











Empowering Tomorrow's Leaders: Navigating Local and Regional COYs

An excerpt from 'Empowering Youth for Climate Action: Navigating COY and COP in the UAE'



Understanding Climate Change and International Climate Conferences

Youth Engagement

In collaboration with YOUNGO and the Youth Climate Champion Team, the Arab Youth Centre is pleased to share an excerpt from the upcoming official COY18 and COP28 Youth Handbook, intended for release later this year as part of the ongoing Arab Youth Toolkit Series, in partnership with HSBC and Posterity Institute. The aim of this document is to provide you with information regarding the array of local and regional Conferences of Youth (COYs) preceding the launch of the complete guide.

The full toolkit will be released in **October**, so stay tuned!

UNDERSTANDING CLIMATE CHANGE AND INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE CONFERENCES

CLIMATE CHANGE AND WHY IT MATTERS

The climate change crisis is one of universal importance, encompassing far-reaching implications for the environment, economies, social structures, and the overall well-being of current and future generations.

Failure to adequately address the crisis has thus far resulted in a myriad of consequences that threaten the future of humanity, ranging from severe ecological and environmental implications to socioeconomic impacts that have a direct effect on communities and nations around the world.

Driven by a mounting concern for the planet's future, **young activists** have emerged, proving themselves to be a powerful force in:







Advocating for policy changes



Demanding urgent action to address the increasingly severe environmental crisis

Youth-driven initiatives have spurred conversations among policymakers, sparked international dialogues, and played a significant role in influencing climate policies, corporate sustainability practices, and public consciousness surrounding the need to combat climate change.

Ultimately, the toolkit aims to support the youth in their pursuit of creating a more sustainable future, supported by international cooperation and dialogue. To that end, COP28 aims to provide plenty of space and opportunities for youth engagement in the Blue and Green Zones.

UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE (UNFCCC)

COP, alternatively known as the "Conference of the Parties," functions as the supreme decision-making body within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.



It is responsible for overseeing and monitoring the implementation of climate change policy¹. Several COP sessions are held each year, including events such as the UN Biodiversity COP, organised by the United Nations Environment Programme, and the Escazu Agreement COP, the inaugural meeting of which took place in 2022, facilitated by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean².

In the world of climate change, COP sessions serve as annual forums attended by member countries of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), serving as the apex decision-making entity³. In recent years, participation has grown exponentially.



As of 2023, the count of participating parties has grown to 198-a substantial increase from the original 118 that participated in the first COP.

This growth is indicative of the urgency of the climate change crisis as well as the growing and increasingly global dedication to combatting the challenges that climate change poses to wider society⁴.





Since COP₁, climate change COP sessions have been held annually, culminating in the most recent COP₂₇ hosted in **Sharm El-Sheikh**, **Egypt**⁵.



Looking to the coming months, COP28 is scheduled to start on **November 30 2023** and conclude on **December 12 2023** and is set to take place in **Dubai**, **United Arab Emirates**⁶.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, «What is the COP?» https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-convention/conference-of-the-parties/parties-and-observers/the-cop.

^{2.} United Nations Environment Programme, "UN Biodiversity Conference of the Parties," https://www.unep.org/events/un-biodiversity-conference-parties-cop.

z. United Nations Environment Programme, "UN Biodiversity Conference of the Parties," https://unifocc.int/process-and-meetings/the-convention/parties-observers

^{4.} COP28 UAE, "About COP28," https://cop28.moccae.gov.ae/about-cop2

COP28 UAE, "About COP28," https://cop28.moccae.gov.ae/about-cop28

UNDERSTANDING CLIMATE CHANGE AND INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE CONFERENCES

The primary purpose of the UNFCCC's COP forums is to provide the global community with a platform to engage in positive and meaningful dialogue to discuss, negotiate and advance strategies, policies and actions that aim to mitigate climate change, adapt to its impacts, and promote sustainable development on a global scale⁷.

