



# UNCCD COP16

## YOUTH ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES



02ND-13TH  
DECEMBER



RIYADH,  
SAUDI ARABIA



UNCCD YOUTH  
CAUCUS (UYC)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**1**

**Abbreviations**

**2**

**Executive Summary**

**3**

**Introduction**

**4**

**Theme for the Fourth UNCCD Youth Forum**

**5**

**Youth Forum**

- Youth Forum Highlights
- Highlights from Peoples' Day High-level Event on Peoples' Day
- COP16 Decision on the Youth Engagement Strategy
- COP16 Youth Declaration
- Key Highlights from the Land Youth Negotiator Programme as part of the implementation of the YES

**6**

**Children and Youth Resilience Hub**

**7**

**Acknowledgements**

**8**

**Annexes**

# ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AIDER</b>	Association for Research and Integral Development
<b>AGFUND</b>	Arab Gulf Programme for Development
<b>BMZ</b>	Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>CGIAR</b>	Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers
<b>COP</b>	Conference of Parties
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>DLDD</b>	Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought
<b>GEF</b>	Global Environment Facility
<b>GIZ</b>	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration

# ABBREVIATIONS

<b>NGO</b>	Non Governmental Organisation
<b>UNCCD</b>	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNEP</b>	United Nations Environment Programme
<b>WRI</b>	World Resources Institute
<b>WFF</b>	World Food Forum
<b>YES</b>	Youth Engagement Strategy
<b>YNA</b>	Youth Negotiators Academy

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Youth Action for Land: Restoring resilient and sustainable futures.

In a world where land degradation and desertification threaten the livelihoods of millions, young people are stepping up not as passive beneficiaries but as architects of the future. **The UNCCD COP16 Youth Forum**, held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, was a milestone moment for youth engagement in global land governance.

Over the course of three days, young leaders, policymakers, scientists, and civil society actors from across the world came together to discuss, collaborate, and advocate for sustainable land management. With an unwavering commitment to reversing desertification and restoring ecosystems, the forum provided a space where voices that often go unheard could shape the conversation and, more importantly, the solutions.

Through panel discussions, interactive workshops, and high-level dialogues, participants tackled some of the most pressing challenges of our time—from gender equality in land access to financing mechanisms for restoration, from policy advocacy to the role of youth in green employment. The discussions were not just about identifying the problems but about forging real pathways for action. And at the heart of it all was a simple but powerful truth: **young people are not just the future; they are the present.**



PhotoCredit: Papa Mamadou, UNCCD



## Key Takeaways: What We Learned

The forum brought forth several critical insights that should guide the next steps in youth engagement within the UNCCD framework:

**Youth Must Be at the Decision-Making Table** While young people bring energy, creativity, and innovative solutions, too often they are sidelined in policy discussions. The forum emphasized that youth engagement should not be tokenistic; it should be effective and meaningful, with young people integrated into decision-making processes at local, national, and international levels.

**Financing is the Missing Piece** Land restoration projects require sustained investment, but funding for youth-led initiatives remains scarce. Discussions highlighted the urgent need for **accessible, long-term financing** for young entrepreneurs, community projects, and grassroots movements dedicated to sustainable land management.

**Climate Resilience and Land Restoration Go Hand in Hand** Desertification and land degradation are not isolated challenges; they are part of the broader climate and biodiversity crises. Solutions must be **cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary**, linking biodiversity conservation, climate mitigation and adaptation, and sustainable land management and agriculture with land restoration strategies.

**Policy Advocacy Needs to Be Strengthened** Youth engagement cannot stop at participation; it must translate into influence and action. Training programs like the **Land Youth Negotiators Programme** demonstrated the power of equipping young people with the skills to **navigate UNCCD negotiations, shape policies, and hold decision-makers accountable**.

**Collaboration is Key** Solutions cannot be achieved in silos. Cross-sector partnerships between governments, the private sector, civil society, and academia must be expanded to amplify youth-led solutions and scale up impact globally.





## A Call to Action: Where we go from here?

To effectively tackle land degradation, different stakeholders must take concrete steps to support youth leadership and engagement. The forum concluded with clear action points categorized by key actors:

### For Governments and Policymakers

- Institutionalize youth participation and representation by integrating young experts into formal governance structures, ensuring they are not just observers but decision-makers and also implementors of UNCCD decisions and processes.
- Expand accessible financial commitments to support youth-led land restoration initiatives through national and international funding mechanisms.
- Develop policies that promote sustainable land management practices and ensure youth engagement in their formulation and implementation.

### For International Organizations and Donors

- Increase accessible funding opportunities for youth-led initiatives, creating long-term, flexible financing mechanisms.
- Strengthen capacity-building programs that equip youth with technical, policy, and advocacy skills necessary to drive change in their communities and beyond.
- Support intergenerational knowledge exchange and mentorship programs to ensure sustainability and impact.

## For Private Sector and Investors

- Invest in youth-led startups and enterprises focused on sustainable land management and restoration.
- Partner with youth organizations to co-develop innovative solutions for land degradation and ecosystem restoration.
- Support skill development programs that enable young people to access green and yellow jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities.

## For Parties, Youth and Civil Society Organizations

- Hold institutions accountable for implementing the UNCCD **Youth Engagement Strategy (YES)** and ensure commitments translate into real opportunities for youth leadership.
- Strengthen grassroots advocacy and mobilization to push for youth-inclusive policies by actively engaging and recognizing the invaluable contributions of indigenous and traditional youth, who hold deep-rooted knowledge, sustainable practices, and lived experiences in environmental stewardship. Their participation ensures that policies are not only inclusive but also informed by diverse cultural perspectives and traditional ecological knowledge, which are essential for building resilient and community-driven solutions.
- Engage in cross-sector collaborations to amplify impact and bring innovative land restoration solutions to scale.



# Conclusion: A Moment of Possibility

The UNCCD COP16 Youth Forum was not just another conference; it was a statement. A statement that young people refuse to wait for change they are creating it. The path forward is clear: youth must be supported, their ideas must be valued, and their leadership must be recognized. If we act now, we can turn this momentum into lasting impact, ensuring that future generations inherit a world where land is restored, livelihoods are protected, and hope flourishes.

The time for action is now. And young people are ready.



# ABOUT THE UNCCD YOUTH CAUCUS (UYC)

With growing recognition of the importance of youth engagement and their unique perspectives in sustainable development, the UNCCD Youth Caucus was officially adopted by the parties in September of 2019 at COP14 as the formal and dedicated youth engagement mechanism of the United Nations to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

The UYC promotes youth engagement in all desertification-related initiatives within the multilateral system bringing together young people from around the world to advocate for land rights, meaningful participation, and sustainable development while ensuring youth voices shape the policies and actions that affect their futures.

The UYC works across global, regional, national, and grassroots levels to contribute meaningfully to the pillars of the UNCCD: land degradation neutrality, drought resilience, and sustainable land management. Our work is organized into three interconnected pillars:

## KNOWLEDGE

We create and maintain a vibrant platform that empowers youth to lead, connect, and share innovative and impactful solutions that respond to the needs of both people and the planet.

