be planned and implemented with an intergenerational, intersectoral, and intersectional approach that leaves no one behind.

We assert that access to clean water, secure housing, comprehensive health care, nutritious food, quality education, and reliable transportation are not privileges but fundamental human rights that must be equitably guaranteed to every individual.

We underscore the importance of fortifying our institutions against corruption and special interests, ensuring they stand as bastions for the protection of our planet and the rights of all its inhabitants. Across our continent, we must foster a relationship with nature that is regenerative and not exploitative, honoring the knowledge and practices of Indigenous peoples, and recognizing the intrinsic value of all ecosystems.

With resolve and solidarity, we assert that the time for change is not solely in the distant future; it is immediate. The present is ours to shape, and thus we set forth our demands, calling for systemic transformation that honors the dignity of all people and the natural world we collectively inhabit.

OVERARCHING DEMANDS

The following sections are based on the combination of sessions and speakers at the RCOY NA. Please note that some of the topics may be separate from one another.

1. Climate Change Action and Disaster Risk Reduction

Regional Demands

Strengthen national policies to ensure a timely transition towards clean and renewable energy sources, reducing dependence on fossil fuels and the use of pollution sources and toxic chemicals, to ensure a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment and way of life.

Invest in regional disaster risk reduction mechanisms, including strengthening infrastructure, especially in regions prone to frequent natural hazards. This includes creating early warning systems and adding climate resilience efforts to disaster risk reduction and management planning.

Launch educational campaigns to raise awareness about climate change impacts and the importance of disaster preparedness among communities.

International Demands

Collaborate on global disaster response strategies, ensuring that resources and expertise are transparently and efficiently shared during times of crisis.

Provide financial and technical support to vulnerable nations, assisting them in building resilience against climate-induced disasters.

Engage in international forums to prioritize and synchronize efforts in climate action and disaster risk management.

2. Climate Change, NDCs, and Health

Regional Demands

Monitor and transparently report progress on Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), ensuring that health considerations are properly tracked and integrated.

Enhance healthcare infrastructure to cope with increasing climate-related health challenges, such as heatwaves and vector-borne diseases.

Initiate research to understand the long-term health impacts of climate change and devise strategies to address them.

International Demands

Advocate for a global one health approach framework that integrates health considerations into climate change discussions and agreements.

Collaborate on research to address global health challenges exacerbated by climate change, sharing findings and solutions.

Assist countries with limited resources in enhancing their healthcare systems to combat climate-related health challenges.

3. Adaptation

Regional Demands

Allocate significant funding for research focused on localized adaptation strategies, understanding region-specific challenges and solutions.

Enhance public awareness campaigns, educating citizens about the changing climate and its impacts.

Develop policies to protect vulnerable populations, such as coastal communities and agriculture-dependent regions, ensuring they have the resources to adapt.

International Demands

Engage in international dialogues to share adaptation challenges and solutions, learning from global experiences.

Provide financial and technical support to developing nations, helping them devise and implement adaptation strategies.

Prioritize adaptation in international climate agreements, ensuring that global efforts are synchronized.

4. Business Sector and Migration

Regional Demands

Finding new funds, adopting alternative finance, and implementing effective energy strategies to promote positive social impacts and achieve a sustainable future with sustainable investment. Better allocate resources and forecast what is needed with energy planning to achieve climate, energy, economic, and environmental goals.

Develop comprehensive policies addressing the challenges of climate-induced migrations, including providing necessary support and resources for displaced communities.

Encourage businesses to adopt sustainable practices, offering incentives for green initiatives.

International Demands

Advocate for international guidelines and frameworks ensuring corporate sustainability, pushing for global accountability and interaction, as achieving a livable and sustainable environment requires a public-private partnership.

Collaborate to develop comprehensive solutions for cross-border climate-induced migrations, ensuring the rights and dignity of displaced individuals are upheld.

Share best practices and resources to promote sustainable business operations and green job creation worldwide.

5. Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities, and Gender

Regional Demands

Recognize and integrate Indigenous rights and Traditional Ecological Knowledge into national and regional climate strategies, valuing Indigenous Peoples' unique perspectives and practices as stewards of the environment.

Develop gender-responsive policies, understanding the differential impacts of climate change on men and women, girls and boys, non-binary people, and the LGBTQI+ community.

Support local and regional communities with resources and platforms to voice their concerns and solutions.

Protection and assurance of the human rights of climate activists and environmental defenders.

International Demands

Advocate for the integration of Indigenous rights and voices in global climate discussions, understanding their needs and unique vulnerabilities and contributions, to foster a global community with inclusivity, diversity, cultural and heritage knowledge, and respect as supporting mechanisms.

Collaborate on gender-focused climate strategies, sharing knowledge and resources to address gender disparities.

Engage with local and regional communities worldwide, understanding their challenges and integrating their solutions into global climate strategies.