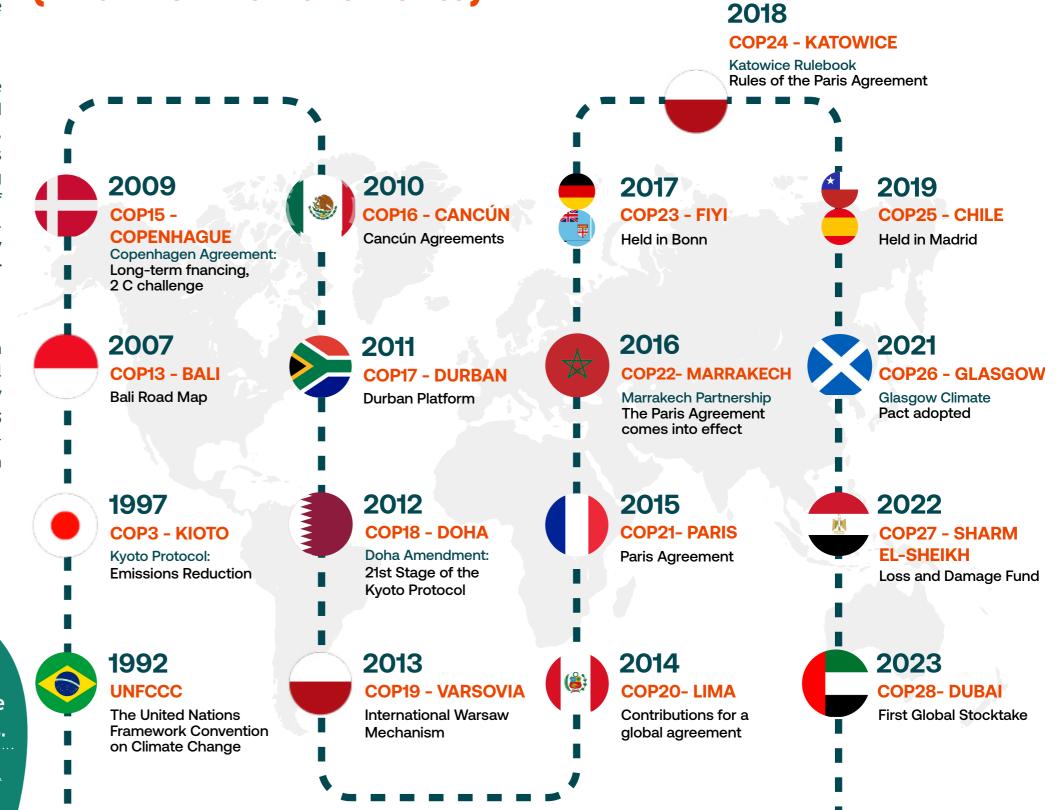
As nations come together in a joint effort to combat the challenges presented by climate change Heads of State and other high-profile dignitaries make keynote appearances, but far more work goes on behind the scenes. The event hosts numerous panel discussions, workshops, and other policymaking activities – with each COP culminating in the development of an agreement or a treaty meant to catalyse climate action. Perhaps most notably, these conferences negotiated two key global climate treaties: first the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, and later the Paris Agreement in 2015.

The COP has long been regarded as a landmark event in the realm of climate change. In recent years, COPs have served as a crucial platform for nations to unveil their long-term carbon neutrality commitments. For instance, during the 2019 COP25 in Spain, 73 parties of the UNFCCC collectively committed to achieving net-zero emissions by 20508. A similar pledge was made by the UAE in 2021 ahead of COP26 held in the United Kingdom.

As a result, COPs have become the main platform for nations to highlight their climate ambitions and simultaneously significant for assessing the progress that these nations have made towards their goals.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). What is the COP? https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-convention/conference-of-the-parties/parties-and-observers/the-cop. (Accessed date. August 23, 2023)
 https://sdu.dia/ord/news/j7-countries-committ-to-net-zero-co2-emissions-by-2050/#--text-The%20Chilean%20Presidency%200f%20the_(CO2)%20emissions%20by%202050

The Main Climate Summits (And Their Achievements)



AN INTRODUCTION TO COP28

Undoubtedly, COP28 is the single most important event taking place in the UAE in 2023. In honour of the event, and what it signifies to the region, the UAE government has officially declared 2023 to be the "Year of Sustainability9". In recent years, the United Arab Emirates has actively demonstrated a growing dedication to addressing the issue of climate change, as evidenced by our strong focus on progressing towards a more sustainable future. Being the second COP to be held in Western Asia and the fifth COP hosted by an Arab country, COP28 holds monumental importance for the MENA region. It signifies increased inclusion in the broader climate change dialogue and a heightened and more inclusive global commitment to pursuing a sustainable future.