## ACTION

We promote and facilitate meaningful youth participation in shaping and implementing policies whether through UNCCD processes, national strategies, or local community initiatives. Our aim is to ensure youth are present in decision-making spaces from design to follow-up.

## CAPACITY BUILDING

We design and support learning spaces workshops, training programs, and peer-to-peer exchanges that equip young people with the knowledge, skills, and tools to effectively engage with land, desertification, drought resilience and multilateral policy systems.



Website: [unccdyouthcaucus.org](https://unccdyouthcaucus.org)



Twitter: @UNCCDYouth



Instagram: @unccd\_youth\_caucus



Facebook: UNCCD Youth Caucus

# YOUTH ENGAGEMENT @COP16

## Introduction

First held in 2015 in Ankara, Turkey, during COP12 (see **ICCD/COP(12)/20**), the Youth Forum has continued to build momentum and become a space where global youth participate in events, organise events and meaningfully contribute to discussions on desertification, land degradation, and drought (DLDD). Various organizations, universities, and other stakeholders recognize the Youth Forum as a strategic capacity-building platform for youth engagement.

The 2024 UNCCD Youth Forum marked a significant milestone in the global movement toward youth engagement and participation within the UNCCD processes and procedures. During the fourth edition of the Youth Forum, the UNCCD Youth Caucus mobilized and brought together a diverse coalition of participants, including policymakers, scientists, innovators, farmers, land stewards, industry leaders, Indigenous leaders, and young change makers from around the globe to discuss and address critical issues related to DLDD. The forum served as a platform for youth to exchange ideas, build skills, and mobilize action toward a sustainable future for our lands.

The UNCCD COP16 Youth Forum aimed to empower youth as advocates for sustainable land management by amplifying their voices and increasing visibility through the Youth Caucus Call to Action and Youth Voices towards UNCCD COP16. It equally sought to encourage stakeholders to implement the **Youth Engagement Strategy (YES)**, foster collaboration among young leaders, and provide a platform for knowledge exchange on land restoration and conservation.

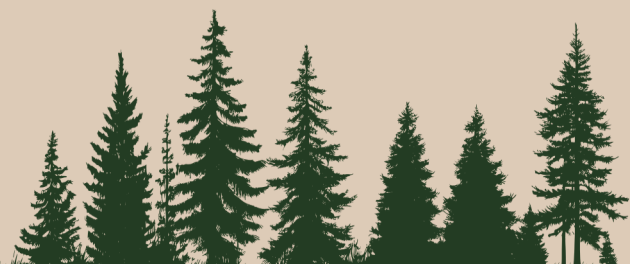
The forum also aimed to generate innovative solutions to combat land degradation, offer recommendations for stronger youth participation in UNCCD processes, and promote opportunities for youth, particularly in green and land-based jobs.

UNCCD through the organising of the Youth Caucus remained committed to fostering inclusivity and innovation. It created an empowering space for all young people, children and youth to lead and influence change. The UNCCD Youth Caucus continues to inspire and mobilize a growing community of young people, pushing the boundaries of what is possible. Through a shared mission to address critical issues related to DLDD.

# THEME FOR THE FOURTH UNCCD YOUTH FORUM

**"Youth Action for Land: Restoring resilient and sustainable futures."**

Recognizing the critical role of young people in addressing the challenges of DLDD, the Global Youth Caucus on Land and Desertification (UNCCD Youth Caucus) the theme for the fourth youth forum was Youth Action for Land: Restoring resilient and sustainable futures to empower young leaders, facilitating knowledge exchange, and catalyzing action towards restoring and protecting our lands for future generations while serving as a platform for youth to exchange ideas, build skills, and mobilize action towards a sustainable future for our lands.



# Youth Forum

By empowering young leaders and fostering collaboration, we can make significant strides in addressing desertification, land degradation and drought contributing to global efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (**SDGs**) and the objectives of the UNCCD as young people are stewards of the future, youth are key actors in driving positive change and fostering sustainable land management practices.

The opening ceremony of the Youth Forum 2024 event, held on 05th December, gathered global leaders, young changemakers, innovators, scientists, investors and a wide range of stakeholders to address urgent challenges in addressing DLDD. Hosted in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, as part of UNCCD COP16, the event was opened by JulietGrace Luwedde, the Global Focal Point for the UNCCD Youth Caucus who highlighted how the theme for the fourth youth forum was a response to the broader COP16 theme of **“Our Land, Our Future”** a reflection of why young people ought to be considered as key stakeholders for the implementation of UNCCD’s mission and mandate.

Key speakers at the event included **Mr. Abdullah M. AlGhamdi**, the General Director for Youth Development from the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia who emphasised the crucial role of youth in achieving land degradation neutrality; **Mr. Marcos Montorio**, the External Relations Officer at the UNCCD who re-emphasised UNCCD’s commitment to working with and supporting young people’s-led initiatives.

Four youth panel discussions were held during the youth forum included, “Gender Equality and Social Inclusion”, “Financing Mechanisms for Land Restoration”, “Understanding the Interlinkages”, and “Policy Advocacy and Governance”. The youth forum also included a High-level Event on People’s Day with an inspiring intergenerational dialogue which outlined key priorities for advancing youth participation, and empowering youth organizations youth participation, and empowering youth organizations and initiatives through accessible funding and capacity building while drawing emphasis to the **UNCCD Youth Engagement Strategy** which has been developed to empower youth voices and actions.





# Youth Forum Highlights: Session Outcomes/ Summaries

## Panel 1: Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

This session focused on ensuring the meaningful participation of women, young people and marginalized groups in land restoration efforts. It was joined by notable speakers: UNCCD Executive Secretary Ibrahim Thiaw, Beth Roberts (Landesa), Judith Rosendahl (GIZ), Washe Kazungu (TMG), Thanh Ha Dang (Vietnam), and Karen Elizabeth Bernard (UNCCD) and moderated by Lena Moral Waldmeier. This panel highlighted the urgent need for comprehensive solutions that address gender inequality through policy reform, societal commitment, and innovative approaches to empowerment. Tackling these issues is essential for moral justice, economic viability, and environmental sustainability.

The speakers emphasized non-governmental actors' role in addressing policy implementation gaps while embracing data and innovative reporting methods as essential tools to spotlight instances where policies are not being enforced.



There was also a very open and constructive discussion regarding some of the challenging aspects of gender programs in diverse contexts and the importance of including all members of society as advocates, leaving no one behind. Panellists made valuable contributions to the conflicting narrative that these approaches are causing negative externalities for other members of society.

The speakers also noted that collaboration between grassroots organizations and policymakers is crucial to ensuring accountability and inclusivity. Sustainable impact demands financial and structural commitments to make people feel a genuine sense of belonging. While expertise in the field may be essential, fostering environments that ensure long-term inclusivity and empowerment is necessary.