6. Peace, Security, and Partnerships

Regional Demands

Strengthen domestic and regional security measures to address potential conflicts arising from climate-induced resource scarcities.

Foster national and regional partnerships, promoting collaboration between government entities, civil society, and the private sector for collective climate action and advancing intergenerational justice.

Develop policies ensuring resource allocation in regions prone to climate-induced conflicts.

International Demands

Engage in dialogues addressing shared security challenges arising from climate change, promoting peace through collaborative efforts.

Foster international partnerships, pooling resources and expertise to address global climate challenges.

Advocate for peace and security considerations in international climate discussions, ensuring holistic strategies.

Regional Demands

Implement robust policies promoting green jobs, understanding their potential in driving a sustainable economy.

Invest significantly in technological research and development, focusing on renewable

energy, carbon capture, and other climate solutions.

Implement effective regulatory measures and ensure effective mitigation efforts at all levels are necessary to ensure a just transition.

International Demands

Collaborate on global technological solutions, sharing knowledge and resources to drive innovation in climate mitigation.

Advocate for international labor standards and protective employment, labor, and legal

frameworks, ensuring worker rights and sustainable practices, governance, and management are secured worldwide. Regulations and business protocols need to be strategized to allow for decent work and economic growth, so as not to stifle innovation, invention, and development.

Engage in discussions promoting global mitigation strategies, understanding the shared responsibility in addressing climate change.

ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

These actions and recommendations resulted from the reflections of the RCOY NA virtual conference. The underlying section shows the explanations for each action or recommendation.

List:

- 1. Robust Climate Action Plans Aligned with NDCs**
- 2. Strengthening Health Infrastructure for Climate Resilience**
- 3. Enhancing Air Quality Monitoring and Control Measures**
- 4. Adoption of IPCC Guidelines for National Climate Assessments**
- 5. Promotion of Climate-Smart Agriculture Practices**
- 6. Implementation of NAPs Focusing on Biodiversity**
- 7. Engaging Indigenous Peoples in Climate Decision-Making**
- 8. Fostering Gender Equality in Climate Actions**
- 9. Establishing Partnerships for Climate Mitigation Projects**
- 10. Addressing Climate-Induced Displacement in Security Strategies**
- 11. Promoting Green and Sustainable Job Creation and Training**
- 12. Fostering Innovation in Low-Carbon Technologies**
- 13. Supporting Renewable Energy Transition**
- 14. Implementing Just Transition Policies for Affected Workers**
- 15. Facilitating Cross-Border Climate Collaboration**
- 16. Enhancing Climate Education and Awareness**
- 17. Establishing Youth Climate Advisory Boards**
- 18. Promoting Community-Led Renewable Energy Projects**
- 19. Developing Regional Climate Finance Mechanisms**
- 20. Supporting Ongoing Climate Research and Innovation**
- 21. Advancing Policy Participation Processes for Youth**

Explanations:

1. Robust Climate Action Plans Aligned with NDCs

It is imperative that the governments of Canada, Mexico, and the U.S. take prompt and appropriate steps to implement robust climate action plans that align with their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). These NDCs represent their commitment on the global stage to combat climate change and address the impacts caused by it. By crafting climate action plans that harmonize with these commitments, governments ensure consistency with national approaches that are derived from local actions, with reference to international climate goals, to significantly enhance the effectiveness of their strategies. This synchronization between local, regional, and global efforts not only demonstrates a strong commitment to addressing climate change but also maximizes the impact of regional initiatives in the broader context of the worldwide climate action agenda.

2. Strengthening Health Infrastructure for Climate Resilience

Safeguarding the health of our communities is of paramount importance. As the impacts of climate change exacerbate health challenges, it becomes imperative to reinforce our regional health infrastructures. This reinforcement is necessary to not only anticipate but also effectively respond to and manage the health threats induced by the changing climate. By fortifying our health systems and making them resilient to climate-related issues, we ensure the well-being and safety of our communities, especially in the face of evolving environmental conditions.

3. Enhancing Air Quality Monitoring and Control Measures

Access to clean air is a fundamental right that must be upheld. To protect this right, it is essential to expand air quality monitoring systems and rigorously implement control measures. These actions are crucial to safeguarding our communities from the detrimental effects of pollutants and ensuring a healthier and more sustainable environment for all.

4. Adoption of IPCC Guidelines for National Climate Assessments

Recognizing the invaluable expertise of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), we recommend the adoption of their guidelines for national climate assessments. By incorporating these guidelines into our strategies, we ensure that our actions are informed by the latest scientific consensus and best practices. This commitment to evidence-based decision-making empowers us to address climate challenges with the most accurate and effective solutions, contributing to a more resilient and sustainable future.