COP28 marks the conclusion of the first Global Stocktake, a comprehensive assessment conducted under the framework of the Paris Agreement on climate change. It functions as a periodic review of the collective efforts and progress made by countries in tackling climate change. This assessment occurs every five years, with each cycle lasting for a two-year period. The Global Stocktake is crucial, as it holds each and every nation accountable for their commitments in reference to the pledges made by each individual nation in the Paris Agreement.





Starting on the: 30th of November and ending on the 12th of December 10.

THE CONFERENCE OF YOUTH (COY)

Any discussion surrounding youth and COP, especially when addressing COY, is incomplete without the mention of YOUNGO.



In 2009, the UNFCCC secretariat extended constituency status to admitted youth NGOs through an entity called YOUNGO, or the Official Children and Youth Constituency of the UNFCCC. Their vision is to empower children and youth to act and work to enhance their skills and capacity to drive the necessary and ambitious climate actions and policies at all levels towards a liveable climate-just future.

The presence of a youth constituency ensures that young people are not only adequately represented, but their inputs and contributions to the discourse surrounding climate change, and the strategies and commitments set in place to address its challenges, are taken seriously and effectively integrated into global ambitions and it is vital to recognise the importance of youth participation as an essential element to the functioning and success of previous and future COPs. As such, the COY or Conference of Youth is widely recognised as a crucial part of the proceedings.

The COYs offer youth a unique opportunity to contribute to climate change policy as the official, globally recognised youth conference on climate change.



It is first and foremost an opportunity for young individuals to project their voices in a formal setting to ultimately shape international climate change policies. COY - more specifically Global COY - is typically held a few days before COP, with YOUNGO having hosted 17 total COYs to date.

The Conference of Youth consists of **four major components**:









Global Youth Statement

Capacity Building

Skill-building Workshops

Cultural **Exchange**

Since the creation and operation of YOUNGO, COY has been presenting the youth in the climate policy space under the UNFCCC. The outcomes from COYs have also been elevated and integrated into dialogues and actions led by COP. In Glasgow COP26, the Global Youth Statement was acknowledged, and the same happened in COP27.

Also, in COP27 in Egypt in 2022, youth engagement as main stakeholders in climate policy for the implementation of the Paris Agreement was extended under the new "ACE Action Plan" signed at the conference. ACE stands for "Action for Climate Empowerment" and is further outlined in the Paris Agreement. ACE was adopted by UNFCCC to empower and engage all members of society through the six ACE elements including education, training, and awareness. In addition, a climate youth negotiator programme was launched that aims to empower young climate activists11.



In addition to the GCOY, more localised COYs exist which address more local and regional issues. These conferences exist to increase inclusivity and diversity, taking place before the final GCOY. The outcomes from these conferences are integrated into the final policy document that is submitted on behalf of all youth each year.

COYs are divided into three levels:



LOCAL COY

A more localised COY that takes place within a particular country (E.g. UAE COY, Saudi COY)