In his remarks, the UNCCD Executive Secretary elaborated on the multifaceted nature of inequalities, providing specific insights into gender gaps:

- **Land Distribution:** Inequalities in land ownership disproportionately affect women, particularly in rural areas.
- **Gender Gap in Land Tenure:** While women produce 80% of the food in developing countries, they largely lack land ownership, noting that over 100 countries have laws or practices that dispossess women of land upon the death of their spouses. Women's inability to use land as collateral restricts their access to investments.
- **Addressing these inequalities is a moral and economic imperative.** It is also a matter of justice and crucial for global food security and economic sustainability.



- Call for Generational Change: Younger generations need to drive transformative change, especially as consumer habits such as fast fashion significantly strain land resources.

The panel highlighted the urgent need for comprehensive solutions that address gender inequality through policy reform, societal commitment, and innovative approaches to empowerment. Tackling these issues is essential for moral justice, economic viability, and environmental sustainability.



**Photo Credit: UNCCD Comms**

## **Panel 2: Financing Mechanisms for Land Restoration**

The session explored innovative funding opportunities and financial instruments to support land restoration projects, youth entrepreneurship, and land-based employment and was kicked off with a keynote address by Dr. Muralee Thummarukudy, Director, G20 Global Land Initiative that focused on Land of Opportunities.

In his remarks, Dr. Muralee highlighted the silent crisis of land degradation, which receives significantly less attention than the climate and biodiversity crises despite its critical impact and drew participants attention to the G20 Global Initiative on Land Degradation which launched during the Saudi 2020 G20 Presidency with the aim to reduce degraded land by 50% by 2040.

In his concluding remarks, Dr. Muralee noted that the G20 Global Initiative on Land Degradation is fostering global collaboration to address the land crisis. However, further efforts are needed to enhance youth engagement, secure funding, and build technical capacities. Increased awareness and concrete actions will be essential to align land restoration efforts with broader climate and biodiversity goals.



**Photo credit: Francis Boafo Asamoah, UNCCD Youth Caucus**

### Panel 3: Understanding the Interlinkages

This panel explored connections between land degradation, climate change, biodiversity loss, and youth leadership. This panel brought together: Stephanie Katsir (GIZ), Luis J. Castillo Mena (AIDER), Berexford Jallah (UNCCD National Focal Point Liberia), Enrique Carlos Paniagua (UNDP), Alondra Fraustro (UNCCD Land Hero) and was moderated by Elizabeth Gulugulu (YOUNGO).

The panelists shared experiences on empowering communities and youth in ecosystem conservation and sustainable management for the restoration of degraded areas using natural solutions. Castillo Mena also shared an example of sustainable water management in northern Peru's dry forests and national parks which has promoted economic activities like non-timber forest product utilization and carbon sequestration with emphasis on capacity-building for sustainable business plans and forest management.

The panelists collectively noted the importance of linking economic benefits with ecological conservation to incentivize sustainability while engaging youth in creating digital networks to address power dynamics and foster collaboration. They also expressed the value of forums in sharing diverse perspectives, solutions, and engaging with governments. Emphasis was placed on the global nature of environmental challenges and the need for localized solutions while calling for opportunities for youth to act as ambassadors and lead initiatives in agroforestry, governance, and sustainability.

The session highlighted the importance of youth leadership in addressing global environmental challenges, with actionable strategies tied to education, community involvement, and innovative financing. Collaboration across generations and sectors remains critical to creating lasting impact.





**Photo Credit: UNCCD Comms**

#### **Panel 4: Policy Advocacy and Governance**

This session looked at the strategies for influencing policy and promoting sustainable land management practices at local, national, and international levels as well as fostering green, land-based jobs for young people. The session focused on equipping young people with the knowledge and tools necessary to influence policy frameworks and governance structures to promote sustainable land management.

This panel brought together: Mette Grangaard Lund (ILO), Marie Wichmann (BMZ), Marie-Claire Graf (YNA), and Youth Activist Juan Sebastian Paredes from Ecuador, moderated by Einass Bakhiet. The discussion focused on how regulatory mechanisms, strategic policymaking, and youth engagement can be leveraged to create a more inclusive approach to environmental governance.

The discussion highlighted the importance of youth-driven policy advocacy, focusing on how young leaders can actively shape national and international land management policies. The session also addressed the barriers to effective policy implementation, including a lack of financial support, limited access to decision-making platforms, and insufficient knowledge-sharing mechanisms.

Participants engaged in interactive discussions and case studies, gaining practical insights into the vital role of policy and governance in promoting green jobs, securing land tenure, and implementing sustainable land-use practices. The session concluded with a strong call to action for governments, international organizations, and youth networks to enhance their collaborations and advocate for policy reforms that prioritize environmental sustainability and active youth participation.



Photo credit: UNCCD Comms



# Session Outcomes Interactive Workshops Sessions

## Youth Advocacy for Land Rights and Policy Change:

This session highlighted the critical role of secure land rights in promoting sustainable land management and ensuring equitable access to resources for young people. Led by key experts and advocates from LANDESA, the participants discussed the intersection of land rights, policy influence, and environmental sustainability, stressing the need for youth participation in decision-making processes. Case studies were shared to demonstrate how land tenure security can enhance climate resilience and improve livelihoods.

### Key Outcomes:



- The forum emphasized the necessity of legal frameworks that recognize and protect youth land ownership and tenure rights.



- Identified strategies for youth-led advocacy to influence land policies at local, national, and international levels in line with the UNCCD Youth Engagement Strategy (YES).



- Encouraged partnerships between governments, NGOs, and youth organizations to amplify youth voices in land governance.



- Recommended the establishment of mentorship and capacity-building programs to equip young leaders with the knowledge and skills needed for effective advocacy.

## Innovations in Sustainable Agriculture:

Organized by the WFF team, this workshop showcased cutting-edge solutions for sustainable farming practices and their impact on local communities.

The session highlighted innovative approaches such as regenerative agriculture, agroecology, and climate-smart farming techniques that enhance soil health and food security while promoting economic resilience among young farmers.

Participants shared success stories from diverse regions, emphasizing the importance of integrating indigenous knowledge with modern agricultural technologies.

### Key Outcomes:



- Increased awareness of sustainable agriculture as a tool for climate resilience and land restoration.



- Recognition of the need for stronger policy support to scale up youth-led agricultural innovations.



- Encouragement for cross-sector collaborations between research institutions, governments, and young farmers.



- Call for investment in capacity-building programs to equip youth with skills for sustainable farming enterprises.



**Photo Credit: UNCCD Comms**

## **Community Engagement: The Role of Young People in Combating Land Degradation**

The session highlighted the crucial role of young people in tackling land degradation and climate challenges, emphasizing youth-led initiatives, education, and intergenerational partnerships.

In their remarks, the MENA Regional Youth Project Manager from UNDP noted that young people are not just future leaders but actively shaping environmental solutions today. They also provided some regional context that 82% of land in Arab states is degraded. The main drivers include deforestation, harmful agricultural practices, and climate stress, which are calling for an urgent need for integrated solutions addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, and land restoration.

