



MOUNTAINS: THE WATER TOWERS OF OUR WORLD

Children's call to action to protect mountain areas
against the impacts of climate change

We, children, are future custodians of the mountains and bearers of the impact of climate change. We want to recall and reinforce to all the governments of the world that:

Mountains are the water towers of the world. River basins with headwaters in mountains provide freshwater to more than half of the world's population. Covering about 27 percent of the Earth's land surface, mountains are home to 15 percent of the global population (1.1 billion people), host about half of the world's biodiversity hotspots and attract between 15-20 percent of global tourism.

However, climate change is impacting mountains and affecting the availability of water almost globally. Elevation-dependent warming, shrinking glaciers, reduced snow cover, and changing precipitation patterns will pose challenges for water supply, energy production, ecosystems integrity, agricultural and forestry production, disaster preparedness, and ecotourism. The impact of climate change will bear a disproportionate impact on the lives of children. Without radical climate action, 92 percent of all 16-year-olds alive today are expected to live in a 2 °C warmer world.

Support the call to action: <https://bit.ly/3x0yWFS>

Governments have already taken important steps to make us children the main actors of change in addressing the challenge of climate change:

RECALLING the objectives of Article 6 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Article 12 of the Paris Agreement and the Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) initiative,

CONSIDERING the next Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC is expected to adopt a reviewed Work Programme on Action for Climate Empowerment, of which one of the guiding principles of action is to “meet the needs of children and youth and integrate the needs and perspectives of children and youth across ACE activities and climate action”,

NOTING the Berlin Declaration for Education on Sustainable Development adopted in May 2021 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) concluded by saying that transformative learning for people and the planet is a necessity for our survival and that of future generations,

NOTING UNESCO’s Futures of Education Initiative, which aims to reimagine how knowledge and learning can shape the future of humanity and the planet in a world of increasing complexity, uncertainty and precarity,

RECOGNIZING there is no exact moment when a child becomes a youth, or when a youth becomes an adult, therefore the importance of lifelong learning for climate action and planetary health at all levels of schooling is paramount,

NOTING the UNIMONT - University of Milan’s youth-centred “Mountain Education and Innovation Manifesto” calls for place-based education to promote the sustainable development of mountain territories worldwide,

ECHOING the urgency of the Call for Action made by the World Meteorological Organization to avoid the impending crisis in mountain weather, climate, snow, ice and water,

NOTING the 2022 World Water Day will focus on groundwater, which provides almost half of all drinking water worldwide and is an important contribution to mountain streamflow,

RECOGNIZING the voices of children around the world, their hopes, dreams and ideas for the future, and the need to empower children to engage and fully participate in developing and implementing action to promote planetary health and human health through addressing climate change,

CALL TO ACTION

We, children, urge the governments to recognize that:

The climate crisis is a child rights crisis, and we want to be active agents of change. We are the current and future custodians of mountains and their natural resources; therefore, improving, supporting and empowering our education and lifelong learning regarding our role in water and mountain conservation in the face of rapidly changing mountain environments and ecosystems is fundamental to addressing the climate crisis.

We raise our voices for the organizers of the UNFCCC COP 26 to hear our vision of the Future We Want:



From children of Wanakha Central School in Paro, Bhutan:

“Despite Bhutan being gifted with an abundance of water resources, battling with water shortages in urban areas has been worrisome for the mountain dwellers.”

– Tika, Grade 10

“Frequent landslides and road blocks during summer in my country worry me more than how I score on exams.”

– Sonam, Grade 10



From children of Alcides Brantes School in the Salinas region of Nova Friburgo, Brazil:

“As a rural community, we witness the dilemma that puts agriculture and the environment on opposite sides. However, considering development in the breadth of meaning, we hope for days when agricultural production and environmental preservation go hand in hand. And may this path find alternatives so that there is no shortage of food or life in the future. We trust that education is the driving force behind this change.”

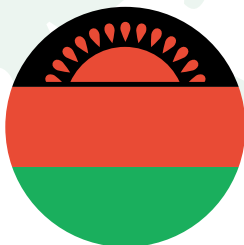
– *Amanda, Josiane and Patricia, Grade 8*



From children of Freie Waldorfschule Sorsum in Niedersachsen, Germany:

“We can see the glaciers melting away and our planet changing. We cannot change what has happened, but we can give the planet and mountains more peace.”

– *Hannah, Grade 11; Helen, Grade 8; Laura, Grade 8; Luke, Grade 9; Mara-marie, Grade 8; Ole, Grade 8; Sonja, Grade 10; and Valentin, Grade 8*



From children of the of Blantyre Secondary School in Blantyre, Ndirande district Malawi:

“We must sensitize people who dwell around mountains areas to practice afforestation and reforestation to address the scarcity of rain which can lead to death of aquatic animals like fish, which are a major source of nutrients for proper growth and development.”

– *Clara, Felix, Kambani, Laston, Mirriam, Nicolas, Tailos, Grade 9*



**From children of Strathallan School in Perthshire,
Scotland:**

“Due to climate change, the rain will get warmer and it will affect wildlife in ponds and lakes. In Scotland, our mountains store water for us in lochs, in the ground, and as snow and ice. Heavy rain fall will happen more often creating floods. Rising sea levels and flooding will affect people and wildlife near the sea including crops, causing people to lose their homes.”

– Anna, Austin, Carla, Finley, Harry, Isla, Ivianna, Kayden, Lois, Oskar, Peter, Rebecca and Thomas, 2nd Form



**From children of Gunnison High School in Colorado,
United States of America:**

“Our mountains should be protected because they are our HOME. The mountains around us provide not only beauty but comfort and homes for the nature that lives there.”

– Ella, Grade 11

“In Gunnison, Colorado, we are a head water community. Due to low and irregular snowfalls increasing with climate change, water security in the Western United States is threatened. It is our job to use and manage our water responsibly, as well as innovate more sustainable water practices.”

– Josh, Grade 12

For achieving the Future We Want, we call upon governments to urgently address:

Education on mountains:

- Develop school learning modules, resources and educational tools for children on environmental and sustainable development education and global citizenship education, to enhance understanding of the challenges facing mountain regions.

- Empower children to become change agents and leaders of whole school, whole community action for mountain conservation.

Awareness of mountains as water towers:

- Maintain the integrity of the mountain ecosystems for supporting and delivering globally important ecosystem services, including freshwater provision, and restore degraded mountain ecosystems.
- Ensure water equity between highland and lowland populations, as well as intergenerational water equity.
- Promote traditional and indigenous knowledge and innovative practices for the sustainable management of natural resources in mountains.

Tap into sustainable mountain tourism's potential:

- Promote courses for building the capacity of children to sustainably engage in mountain tourism.
- Develop mountain-specific policies to foster mountain tourism modalities that could benefit local populations while respecting the environment.
- Engage and train mountain professionals and mountain guides to become climate change educators who can actively support school education programmes.

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This call to action is promoted by the Zero Water Day Partnership with support from the Mountain Partnership:

Zero Water **Water** **Day** **Partnership**