REGIONAL COY

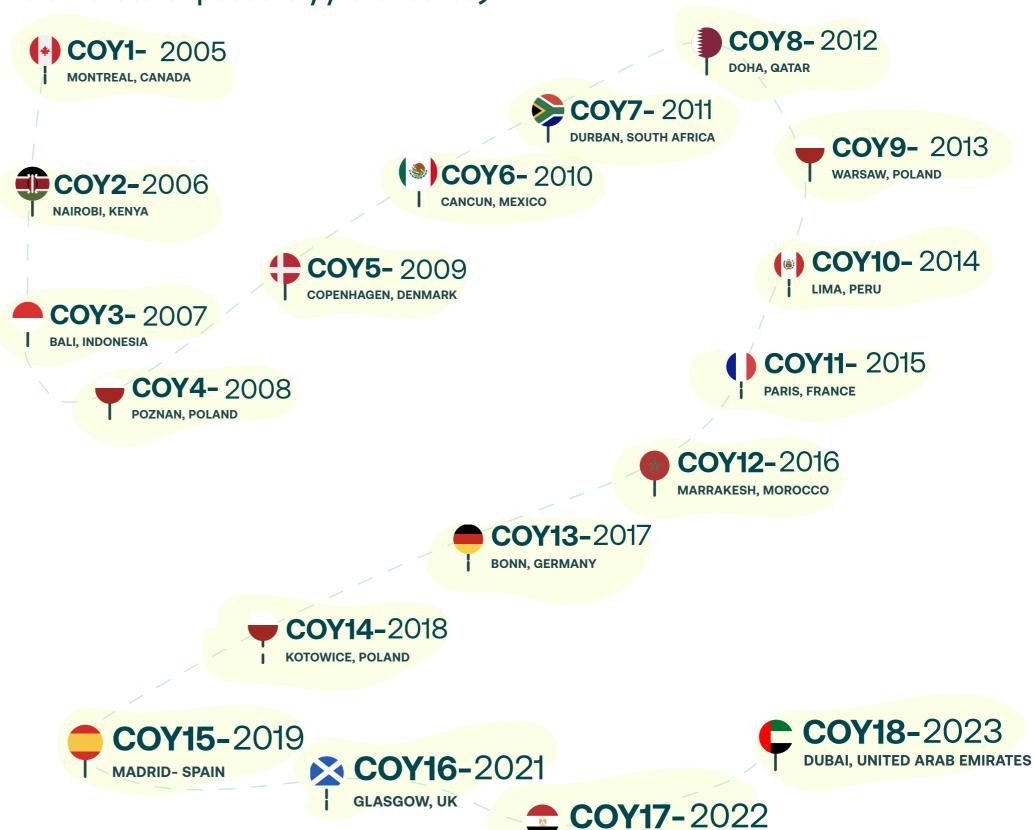
The Regional COY expands on local COY and covers an entire region (E.g. MENA COY, Eastern Europe COY).

GLOBAL COY



The Global COY takes place a few days preceding COP, and within the context of GCOY, the Global Youth Statement (GYS) is developed throughout the year. This statement underscores global youth perspectives on climate change and sustainability matters, culminating in the upcoming iteration known as GCOY18. And then in the registering for COY18: "This year, COY18 will be co-hosted by the Arab Youth Center, the American University of Sharjah, and Green House - New York University Abu Dhabi's Youth Climate Think Tank.

The following table outlines the different COY iterations that have taken place every year since 2005:



SHARM EL-SHEIKH, EGYPT

Fundamentally, LCOYs aim to train youth and build their knowledge to enhance their proactivity and involvement in local and national movements and sustainability targets.



Focusing on youth in one country facilitates the process of honing in on the priorities of that particular nation and addressing the most pressing climate challenges and objectives that the country seeks to overcome and achieve. The discussions and outputs developed at LCOY are then projected onto a more regional level and discussed at RCOY.

RCOY makes use of common climate themes and objectives of regions, unlocking multilateral dialogues across the UN's identified regions including North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, South America, Africa, Europe, Asia and Oceania.



Furthermore, many RCOYs are further divided into subregions including Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Central Asia, Asia and the Pacific, and Eastern Europe. These discussions feed directly to the GCOY.

Local Conferences of Youth (LCOYs) and Regional Conferences of Youth (RCOYs) play a crucial role in the climate policy formulation process. For instance, the UAE's LCOY could discuss potential pathways and strategies aimed at reaching the national net-zero agenda which includes steps for water security. However, the MENA RCOY would more likely discuss the state of water stress and security across the entire region and create solutions or propose policies to improve access to clean water in climate-catalysed water-stressed regions. These conversations would then be formalised in anticipation of the larger GCOY and may be published in the Global Youth Statement. These conferences provide excellent opportunities for youth to meet with like-minded individuals, voice their concerns, and build their capacities.