The session showcased youth-led initiatives while highlighting challenges and gathering recommendations for overcoming barriers, with participants sharing strategies for scaling initiatives regionally and globally.



**Photo Credit: UNCCD Comms**

## **From Land to Livelihoods: Decent, green, land-based jobs for youth**

This session focused on unlocking opportunities for youth in land-based green jobs, emphasizing the role of sustainable land management in creating employment. Experts from ILO and UNDP and young leaders discussed innovative solutions for securing decent work while combating desertification, land degradation, and drought (DLDD).

Participants explored pathways to empower youth through green employment, including entrepreneurship, education, and governance.

The session featured a presentation on the Green Jobs for Youth Pact and the Youth Employment Barometer, highlighting key initiatives to support young people in green careers. A world café discussion allowed participants to engage in thematic dialogues on green employment, skills development, and youth empowerment strategies.

### Key Outcomes:



- Developed actionable strategies to promote youth employment in land-based sectors as highlighted in the UNCCD Youth Engagement Strategy.



- Strengthened youth empowerment by encouraging active roles in sustainable development and land stewardship.



- Facilitated knowledge exchange on best practices for integrating youth into sustainable land-based economies.



- Increased awareness of the importance of youth-led solutions in combating DLDD and fostering economic resilience.



- Fostered new collaborations and networking opportunities between young professionals and experts in environmental sustainability.

## Youth Empowerment in Addressing Migration Challenges Linked to Drought and Land Degradation

The session focused on the critical role of youth in tackling migration issues caused by drought and land degradation. Experts, policymakers, and young leaders engaged in discussions on the root causes of environmental displacement, strategies for resilience-building, and the importance of youth-led initiatives in sustainable land management.

The session emphasized the need for inclusive policies, capacity-building programs, and innovative solutions to mitigate forced migration.

### Key Outcomes:



- Participants gained a deeper understanding of the link between environmental degradation and migration, fostering a sense of urgency to take action.



- The session highlighted successful youth-driven projects, such as reforestation programs, regenerative agriculture, and climate-smart innovations.



- There were calls to integrate the perspectives of youth into national and international migration and environmental policies, urging governments to focus on sustainable land use.



- Emphasis was placed on providing financial support, training, and mentorship for young people working on climate adaptation and resilience projects.

The session concluded with a call to action, urging youth to take leadership roles in combating land degradation and ensuring climate resilience for future generations.

### Networking and Collaboration Session: Youth-led Climate Action, Access to Funding:

The Networking & Dialogue Session on Advancing Finance & Strategic Partnerships for DLDD provided a dynamic platform for engagement

between youth and policymakers, financial. Hosted at the Children & Youth Resilience Hub and co-organised by Surge Africa, the session featured a mix of structured discussions, speed networking, and informal dialogues to address the persistent funding gap for land restoration initiatives. Participants engaged in meaningful exchanges on the state of DLDD financing, unpacking why funding for land restoration remains disproportionately low in regions most affected, such as Africa and Latin America.

During the interactive dialogue with H. E. Mamadou Touré, Minister for the provision of youth of Cote d'Ivoire, he highlighted some of the challenges young leaders and local initiatives face in accessing finance, while emphasizing the need for public-private collaboration to scale impactful projects. A key takeaway was the importance of narrative change in positioning land governance as an investment-worthy priority, with a focus on creating tangible entry points for youth and locally led organizations to engage multilateral financial institutions.

The session also provided a space to showcase successful youth-led projects, their impact, and the bureaucratic challenges they navigate in scaling up.

A film screening of *Daughters of the Soil* further reinforced the discussion by showcasing grassroots efforts in land restoration, followed by a reflection session on how storytelling can influence policy and investment decisions. The session concluded with networking and knowledge-sharing opportunities, fostering new collaborations between youth representatives and key stakeholders.

This session laid the groundwork for long-term partnerships and actionable steps toward ensuring youth have a central role in shaping and implementing solutions for DLDD resilience.





PhotoCredit: Khilolakhon Kayumova, UNCCD Youth Caucus



# Highlights from Peoples' Day High-level Event on Peoples' Day:

The high-level event for closing the youth forum was part of Peoples' Day and brought together ministers and representatives from key stakeholders. This included the presidencies of COP15 and COP16, leadership from the UNCCD, international organizations, youth-led initiatives, and influential entities such as AGFUND, AEON Collective and the MISK Foundation. The youth forum closing session on People's Day.



- Highlighted the critical role of youth in addressing land degradation, drought and desertification. **"Young people are not just future leaders, but catalysts for transformation today"** Princess Mashaal bint Saud Al-Shalan.



- The youth speakers outlined key priorities for advancing youth-focused policies, supporting meaningful youth participation, and empowering youth organizations and initiatives through accessible funding and capacity building while drawing emphasis to the UNCCD Youth Engagement Strategy which has been developed to empower youth voices and actions.



- Government representatives acknowledged the need to make decision-making processes more agile and inclusive of youth, recognizing that young people make up a significant portion of the population in many countries.



- Representatives from multilateral organizations like UNEP and IOM highlighted opportunities to create green jobs and scale up youth-led nature-based solutions for land restoration.



**Dr. Nasser Al Qahtani, Executive Director AGFUND**



**PhotoCredit: UNCCD Comms**



PhotoCredit: UNCCD Comms



## Challenges faced by youth during the three days of the Youth Forum:

The Conference of Youth agenda as a special event was not included in the official COP16 agenda, which significantly impacted its visibility, accessibility, and overall participation. Without formal recognition within the main conference programme, it was difficult to attract the attention of key stakeholders, including negotiators, policymakers, and representatives from partner organizations, many of whom were unaware of the event or had conflicting commitments.

This lack of official status also posed challenges in mobilizing youth delegates and broader COP participants, as there were no designated time slots that prevented clashes with high-level meetings, side events or negotiation sessions. As a result, many interested participants struggled to fit the Youth Forum into their schedules leading to lower than expected engagement for some sessions.

Additionally, without being on the official agenda, the Youth Forum had limited access to official communication channels used by COP organizers, such as the conference website, daily bulletins, and venue-wide announcements. This meant that outreach efforts had to rely heavily on informal networks, word of mouth, and social media, which, while effective in some cases, lacked the reach and credibility of official COP communications.

Participants on-site highlighted the challenge of limited resources, which restricted the ability to accommodate all those interested in attending sessions ranging from room allocation for the different sessions and on-ground support which made it difficult for many young people to fully engage in the discussions. This underscored the need for better planning and resource allocation to ensure inclusive participation in future events.

Participants faced challenges in navigating cultural and language differences within the diverse group, as the absence of simultaneous interpretation during sessions created barriers to effective communication. This limitation made it difficult for some attendees to fully engage in discussions, or contribute meaningfully to the dialogue. As a result, certain perspectives were underrepresented, and networking opportunities were hindered. The lack of interpretation also placed an extra burden on bilingual participants, who often had to assist with informal translations. Addressing this issue in future conferences by providing multilingual support would enhance inclusivity and ensure that all voices are equally heard and valued.