5. Promotion of Climate-Smart Agriculture Practices

Agriculture plays a dual role as both a victim and a contributor to climate change. Therefore, it is essential to promote climate-smart agricultural practices that are resilient to climate variations and

have a reduced carbon footprint. By doing so, we prioritize sustainable food security while mitigating the impact of agriculture on the environment. This approach is vital in ensuring the long-term well-being of our communities and the planet.

6. Implementation of NAPs Focusing on Biodiversity

Biodiversity serves as the lifeblood of our ecosystems. In the implementation of National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), there should be a primary focus on the preservation and restoration of diverse ecosystems. By doing so, we prioritize the cultivation of a balanced and resilient natural environment that is essential for the well-being of our planet and future generations.

7. Engaging Indigenous Peoples in Climate Decision-Making

Indigenous communities possess centuries of invaluable ecological wisdom. Actively involving these communities in climate decision-making processes is essential to ensure that Traditional Ecological Knowledge complements modern science. This harmonious blending of insights from Indigenous wisdom and contemporary science leads to holistic solutions that are crucial for effectively addressing climate challenges and preserving our natural world.

8. Fostering Gender Equality in Climate Actions

Gender equality is not merely a social imperative but also a critical factor that enhances the effectiveness of climate actions. By ensuring equal and equitable representation and addressing gender-specific challenges, our strategies become more comprehensive and inclusive. This inclusivity is essential for advancing climate solutions that truly reflect the diversity of our communities and promote equitable resilience in the face of climate change.

9. Establishing Partnerships for Climate Mitigation Projects

Collaboration has the power to amplify impact. By forging partnerships with a diverse range of stakeholders, including the private sector and NGOs, we have the opportunity to pool resources, expertise, and drive large-scale, impactful climate mitigation projects. These partnerships facilitate the mobilization of collective efforts, making it possible to address climate challenges on a broader scale and achieve meaningful results in our pursuit of a more sustainable future.

10. Addressing Climate-Induced Displacement in Security Strategies

Climate change poses a significant security threat, leading to the displacement of communities and resource conflicts. It is imperative that our security strategies not only recognize but also anticipate and address these challenges. Doing so is essential to ensure regional stability and proactively manage the security risks associated with climate-induced displacement and resource constraints.

11. Promoting Green and Sustainable Job Creation and Training

A green and sustainable economy represents the future. By actively promoting green and sustainable job opportunities and providing the necessary training, we ensure that our workforce is well-prepared for the transition to sustainable industries. This proactive approach not only contributes to environmental preservation but also fosters economic growth and provides meaningful employment prospects for our communities.

12. Fostering Innovation in Low-Carbon Technologies

Innovation plays a pivotal role in our fight against climate change. By dedicating resources and promoting research in low-carbon technologies, we pave the way for groundbreaking solutions that have the potential to revolutionize our approach to energy and resource management. This commitment to innovation is essential for driving the transition towards a sustainable and low-carbon future.

13. Supporting Renewable Energy Transition

The transition to renewable energy sources is no longer optional; it has become an imperative. Regional support in the form of policy incentives, grants, and infrastructure development is essential to expedite this transition. By providing the necessary support, we can accelerate the shift towards renewable energy, reduce our carbon footprint, and secure a more sustainable and resilient energy future for our communities.

14. Implementing Just Transition Policies for Affected Workers

As we transition towards greener and more sustainable industries, workers in traditional sectors may face significant challenges. Just transition policies are vital to ensure that these workers are not left behind. These policies aim to provide support, retraining, and a seamless integration into new industries, all while mitigating economic hardships for affected workers. This approach helps to bridge the gap between old and new sectors, ultimately fostering a more equitable and resilient workforce.

15. Facilitating Cross-Border Climate Collaboration

Climate change recognizes no borders. Collaborative efforts with neighboring regions can amplify our mitigation and adaptation strategies, ensuring coordinated and effective actions. By fostering cross-border collaboration, we create a unified front against the shared challenges of climate change, enabling the exchange of knowledge, resources, and innovative solutions that benefit us all.

16. Enhancing Climate Education and Awareness

Awareness serves as a driving force for action. By incorporating climate education into curricula and launching public awareness campaigns, we ensure that every individual is well-informed, conscious, and inspired to take action. This approach empowers our communities with the knowledge and motivation needed to address climate challenges proactively and collectively.

17. Establishing Youth Climate Advisory Boards

The youth are not just the leaders of the future; they are active stakeholders today. The creation of Youth Climate Advisory Boards is essential to ensure that the unique perspectives and innovative ideas of the younger generation are fully integrated into our climate strategies. By empowering youth to actively participate in shaping these strategies, we harness their passion and creativity to drive meaningful and effective climate actions.

18. Promoting Community-Led Renewable Energy Projects

Communities often possess the best understanding of their unique energy needs. Therefore, supporting community-led renewable energy initiatives is crucial. These initiatives ensure that localized and regionalized solutions are not only efficient but also sustainable. By empowering communities to take the lead in renewable energy projects, we foster a sense of ownership and responsibility that drives the transition towards cleaner and more resilient energy sources.