Looking to participate at LCOY or RCOY? Check out the two online resources below to keep track of all local and regional COYs happening this year prior to COP28. It would be very useful to attend the COY happening in your country or region! These resources contain essential details such as locations, dates, hosts and contact information for each of the upcoming events.





DIFFERENCE BETWEEN COY AND COP

The Conference of Youth (COY) and the Conference of the Parties (COP) are distinct events within the context of climate change discussions. Both conferences are crucial in increasing dialogue and cooperation in the global arena and in the pursuit of a more sustainable future.



- Primarily, the Conference of Youth (COY) focuses on amplifying the voices of the youth, serving as a forum led by youth and youth-led organisations to supplement the wider COP discussion.
- The COY offers a unique opportunity for young individuals, advocates and activists to engage in discussions, share ideas, and collaborate to create solutions related to climate change. These conferences are characterised, namely, by their strong emphasis on youth empowerment and their promotion of innovative thinking, allowing young people to participate actively in the wider global climate discourse.

Keep an eye out for the upcoming COY18 website.

СОР

- Alternatively, the Conference of the Parties (COP) is the supreme decision-making event of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- As mentioned previously, these conferences are attended by memberstates of the United Nations, where they negotiate and advance international agreements, policies, and actions aimed at addressing the challenges posed by climate change. During COP, global climate goals are set, and crucial discussions surrounding strategies for emissions reductions, adaptation, and finance are held, among other climaterelated matters.

Check out COP28's themes on the official COP28 website

REGISTERING FOR COY18

Registration for GCOY is typically announced on YOUNGO's social media platforms and the official COY social media platform of that year. Be sure to follow and to stay updated on the latest news and opportunities for LCOY, RCOY, or GCOY.

Interested in potentially participating in COY18? You can register application form before **September 14**.

For more information, you can also email inquiries@coy18uae.org and a representative from the organising committee will reach out to you. For inquiries related to the COY18 delegation, you can reach out to delegates@coy18uae.org

! Be sure to fill out the



APPLY BY 14 SEP 2023



THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Youth involvement is a crucial aspect of sustainability. This is further highlighted in the principle of Intergenerational Equity¹² which states that just development must meet the demands of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to develop – particularly in the context of resource consumption and environmental preservation.

Historically, members of the youth have played a significant role in driving change in the realm of climate change. Young people have been at the forefront of change in terms of global awareness and advocacy, community engagement, innovation and technology, and have had an undeniable impact on policy formation. Youth have a vested interest in making Earth a healthier place to live, and while they may not yet possess career experience for now, they are nevertheless important stakeholders in the global community, and including them as such in policy or strategy discussions is necessary. **Ultimately, decisions that impact their daily lives should not be made without them.**

Youth often have fresh and genuine perspectives to bring to the table, given their different life experiences and native understanding of newer technologies. These fresh perspectives can translate into innovative or profitable breakthroughs in climate technology and regulations. Youth can also have unique input pertaining to policy development and could advocate for certain policies that address areas of their concerns. Youth engagement is critical to creating an inclusive policy landscape that positively influences the lives of young people around the world. One of the platforms where youth – like yourself and your peers – can engage in these discussions and make their voices heard is COP. COP is an opportunity for the voices of less privileged, vulnerable, marginalised, refugee and Indigenous groups to have a physical presence. Inclusivity is an important component of climate discourse as the impacts and consequences of climate change are widespread and ubiquitous, and extensive progress is still required in this space.

That said, representation has improved over the years, and this momentum should be maintained. Not only does COP focus and amplify discourse around the topics of climate change and sustainability, but their delocalisation and presence in various host countries around the world give youth the ability to leverage an international platform to highlight local issues.