Participants faced significant challenges in balancing time constraints with the wide range of topics that needed to be addressed. Sessions often had to condense complex discussions, forcing speakers and facilitators to prioritize certain aspects while leaving others insufficiently covered. This made it difficult for participants to engage in detailed deliberations, ask follow-up questions, or develop actionable outcomes. Additionally, overlapping sessions meant that attendees had to make tough choices about which discussions to attend, sometimes missing critical conversations relevant to their work or advocacy.

The fast-paced nature of the COP16 also posed a challenge for new and first-time participants, who needed more time to grasp the negotiation processes and technical language.



## Ensuring Sustainable Support for the Youth Forum at COP

### Timely Funding Support for Youth Forum Organizers

- Host countries and other partners can play a crucial role in strengthening the Youth Forum by providing dedicated funding for participants tasked primarily with its organization. This financial support, channeled through the Youth Caucus Coordination Team, would ensure that a core group of youth organizers can focus on planning, logistics, and effective execution of the Forum without being overburdened by financial constraints. Currently, many young organizers balance multiple responsibilities, often volunteering their time while also trying to participate in negotiations and other sessions. Sustainable funding would allow them to concentrate fully on delivering a high-impact forum, ensuring smoother coordination, better outreach, and improved engagement of youth at COP.

### Integrating the Youth Forum into the Official COP Agenda

- The Youth Forum must be formally included in the official COP agenda and programme to enhance visibility, legitimacy, and participation. Currently, its absence from the official schedule makes it difficult to mobilize delegates, negotiators, and stakeholders who may otherwise wish to attend. Being on the main programme would ensure that high-level representatives, technical experts, and youth delegates from different delegations can plan their participation in advance. This would also provide youth-led discussions with a greater platform, allowing for meaningful interactions with policymakers, negotiators, and civil society actors. Official recognition would further validate the role of young people in UNCCD processes, reinforcing their contributions to land governance and drought resilience.

## Prioritizing Quality Over Quantity in the Absence of Resources

- If adequate resources cannot be secured, the Youth Caucus must make strategic adjustments, focusing on quality over quantity. While ambitious programming is desirable, overextending efforts without sufficient funding or logistical capacity can lead to burnout, inefficiencies, and diluted impact. Instead of attempting to organize multiple sessions with limited support, the Youth Forum could streamline its agenda, ensuring that fewer but high-impact, well-resourced sessions take place. This approach would allow for more meaningful engagement, well-prepared speakers, and structured follow-up actions, ultimately making the Forum more effective. Additionally, prioritizing strategic partnerships with organizations that can provide technical or logistical support would further strengthen the quality of discussions and outputs.

By addressing these key areas, the Youth Forum can evolve into a more sustainable, impactful, and recognized platform within the UNCCD COP process.

## Key Outcomes of the Youth Forum at COP16



### Actionable Recommendations for Integrating Youth Perspectives into UNCCD Policies

Throughout the Youth Forum, participants engaged in discussions and working sessions to develop concrete recommendations for strengthening youth involvement in UNCCD policies and initiatives.



These recommendations focused on key areas such as youth inclusion in decision-making processes, access to climate and land restoration financing, capacity-building for young negotiators, and integrating youth-led solutions into national and global land governance strategies.

By presenting these recommendations, young people demonstrated their commitment to shaping policies that directly affect their future and ensuring that youth-driven innovations and grassroots actions are recognized within the UNCCD framework.



## Youth Statement at the Closing of COP16

One of the most significant moments for youth participation at COP16 was the presentation of the Youth Statement at the conference's closing session.

This statement, developed collectively by Youth Forum participants, outlined key demands and proposals to ensure the stronger, more effective, and meaningful participation of youth in future UNCCD meetings and decision-making processes.

It served as a formal call to action for Parties to integrate youth perspectives into their commitments and create institutionalized mechanisms for youth engagement. The statement reinforced the message that young people are not just beneficiaries but active contributors and key stakeholders in achieving sustainable solutions.





## **Strengthening Networks for Future Collaborations**

The Youth Forum provided a unique space for youth leaders, policymakers, and organizations to connect, exchange ideas, and explore opportunities for collaboration.

These interactions helped bridge gaps between young people advocating for land restoration, drought resilience, and sustainable agriculture and decision-makers responsible for policy implementation.

As a result, several participants formed strategic partnerships that will continue beyond COP16, enabling long-term cooperation on youth-led initiatives, capacity-building programs, and joint advocacy efforts at both local and international levels.



## **Enhanced Understanding of DLDD Issues and Practical Solutions**

Through interactive workshop sessions, participants deepened their understanding of DLDD issues, learning about the scientific, policy, and practical dimensions of these challenges.

Sessions covered a range of topics, including land tenure rights, climate-resilient agricultural practices, sustainable land management, and drought mitigation strategies.

In addition to theoretical knowledge, the workshops equipped youth with practical tools and skills to implement solutions in their communities, such as project design techniques, advocacy strategies, and innovative approaches to land restoration.



## Commitments from Organizations to Support Youth-led Initiatives

The presence of international organizations, government representatives, and funding partners at the Youth Forum created opportunities for tangible support toward youth-led projects.

Several organizations pledged to provide technical assistance, mentorship, and financial resources to empower young change-makers in advancing land restoration and climate action efforts. These commitments signal a growing recognition of the critical role that young people play in addressing environmental challenges and the importance of investing in their leadership and initiatives.

Moving forward, it will be essential to track these pledges and ensure that they translate into sustained support and impactful collaborations.



# COP16 Decision on the Youth Engagement Strategy



**PhotoCredit: IISD-ENB Anastasia Rodopoulou**

UNCCD COP16 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia was a pivotal gathering that brought together nearly all the countries of the world to address the escalating challenges of DLDD. COP16 attracted a record-breaking attendance of 24,239 participants in the blue zone, highlighting an unprecedented global commitment to addressing urgent DLDD.

The high-level events on the Youth Forum Action for Land, Restoring Work for Resilient and Sustainable Futures was instrumental to the realization of some decisions that were taken at the COP16, including:

- **ICCD/COP(16)/L.5 Declaration of the Youth Forum UNCCD:**
- **ICCD/COP(16)/L.17 Participation And Involvement Of Civil Society Organizations In Meetings And Processes Of The UNCCD**

This growing recognition emphasizes the need for collective action to create more resilient and sustainable land systems and with the adoption of the YES at UNCCD COP16, this marks a significant milestone in advancing youth participation in the Convention's processes.

This decision recognizes the vital role of young people in addressing DLDD and reinforces the need for structured and meaningful youth engagement. Throughout COP16, youth advocates emphasized the importance of implementing the YES, calling for stronger commitments from Parties to integrate youth perspectives into decision-making and action plans.

