



**AFRICAN YOUTH
BIODIVERSITY
FORUM**
5-7 FEBRUARY 2020
VHEMBE BIOSPHERE RESERVE
SOUTH AFRICA

African Youth Biodiversity Forum Declaration

Vhembe Biosphere Reserve, Tshipise, South Africa

7 February 2020

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PREAMBLE

We the 43 young people active in 32 organizations and institutions, and representing 19 African States attending the first African Youth Biodiversity Forum met and discussed the Zero Draft of the Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework from 5 – 7 February 2020 in Vhembe Biosphere Reserve, Tshipise South Africa.

ACKNOWLEDGE with thanks Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework . EU support for its financial support. We would like to also thank UNESCO, the Global Youth Biodiversity Network, the South African Youth Biodiversity Network and the Vhembe Biosphere Reserve for organizing and hosting the Forum.

ACKNOWLEDGE that African countries experience different environmental challenges.

ACKNOWLEDGE that youth are the future and that the voices and opinions of young people will bring the solutions to ensure the sustainability of our collective future.

ACKNOWLEDGE that our future is increasingly urban. More than half of the world's population lives in cities, and this number is expected to rise to 60% by 2030, and to 67% by 2050.

RECOGNISE that our global population, and especially in Africa, is a young one, and that there is a large youth constituency that needs to be recognised, engaged and whose solutions we need.

RECOGNISE that 2020-2021 is a critical moment in the history of humanity and that the collective actions we take now will determine the quality of our lives in the future.

TAKE INTO ACCOUNT the Common African Position (CAP) to Agenda 2030 and the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063. The protection of biodiversity must be paramount in order to raise awareness, ambition, and participation; and take urgent actions to preserve Africa's biodiversity richness.

RECOGNISE various youth past and ongoing consultative workshops in the preparation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework facilitated by the Global Youth Biodiversity Network chapters in the African Region.

REAFFIRM that biodiversity provides a variety of ecosystem services upon which lives depend.

REAFFIRM the importance of advocacy, conservation of, and respect for biodiversity region-wide, and that the ultimate sources of livelihoods for many Africans rely on protecting biodiversity. Every effort must be made to ensure its proper respect by all.

ACKNOWLEDGE the different priorities and challenges each African country faces and **RECOGNIZE** the wide range of threats outlined in the Intergovernmental Science Policy-Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports. It is important to find the elements shared among the countries of the continent and develop policy possibilities to halt biodiversity loss.

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COMMITMENTS

We, the African Youth Biodiversity Forum participants, commit to;

- Drive transformative change across all sectors;
- Spread awareness through all available mechanisms on the importance of biodiversity and the risks of inaction;
- Scale up our advocacy and activism efforts in support of a new deal for people and nature;
- Continue to raise our voices on the need for urgent action;
- Promote innovative technologies and sustainable livelihoods through advocacy channels and mechanisms that are unique to our youth populations;
- Raise our ambition and act with urgency to address the threats to biodiversity and to conserve and restore the natural environment on which we depend.
- To engage with and mainstream the youth agenda through collaboration with other relevant constituencies.

We call the African Union to;

- Recognize that the African Youth Biodiversity Forum has provided an excellent opportunity to discuss and develop inputs into the consultative process of the Post-2020 Global biodiversity Framework in 2020 and beyond;
- Actively account for present and future short-term and long-term impacts on biodiversity, and take actions to avoid or minimise potential negative impacts in response to the common but differentiated responsibility of all generations in ensuring a fair and sustainable planet for the generations that follow, with full and effective participation of children and youth, ensuring our capacity-building and access to environmental information that concerns us;
- Be alarmed by the lack of data on valuation of biodiversity in most African countries and promote long term scientific research and monitoring on biodiversity;
- Operationalise Article 19 of the African Youth Charter in line with Aspiration 6 of Agenda 2063 to tap into youth engagement and empowerment;
- Provide funds from internal & external mechanisms to support youth engagement and empowerment, as well as implementation and monitoring of the CBD Pos- 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework;
- Address the direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss including but not limited to: the impacts of pollution and invasive alien species on biodiversity which alter the quality of life and livelihoods;
- Promote Access and Benefit-Sharing and domesticate its laws in in order to reduce poverty and promote biodiversity-friendly economies;
- Improve the monitoring mechanism of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework by using innovative and interactive technology to allow submission of reports and exchange of information between the responsible authority and interested parties;
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- Apply biotechnology and other technological advances to biodiversity conservation.
- Put appropriate modalities, compliance mechanisms and sufficient resources in place to enhance capacities and bio-friendly technologies, good governance; and promote sustainable development;
- Address the major drivers for biodiversity loss such as land use change, overexploitation of species, climate change, pollution and invasive alien species;
- Mainstream biodiversity in all sectors of development; and make use of multi-level governance structures;
- Address pollution impacts, specifically on our waters and aquatic life;
- Take into account that the UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme provides an opportunity for Other Effective Areas-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs); Facilitating biodiversity and sustainability science, education for sustainable development and capacity building; Contributing to sustainable, healthy, and equitable societies, economies and thriving human settlements in harmony with the biosphere; and Support mitigation and adaptation to climate change and other aspects of global environmental change;
- Recognize our role in Nature conservation and the fight against biodiversity loss through the initiation by the African Group of Negotiators (AGN) of a Junior Negotiators Programme to the UN CBD similar to the AGN UNFCCC Junior Negotiators Programme, to build the capacity and experience of the junior negotiators, by working with, and learning from experienced negotiators of the Group following the CBD processes;
- Consider the nexus between biodiversity conservation, nutrition, agriculture and peace in order to protect the African food system and achieve the AU “Silencing the Guns” Initiative;
- Support and accelerate youth entrepreneurial biodiversity conservation initiatives and social enterprises;
- Create mechanisms that not only ensure equality among genders, but also address the hardships that are gender-specific.
- Recognize the importance of a collective and continental strategy and best practices sharing between the countries.

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32 participating organizations

African Youth Initiative on Climate Change
Benin Youth Biodiversity Network
Botswana Youth Biodiversity network
Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa (CYNESA)
Center for Animal Law Studies
Climate Trackers
Dinder Biosphere Reserve
Ghana Youth Biodiversity Network
Ichkeul Biosphere Reserve
ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability
Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement Mali
Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement Niger
Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Reserve
Lake Chilwa Wetland Biosphere Reserve
Malagasy Youth Biodiversity Network
Moroccan Youth Biodiversity Network
Namibian Youth on Renewable Energy
Nigerian Youth Biodiversity Network
Omayed Biosphere Reserve
People and Parks Youth in Conservation
South African Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries
South African Youth Biodiversity Network
Tai Biosphere Reserve
Tanzania Youth Biodiversity Network
Ugandan Youth Biodiversity Network
UICN-PAPACO
UNESCO Regional Office for Southern Africa
Vhembe Biosphere Reserve
Vhembe Biosphere Reserve
Waterberg Biosphere Reserve
WWF
YOUNGO
Zimbabwe Youth Biodiversity Network

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