

International Graduate Conference on Climate Change and People

15-19 November 2010
Kathmandu, Nepal

“Declaration to COP 16 Policymakers” from University Youth on the “Roof of the Planet”

As we watch the present ruling generation grapple with policy responses to a human-induced warming of the planet’s atmosphere, we are deeply concerned that the voice of our generation, the Eco-Generation, is not being considered. Yet it is our common future with which today’s policymakers are playing. Our generation, born in the 1980s, has been totally immersed in bad news about the environmental wellbeing of the earth’s natural condition. We have equally been awash in platitudes about poverty reduction, sustainable development, renewable energy desires and prospects, and the urgency to reduce carbon emissions. What we have seen, however, is much talk, little action, and fewer successes. We urge that you, who are charged with the responsibility of making policies today, listen to us, involve us, hear us, and treat us, who will suffer the consequences of your decisions long after you are gone, as equal partners as we head together into the second decade of the twenty-first century. We have leaders; we need guidance and mentoring. Give us our rightful place at the negotiating table.

The following statements are taken from deliberations among more than one hundred and thirty students from seventeen countries in Greater South Asia and beyond who participated in the “First International Graduate Conference on Climate Change and People” held in Kathmandu, Nepal in mid-November 2010*.

LISTEN

1. **Governments must stop blaming each other** about various aspects of climate change and act positively to reduce collectively their carbon emissions.
2. **Stakeholders are not political pawns. They not only have voices but also have things to say** about their experiences with change —locally, regionally, and globally.
3. **Foresee and—in the near term—prepare strategies & tactics to ensure that viable livelihood options** are available to vulnerable communities.
4. **Pay attention to locally-defined community needs, respecting “bottom up” inputs and outlooks.**

UNDERSTAND

5. **Reducing uncertainty in regional climate change science is urgent and is dependent on intensive moral and financial research support.**
6. **Awareness-raising, though necessary and urgent, will by itself prove insufficient** for human communities to cope with the impacts of changing climates.
7. **Indecision is not a strategy;** coping effectively with the foreseeable causes and consequences of global warming demands more than the status quo of ‘muddling through’.
8. **Decision-making processes must be accelerated to match rates of change,** as rates of change can often be as important to societies as magnitudes of change.
9. **Women, children, and marginalized people are the earth’s most vulnerable groups** and special provisions and mechanisms must be developed for them.

ACT

10. **Prevent the development of new GHG-emitting activities;** otherwise, steps to mitigate and adapt to climate-, water- and weather-impacts will prove insufficient.

11. **Promote the sustainable development and use of eco-friendly ways of living as well as technologies that support those ways.**
12. **Develop mechanisms to better manage voluntary as well as hazards-related forced internal migrations** that result, whether directly or indirectly, from environmental changes, regardless of their causes.

ENGAGE

13. **Building individual and institutional capacity empowers localities and regions** to develop community-level strategies to adjust to changing climates.
14. **Incorporating indigenous ways of knowing and understanding the world into the decision-making process** clarifies local-level consequences of climate-related impacts, making those impacts foreseeable and therefore preventable.
15. **Indigenous ways of knowing and understanding the world provide insights into how local-level strategies have been developed to cope with past climate changes**, especially over the last 40 years.
16. **Invention, as well as transfer, of innovative technologies expands the tools** available to societies to cope with climate change's impacts.

EMPOWER

17. **Expand beyond narrow economic indicators to include the numerous social and cultural factors that influence quality of life and standard of living.**
18. **Train and educate vulnerable and marginalized populations**, in both rural and urban areas.
19. **Connect youth to both local and global knowledge systems**, thereby endowing them with a range of wisdom from which to draw and develop their generations' coping strategies well into the future.

EMBRACE

20. **Recognize the sharp increase in interest and involvement of younger generations through social networks; include youth as partners** in the climate change decision-making process.
21. **Present and future environmental issues demand intergenerational representation** for effective negotiation and implementation.

IMPART

22. **Share knowledge of climate adaptation, mitigation, and prevention across borders.**
23. **Enhance the use of a wide range of informal as well as formal channels of communication for both rich and poor populations.**
24. **Encourage the media to pledge to assist in socially responsible free training and education of the public.**
25. **Provide economic incentives to climate-related refugees** in the form of a Climate Change Adaptation Fund. Such a **fund must be distributed in a fair and equitable manner** according to severity, regardless of population size.

The *First International Graduate Conference on Climate Change and People* was organized in Nepal, the roof of the planet, from 15 to 19 November 2010. The conference was attended by one hundred and thirty graduate students **from seventeen countries** from Greater South Asia and beyond and focused on multidisciplinary capacity building on climate change and people. Students participated in lecture sessions, interacted with experts, held group and panel discussions, and formed an Internet-based social network for communicating climate change ideas, insights, and information between themselves and their peers. The conference was jointly organized by The Small Earth Nepal (SEN) and the Consortium for Capacity Building (CCB), University of Colorado, Boulder (USA) with base funding from the Asia Pacific Network for Global Change Research (APN). More than a dozen national and international organizations were supporters. The statements above resulted from the deliberations of student participants.

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