The Youth Forum, side events, and negotiations provided a platform for knowledge exchange, networking, and solution-oriented discussions, demonstrating the capacity of young people to drive change in sustainable land management. Moving forward, the focus must shift toward operationalizing the strategy—securing financial and technical support, ensuring youth representation in key processes, and fostering long-term collaboration with governments and stakeholders.

The decision on YES is not just a commitment on paper but a call to action, urging Parties and institutions to translate words into tangible opportunities for youth leadership in land restoration and climate resilience.



## COP16 Youth Declaration

The COP16 Youth statement/declaration that was read by the Global Focal Point of the UNCCD Youth Caucus Ms. JulietGrace Luwedde was developed collectively by Youth Forum participants, outlined key demands and proposals to ensure the stronger, more effective, and meaningful participation of youth in future UNCCD meetings and decision-making processes.



**PhotoCredit: IISD-ENB Anastasia Rodopoulou**



## **Global Youth Statement for COP16: United for Land – Our Legacy, Our Future**

Youth across the globe face barriers that hinder their full participation in governance, policymaking, and sustainable entrepreneurship. Limited access to markets, funding, and knowledge on desertification, land degradation, and drought (DLDD) further restricts their contributions.

We, the youth of the world, call on global leaders convening at COP16 to take bold and transformative steps to combat DLDD and implement the UNCCD Youth Engagement Strategy. Our future depends on the health of our land. We demand action to ensure a sustainable legacy.



## **Our vision for COP16**

- COP16 must serve as a turning point in the global fight against degradation of the land that sustains us and reaffirm the parties commitment to youth engagement by adopting a decision on youth engagement strategy. We reaffirm our commitment to sustainability, inclusion, advocacy, education, and action to ensure that the legacy we leave behind is one of positive environmental transformation, equity, and justice.
- COP16 should establish a legacy of intergenerational collaboration between the older generation of policymakers, who provide guidance for the implementation of proposed policies, and the younger generation of aspiring policymakers, empowering them to shape the future in which they will live by recognising the role that we all play in the UNCCD processes.

## **Our Demands to Advance Youth Engagement at COP16 and Beyond:**

- Advance youth-focused policies by promoting equitable land rights, particularly for marginalized groups like young women, children, refugees, and Indigenous communities while fostering youth collaborations across the Rio Conventions to amplify advocacy.
- Ensure gender inclusion by guaranteeing land tenure for women to promote equitable land access and meaningful participation of young people in agri-food policy-making.
- Establish monitoring systems to track inclusivity and the impact of land-based interventions. Implement rights-based land policies integrating Indigenous and scientific knowledge.



## **Support meaningful participation and partnerships:**

- Institutionalize youth participation in land governance, and decision-making processes such as negotiations to ensure equitable representation of grassroots, Indigenous, and marginalized youth in national delegations with financial support.
- Enable meaningful youth involvement in developing and implementing DLDD policies and accountability frameworks by supporting the implementation of the UNCCD Youth Engagement Strategy.
- Establish and promote inclusive platforms for knowledge-sharing by connecting youth with experts to facilitate skills transfer, especially in the Global South and conflict-affected areas, to lead and monitor land restoration projects with transparent engagement mechanisms.



## **Provide dedicated financial and technical support:**

- Provide accessible and flexible funding for youth-led initiatives in sustainable land management, and invest in green jobs while improving existing ones by ensuring fair wages and safe working conditions in sectors like agriculture and forestry.
- Reform subsidies to support innovative and scalable business models that foster collaboration for communities impacted by land degradation and strengthen sustainable land management through investments in research, technology, and the integration of Indigenous practices.
- Prioritize financial support for youth, women, and children, particularly in the Global South and conflict-affected areas, to advance ecosystem restoration aligned with goals of peace, security, and resilience.



## **Build capacity and support networking:**

- Strengthen the capacity of marginalized youth through grassroots initiatives, educational programs, and formal advocacy channels, including opportunities to participate in UNCCD COP sessions while fostering international and intergenerational collaboration to share and replicate effective DLDD solutions, integrating Indigenous knowledge with scientific research.
- Provide training for youth on the science-policy interface to improve their understanding and application of sustainable land management and resilience-building strategies and also create inclusive spaces where young people can share best practices in sustainable agriculture, forestry, and land use, fostering opportunities for networking and collaborative learning.



## **Conclusion**

The intentionality of the convention to center youth engagement was fully felt for us when the parties requested the secretariat for a Youth Engagement Strategy and since then, we the young people have worked very closely with various stakeholders to respond. We also acknowledge the fundamental importance of soil to life and recognize soil degradation as a major challenge to global sustainability and food security.

The UNCCD Youth Engagement Strategy is not just a document; it is a roadmap, a call to action, and a testament to the belief that young people are not only stakeholders but catalysts for transformation in combating desertification, land degradation, and drought as it seeks to bridge this gap by embedding youth voices and actions into the very fabric of the Convention's policies and programs.

Our message is clear: our shared legacy is at risk without action. Together, we must create a future where land degradation is a thing of the past and the land is a thriving foundation for all life. We, the youth, are not a distant hope for the future; we are the force driving change today. Together, let us ensure that the implementation of the UNCCD Youth Engagement Strategy is not just a goal but a reality—one that transforms our communities, regenerates our lands, and secures a sustainable future for all.

We, the youth of the world, stand united for land, calling upon the global community to listen, engage, and act. This is our legacy, our future. Let us protect it together.

Thank you.



## Key Highlights from the Land Youth Negotiator Programme as part of the implementation of the YES

At COP16, 44 young people from 34 countries, trained as young negotiators by the Land Youth Negotiator Programme, engaging directly in the UNCCD negotiation process as part of their respective member states. This initiative by the Youth Negotiators Academy (YNA) marked a significant step toward strengthening youth representation in global land governance and policy making.

Throughout the negotiations, young negotiators played an active role in following key agenda items, bridging generational gaps, and advocating for youth-centered policies. Their engagement highlighted the need for a formal and structured approach to integrating young experts, not just as observers but as negotiators shaping decisions on drought resilience, land restoration financing, and gender inclusion in land governance.

Key reflections from the programme include:



- **Navigating the Negotiation Process:** The structure of UNCCD negotiations, often complex and procedural, posed a learning curve for young negotiators. However, through six-months of tailored and intense capacity-building sessions, mentorship, and peer support, participants developed confidence in engaging with delegates and providing substantive input. This underscores the importance of sustained training opportunities for youth ahead of future COPs.



- **Bridging Policy and Action:** Many young negotiators came from backgrounds of grassroots activism, land restoration, and sustainable agriculture. Their lived experiences enriched the discussions, ensuring that negotiations remained grounded in realities on the ground. However, a recurring challenge was the disconnect between high-level commitments and actual implementation, reinforcing the need for accountability mechanisms that include youth as key rightholders.



- **Overcoming Barriers to Effective and Meaningful Participation:** Despite the progress made in including youth at COP16, financial constraints, visa challenges, and lack of formal recognition in delegation structures remain barriers to equitable youth participation.