19. Developing Regional Climate Finance Mechanisms

Funding is a critical component of effective climate action. To address this need, it is imperative to establish dedicated regional climate finance mechanisms. These mechanisms ensure that funds are readily available, accessible, and utilized effectively for climate-related projects. By creating regional financial avenues, we can better mobilize resources and drive meaningful climate initiatives that contribute to a more sustainable and resilient future.

20. Supporting Ongoing Climate Research and Innovation

The climate crisis is dynamic, and our understanding of it continues to evolve. Supporting research and development (R&D) in climate science and solutions is crucial to ensure that we stay ahead of the curve. This commitment to ongoing R&D allows us to continuously refine our strategies and actions based on the latest scientific insights. By investing in R&D, we empower ourselves to adapt and respond effectively to the ever-changing challenges posed by the climate crisis.

21. Advancing Policy Participation Processes for Youth

As progressive climate policies introduced today impact our future tomorrow, we demand to participate in the policy creation process in a more meaningful way. The following proposed framework advances the participation of youth in these processes and recognizes the global community of youth as a group that needs to be represented in a participatory manner in these discussions. We seek to have this framework adopted at all levels of climate policy creation.

Access: Members of the global community of youth need to know that invitations and opportunities exist for direct engagement with policymakers. Access to these opportunities must be provided by the policymaker through channels familiar to youth for meaningful discourse;

Respect: Both parties need to enter policy collaborations with an open mind since neither party is fully aware of each other's perspectives, experiences, and cultures. Efforts to learn and understand these defining characteristics will facilitate discussions. Regarding youth as a separate and distinct global community, as well as its inherent sub-cultures and differences within itself, acknowledge a culture that the policymaker needs to consider for fully inclusive and representative climate policy. Understanding the same sub-cultures of the policymaking community helps us empathize with the government officials and can lead to solutions to their obstacles faster;

Collaboration: We are prepared to conduct research and present reliably researched evidence that may be absent from the policymaker's understanding of our community's unique relationship with the impacts of climate change. The policymaker, in turn, needs to be open to assigning such knowledge collection and accepting it as reliable representations of our community's culture;

Finance: Funding programs and relative mechanisms need to be provided to supplement opportunities for direct engagement. Many young people cannot afford the travel to the policymaker's offices and many policymakers do not have a specific budget to travel to various and remote communities of youth leadership. It therefore becomes apparent that funding programs, especially at the UN level, need to be established to facilitate mutually agreeable places for engagement; and,

Authorship: We need to be able to contribute directly to policy writing and feel we have some acceptable degree of ownership with the drafted policy. Review and approval phases for us would contribute to this. This component ensures that our collective voice is not only heard, but is accurately represented in any ensuing policy. Participating youth need to have their names attached to the authorship of any published and enacted policy.

CONCLUSION

In the face of an ever-pressing global climate crisis, the Regional Conference of Youth North America 2023 has established a comprehensive set of actions and recommendations to guide our collective efforts towards a more sustainable and resilient future. As we reflect on the deliberations of this conference, it is evident that climate change is not a challenge we can afford to ignore or delay action upon, it demands our immediate attention and collaboration.

The preambles to our recommendations set the tone for our dedication to inclusivity, resilience, and justice. We recognize the importance of involving disadvantaged, vulnerable, and marginalized communities, Indigenous groups, children, and the youth in the decision-making processes, as their perspectives and wisdom are integral to crafting holistic solutions. We emphasize the necessity of climate justice, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable populations who are disproportionately

impacted by climate change. Our recommendations encompass a wide array of strategies that acknowledge the multifaceted nature of climate change. From aligning climate action plans with international commitments and focusing on climate resilience in health infrastructure to promoting gender equality in climate action and fostering innovation in low-carbon technologies, our approach is comprehensive and forward-looking.

Moreover, the call for cross-border collaboration and the establishment of Youth Climate Advisory Boards highlight our commitment to working together across borders and generations. By supporting community-led renewable energy projects and regional climate finance mechanisms, we recognize the importance of local ownership and access to funds. We prioritize ongoing climate research and innovation to ensure that our strategies remain up-to-date and effective in the ever-evolving climate landscape.

The Regional Conference of Youth North America has charted a course towards a more sustainable, resilient, and equitable future. Our recommendations reflect a recognition of the urgency of climate action and the importance of addressing this challenge comprehensively and collaboratively. As we move forward, we must ensure that these recommendations are not mere words on paper but actionable steps towards a world where we safeguard the environment, promote justice, and empower communities to thrive in the face of a changing climate. Together, we'll make a difference, and it is our collective responsibility to turn these recommendations into reality.