While young people might have previously encountered limited access and opportunities to actively participate in COP, this situation has significantly changed in recent years. A powerful testament to the enhanced role of youth lies in the appointment of **Dr. Omnia El Omrani** as the inaugural Youth Envoy for the President of COP27, along with the designation of **Her Excellency Shamma Al Mazrui**, the UAE's Minister of Community Development, as the COP28 Youth Climate Champion. Moreover, the COP28 Presidency has initiated the International Youth Climate Delegate Program (IYCDP), aimed at integrating 100 youth delegates – with a special focus on those from Least Developed Countries, Small Island Developing States, Indigenous Peoples, and other minority groups around the world – into the COP process. This endeavour seeks to expand youth participation in the international climate negotiation processes by building the delegates' capacities and fully funding them to attend COP28¹³. Learn more about the IYCDP



The COP28 Presidency is dedicated to increasing youth engagement. Following the addition of the first-ever Children and Youth Pavilion at COP27, COP28 hopes to nurture the role of youth even further by creating three designated spaces at this year's conference, the Children and Youth Pavilion and the Youth Climate Champion Pavilion in the Blue Zone, as well as the Youth Hub in the Green Zone. There are many ways in which young people are able to engage and participate in meaningful ways at COP:



Attending COPs

For logistical purposes, COP is divided into two main physical spaces, the Green and Blue Zones:

- The Blue Zone: is the more conservative site of the two, managed by the UNFCCC. The main climate policy negotiations take place in the Blue Zone and thus entry to this segment requires accreditation. In addition to the official negotiations, the Blue Zone features party pavilions - including the Children and Youth Pavilion, presidency events, and side events including panel discussions, roundtables, and cultural events. Click for more information on Blue Zone registration.
- The Green Zone: is more accessible to the general public and features various side events including exhibitions, conferences, and panels. The Green Zone is also home to several stakeholder hubs, which will include the first-ever Youth Hub. Stay up to date with COP28's website and socials for the latest information about visiting the Green Zone.



Participating in side events

there are many panels, events, and activities that take place alongside the negotiations, including in the Green Zone, that youth can join and actively engage with (ask questions during panels, discover new trends or updates in climate and sustainability, explore what various stakeholders are doing to address issues).





Participate in COP Negotiations

Some delegations include youth negotiators as part of their official representation. While this level of engagement is not open to all youth, building strong relationships and being proactive in the climate and sustainability space may provide you with access to being a youth delegate at the actual leader negotiations that take place. You could also reach out to your country's delegation to seek potential opportunities.

Participating in YOUNGO's COYs (Conference of Youth)

This is perhaps the most important and relevant means of participating at COP, or rather, on the road to COP. COYs are divided into three levels:









The Global Youth Statement

The Global Youth Statement - Youth policy inputs at COPs always take shape in the form of the UNFCCC Official Youth Constituencies (YOUNGO) as a mandated Youth constituency of the UNFCCC in its flagship publication the Global Youth Statement. The Global Youth Statement synthesizes the collective demands of children and youth across the world, as represented by YOUNGO, into a comprehensive message directed at global leaders who possess the power to instigate transformative change during annual COP sessions. This statement is formulated through intensive consultations involving young individuals from over 150 countries and is announced annually within the context of the Global COY. The Statement comprises key policy demands across many themes, ranging from climate finance and energy to loss and damage and climate justice. It calls for an inclusive approach to climate governance that acknowledges the disproportionate impact of the climate crisis on communities and the need for systemic and radical action.



Senior sustainability professionals, venture capital investors, high-net-worth individuals, academics, and even celebrities are no strangers to COPs, so whether you have an idea for a greentech start-up that needs investment, or want to broaden your network and make your voice heard, networking at COP is a great platform to do so.



To stay up to date with the latest news on COY18, COP28, and youth in climate action, be sure to check out the following platforms:

- 1 @COP28_UAE
- 2 @COY18UAE
- 3 @shamma
- 4 @Youngo.UNFCCC
- 5
- 6 @UNDP4Youth
- 7 @Y4Cofficial
- 8 @aym4cop
- 9 @Connect4Climate

Key Note: If you are looking to get involved with COP28, be sure to regularly check out the official COP28 'Get Involved' page on the dedicated COP28 website.