Several young negotiators faced difficulties in securing official party badges despite the formal Memorandum of Understanding of the YNA, limiting their access to key decision-making spaces. Addressing these systemic issues is critical to ensuring that youth are not just present but fully engaged in shaping land governance policies through formal recognitions.



### **Strengthening Youth-led Advocacy:**

The Land Youth Negotiators Programme demonstrated the power of youth organizing within multilateral spaces. Whether through regional meetings, formal negotiations, side events, direct consultations with government representatives, or informal lobbying, young people brought energy, solutions, and urgency to the negotiations. Moving forward, institutionalizing this initiative within UNCCD processes would provide a sustainable pathway for intergenerational dialogue and knowledge transfer.

The participation of 44 youth negotiators at COP16 from 34 countries, with representation of all the five UNCCD annexes, engaging directly in the UNCCD negotiation process was a milestone, but it must not be a one-time effort.

To create lasting impact, young people must be given structured and consistent roles in decision-making, with increased access to funding, training, and political recognition.

The Land Youth Negotiators Programme sets a strong precedent for future CRICs and COPs, demonstrating that when youth are at the table, negotiations become more inclusive, innovative, and action-oriented.



**PhotoCredit: Anthony Mwami, YNA**



**PhotoCredit: Tselmeg Urtnasan, Mongolia COP16 Youth Delegate**

# CHILDREN AND YOUTH RESILIENCE HUB

For the very first time at a UNCCD COP, a dedicated "**Children & Youth Resilience Hub**" pavilion was established to offer a unique and dynamic platform to highlight, empower, and celebrate the critical role of youth in driving resilience, land restoration, and sustainable development thanks to the financial support of the host country and AGFUND who made this possible.

With 35 in-person sessions hosted, the hub included engaging sessions in a variety of formats, interactive games, educational entertainment, film screening sessions, workshops, panel discussions, and networking events that helped showcase youth-led initiatives, foster intergenerational dialogues, and inspire innovative solutions.





## What partners had to say



**Lidya Beyene**, Youth4Climate Learning and Partnership Specialist, UNDP Rome Centre for Climate Action & Energy Transition

"Youth4Climate (Y4C), an initiative co-led by UNDP and the government of Italy was present at the UNCCD and funded the participation of 10 Youth, leading local action on land restoration in Peru, Uganda, Kenya, Palestine, Colombia, Vietnam, Ghana, and Cameroon. They participated and spoke in Youth Caucus events at COP16 and were formally awarded funding for their work at this conference. Y4C, in collaboration with the UNCCD Youth Caucus, also facilitated a discussion at the Children and Youth Hub titled "Funding and Communicating Youth-led Climate Solutions". This session focussed on the essential aspects of securing funding and enhancing the visibility of youth-led initiatives.



**Professor Dr. Mohammad Nurunnabi**, Founding Director, Center for Sustainability and Climate at Prince Sultan University

"Today, there are approximately 1.2 billion young people between the ages of 15 and 24, representing 16 percent of the world's population (UN, 2024). This demographic is not merely advocating for change; they are actively driving it. In Saudi Arabia, 67 percent of the population is under the age of 35, with nearly half (47 percent) of the workforce belonging to this youthful segment. Young people are not just passive victims of climate change; they are essential players in climate action and catalysts for transformation. It is not too late to shift course. Together, we can move to action, we can fight together and we can win together."



**Eirini Sakellari**, Youth Program Coordinator, Global Landscapes Forum (GLF)

"Engaging with the UNCCD Youth Caucus at COP16 was a profoundly inspiring experience, showcasing the power of youth to drive transformative change from policy to science and practice. By weaving together creativity, intersectionality, and progressive vision, the caucus created multiple spaces where diverse voices could meaningfully shape the future of land stewardship. It was a testament to the critical role young leaders play in rebuilding our relationship with the land and paving new pathways for a future rooted in prosperity and justice for all. My heartfelt gratitude to all who contributed their passion and expertise to this vital work."

## What youth delegates had to say



**Ajuna Tadeo**, Uganda Country Representative, Young Professionals of Agricultural Development (YARD)

"COP 16 has been a truly transformative experience. I was honored to moderate two pivotal YPARD events that focused on collective action for land restoration among marginalized communities while presenting YPARD's UNCCD Position Paper focused on connecting the Rio Conventions and contributing to the UNCCD Youth Caucus's youth statement. I was touched by the genuine engagement from various parties and look forward to continuing the momentum in the next COP 17 in Mongolia."



**Shaun Karakkattu**, Tomorrow in Focus / G20 Global Land Initiative

"I had an incredible experience presenting at the UNCCD Youth Caucus Pavilion, where I connected partners like the G20 Global Land Initiative, Vanderbilt University, and Tomorrow in Focus to explore the role of creativity and AI in developing impactful stories. As part of this initiative, we brought 10 Vanderbilt students to engage with global leaders, foster innovative storytelling for climate action and sustainable development, and learn from the inspiring partners of the Youth Caucus."



**Maryam Azzam**, Project coordinator Roots

"The children and youth pavilion was a safe space for activists and practitioners to connect, learn and have fun. For the first time in the UNCCD process, the youth get to have their own space to share their experiences, needs and aspirations."



## **Beatriz Azevêdo de Araújo, UNCCD Land Hero**

My experience at COP 16 was remarkable. I had the opportunity to interact with young people from all over the world, share in their cultures, learn from their initiatives, and, most importantly, build new friendships. Desertification and drought directly impact our lives, and being able to exchange ideas about the positive changes young people are promoting gave me a lot of hope.



## **Keeva Duffey, Sr. Advisor Sustainability at ChildFund**

Collaborating with the UNCCD Youth Caucus at COP16 was a profoundly impactful experience. Our mutual goal was to ensure that the voices of children and youth from the most vulnerable communities around the world affected by desertification and land degradation were heard at the Children and Youth Resilience Hub.

The inaugural Children and Youth Resilience Hub held major significance as the first space dedicated to children and youth at a UNCCD COP. It provided a unique platform for young individuals to engage in meaningful dialogue, fostering a sense of empowerment and community. Given my role and experience working with some of the most underrepresented groups on the frontlines of global challenges, it is critical to amplify their voices in these discussions, even when they cannot physically attend. Therefore, together with the UNCCD Youth Caucus, we decided to make this space vibrant and diverse, filled with the voices of young people from around the world, sharing artwork and creative expressions from those who could not attend.

The feedback from participants was particularly moving; from adults to young children and youth, everyone expressed their enjoyment of the interactive games, and the vibrant space filled with artwork provided by ChildFund. These activities not only offered a creative outlet but also facilitated deeper connections and understanding among attendees, including those who could not be present—the children and young people from some of the most impacted areas of land degradation and desertification.

Witnessing the enthusiasm and heartfelt responses from the young participants underscored the importance of creating child-friendly and inclusive initiatives at UNCCD forums.

Their desire for such platforms highlighted the need to improve ways to include children and youth and their active voices in discussions that affect their future. The creative outlets provided at the pavilion were instrumental in achieving this goal.

My hope is that this experience serves as a catalyst for others to champion inclusivity and creativity for children and young people in these spaces, ensuring their voices contribute meaningfully to policy development and decisions. Together, we can build a more resilient and inclusive future.



# CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

The key is to move beyond tokenistic youth engagement and truly empower young people as drivers of change today, not just tomorrow. The future depends on meaningful youth leadership and participation.

The UNCCD COP16 Youth Forum was a resounding success demonstrating the power of youth-driven action in addressing Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought while advancing sustainable development goals.

Youth-led events at COP16 showcased the critical role young people play in shaping a resilient and sustainable future through the innovative solutions, inclusive dialogues, and strategic partnerships. As the Children and Youth Constituency of UNCCD, we extend our sincere gratitude to the partners who provided financial support and placed their trust in us. This support was a vital enabler of meaningful youth engagement at COP16.

Looking ahead, we invite the UNCCD Secretariat to consider the following action points. It is imperative to:

- Provide consistent and sustainable financial support plus systematic grants as this is crucial in sustaining youth-led activism and also participation in global decision spaces like the conference of parties. Lack of funding prevents youth leaders from advocating issues that directly impact them like land rights and leading impactful projects.
- Institutionalize youth participation in governance structures, negotiations and decision-making processes through dedicated platforms (such as and not limited to the Land Youth Negotiators Programme) and ensure equitable representation through the implementation of the UNCCD Youth Engagement Strategy to formalize youth's role in global land restoration efforts.

- Scale up support for youth-led projects and initiatives by providing accessible, long-term and flexible funding to support youth-led initiatives on sustainable land management, restoration and entrepreneurship, particularly those in vulnerable areas.
- Invest in building the capacity of youth organizations, especially in the Global South and conflict-affected regions, to lead and monitor land restoration projects.
- Promote international and intergenerational collaboration to share knowledge, integrate indigenous practices with scientific research, and incentivize education programs on land solutions.

The outcomes and recommendations from this forum lay a strong foundation for future action. Integrating these efforts into global frameworks will help the UNCCD and its partners keep youth at the forefront of combating desertification, restoring degraded lands, and strengthening climate resilience. The path ahead requires collaboration, innovation, and a steadfast commitment to sustainable land management. We look forward to continuing our partnership with UNCCD to ensure global youth engagement leading up to COP17.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

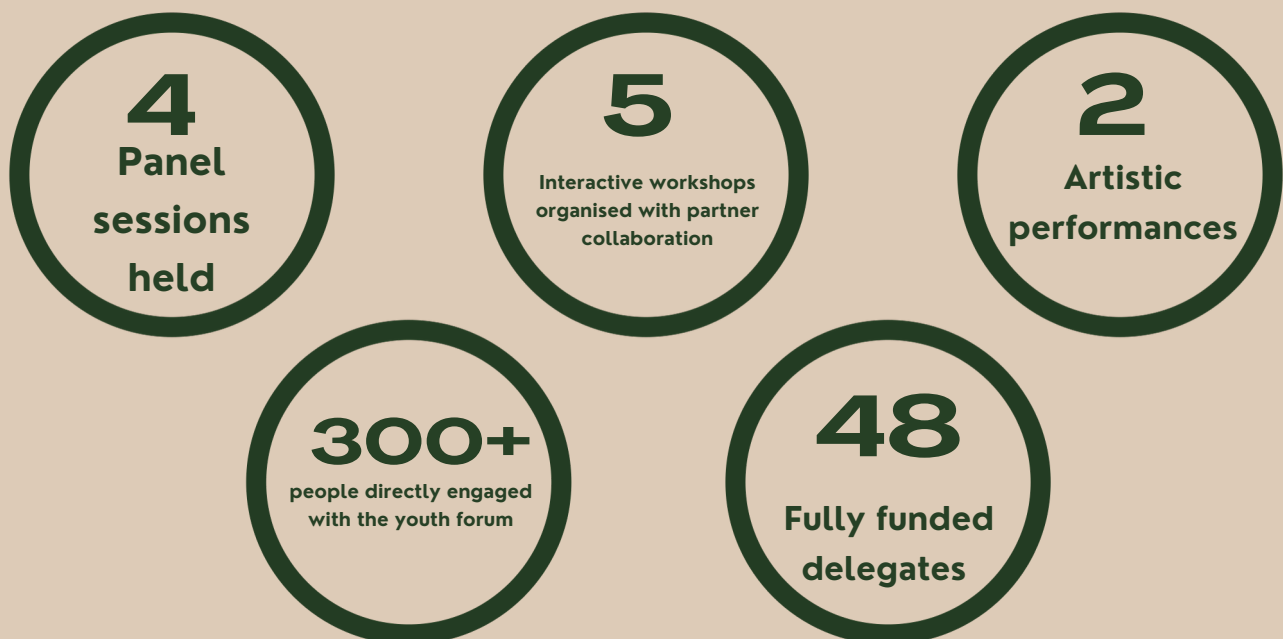
We extend our gratitude to all speakers, facilitators, partners, and participants who contributed to the success of the forum. Special thanks to the UNCCD secretariat and by extension Marcos Montorio who is the youth engagement champion for their dedication to advancing youth leadership and engagement within the UNCCD processes and procedures.

We also want to appreciate our amazing volunteers, rapporteurs, runners, and facilitation team members from the UNCCD Youth Caucus for dedication and making all the various sessions and engagements possible.



## Youth Forum in numbers

### Events, sessions and reach



# Children and Youth Resilience Hub

- 35 sessions hosted
- 500+ people reached with the youth forum
- 10 youth-led solutions showcased
- Organisations engaged;
  - Child Fund
  - Surge Africa
  - Earth Warriors
  - Arab Youth Sustainable Development Network
  - MentalED (UAE)
  - Goumbook (UAE)
  - Be Well With Norah (KSA)
  - Youth on Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Development
  - Water Youth Network
  - World Food Forum (Youth Assembly Team)
  - Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD)
  - International Land Coalition Africa
  - Youth and Land Initiative in Africa
  - Save Soil Movement
  - Sand to Green
  - Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)
  - Accelerate for Impact Platform (A4IP)
  - Foxtrot International
  - UK Aid
  - Global Landscapes Forum
  - Youth in Landscapes Initiative
  - Global Youth Biodiversity Network
  - International Forestry Students Association



- Center for Sustainability and Climate
- Prince Sultan University, Saudi Arabia
- Sudan Climate Collective
- Tomorrow in Focus
- G20 Land Initiative
- Greenpeace Africa
- International Land Coalition Africa
- Youth and Land Multi-stakeholder Platform in Africa
- Commonwealth Voices.



**United Nations**  
Convention to Combat  
Desertification



**International  
Labour  
Organization**



**مسك**  
مؤسسة محمد بن سلمان  
Mohammed Bin Salman  
Foundation