EXCERPT CONCLUSION

This is just a **short segment of the guidebook**, but an essential one to **kickstart your journey on the Road to COP28**. There are many open sources to build your climate and sustainability literacy and COP knowledge including:

- 1 There are 3 other toolkits as part of the Arab Youth Toolkits
- The COP27 YouthKit championed by Dr. Omnia El Omrani, the official Youth Delegate for the COP27 President
- The official COP27 Observer Handbook developed by the COP27

 Presidency
- 4 COP For Newbies Toolkit championed by Beniamin Strzelecki
- Toolkit for Youth on Adaptation & Leadership from the Global Center on Adaptation and Care Climate & Resilience Academy
- 6 UNICEF Toolkit Series for Young Climate Activists

Stay tuned and keep your eye out for the **official launch of the full guidebook**, which will provide you with further insights and details on COP28 and how to best leverage this conference for meaningful contribution and participation. Finally, while these events frame discussions and action for climate change, it is important to stay active and aware throughout the entire year, and the resources above are merely a starting point and all the best on your journey!











HSBC in the MENAT region

international banking organisation in the Middle East, North Africa and Turkey (MENAT), with a presence in nine countries across the region: youth capabilities and support innovation Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and creativity among youth. AYC implements Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates. In Saudi Arabia, HSBC is a 31% shareholder of addition, it conducts research on young Arabs to Saudi British Bank (SABB), and a 51% shareholder of HSBC Saudi Arabia for investment banking in the Kingdom. Across MENAT, HSBC had assets of US\$71bn as at 31 December 2021.

The Arab Youth Center (AYC)

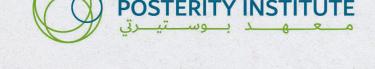
HSBC is the largest and most widely represented The Arab Youth Center (AYC), aims to empower young Arabs and address their needs.

> The Center offers a unique platform to develop purposeful initiatives across diverse sectors, in help decision-makers shape policies that enable

https://arabyouthcenter.org/en



their progress.



Posterity Institute

Posterity Institute is a think tank based in the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates the public and private sectors through designing inclusion, climate change, and leveraging Institute's three core pillars.

info@theposterityinstitute.org

The Arab Youth Council for Climate Change (AYCCC)

that focuses on fostering partnerships between The Arab Youth Council for Climate Change (AYCCC) is an initiative by the Arab Youth Center. initiatives that drive sustainability, enabling the The Council aims to achieve a qualitative leap in regional climate-tech ecosystem, and creating the interaction of Arab youth with environmental a hub for ground-breaking research in economic issues, support youth climate action, and engage young Arabs in developing innovative technology for intergenerational wellbeing, the and sustainable solutions to the climate change challenge.

Check out more resources from the Council

COP₂₈

COP28 UAE is a milestone opportunity for the world to come together, course correct, and drive progress. As the 28th Conference of Parties under the UNFCCC, COP28 will emphasise a 'leave no one behind'approach to climate action. COP28 UAE will take place from 30 November to 12 December 2023 at Expo City, Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. By and positive solutions that drive progress for the climate and the economy, as well as provide relief and support to vulnerable communities. The UAE intends to make COP28 highly inclusive, reflecting the views of all geographies, sectors, and constituencies.

YOUNGO

YOUNGO is the official children and youth constituency of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). YOUNGO is a vibrant, global network of children and youth activists (up to 35 years) as well as youth NGOs, who contribute to shaping the intergovernmental climate change policies and hosting COP28, the UAE is focusing on practical strive to empower youth to formally bring their voices to the UNFCCC processes.

> In 2009, the UNFCCC secretariat extended constituency status to admitted youth NGOs. YOUNGO's vision is to empower children and youth to take action and works to enhance their skills and capacity to drive the necessary and ambitious climate actions and policies at all levels towards a livable climate just future. YOUNGO representatives make official statements, provide technical and policy inputs to negotiations and engage with decision-makers at the UN climate change conferences, and promote youth participation in climate change projects at local and national levels.

Become a member of YOUNGO













FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE LED BY YOUTH



This document was prepared with the support of the Posterity Insitute