

INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY TO PROMOTE A CULTURE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN THE CLIMATE AGENDA FOR 2024-2030

CHAPTER 1: GENERAL PROVISIONS

The **International Strategy to Promote a Culture of Sustainable Development and Involvement of Children and Youth in the Climate Agenda for 2024-2030** (hereinafter - the Strategy) provides a global foundation for constructive interaction among governmental bodies, educational institutions, public and scientific organizations, children and youth, and other stakeholders involved in climate change efforts. This strategy emphasizes the inalienable right of children and youth worldwide to a healthy environment and seeks to expand their meaningful participation in climate-related processes on an international scale.

The Strategy emphasizes inclusivity and accessibility, ensuring that ecological matters are addressed in ways that involve and benefit all children and youth, irrespective of their geographic location, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, and physical abilities. It seeks to create opportunities for children and youth from diverse backgrounds to actively engage in environmental initiatives and decision-making processes, promoting and advocating for sustainable development and fostering a global culture of environmental responsibility.

The main objective of this Strategy is to recognize and define the priority role of children and youth in addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges posed by climate change. It seeks to involve, mobilize, and encourage their active participation in climate action while creating an enabling environment for developing an environmental culture and understanding sustainable development principles globally.

An important aspect of this Strategy is its alignment with international frameworks and initiatives, particularly those spearheaded by UN. This includes:

- 1. Signing the UNICEF Declaration on Children, Youth, and Climate Action**, which commits governments to integrating the special needs, rights, and interests of children into their climate policies and actions.
- 2. Supporting UN initiative on environmental education (GEP)**. The initiative aims to strengthen the resilience of educators, learners, and societies, using education as the main tool. It also contributes to making education systems more resilient to climate change and to creating safe preschools and schools that are protected from climate impacts.

To realize the strategy of "green" education and the culture of sustainable development globally, it is necessary to strengthen the foundation, which includes the following activities:

- Changing the system of classical engineering and environmental education, as well as related systems of geographical, biological, geological, and economic education.
- Adjusting existing educational standards for preschool and secondary education to include elements of sustainable development.
- Including sustainable development and green education goals in the processes of standard-setting and decision-making related to reforms and development of the education sector.

The Strategy is based on international experience and takes into account the continuity, interdisciplinarity, fundamentality, and comprehensiveness of education traditions in various regions. Appropriate education should help individuals internalize environmental and ethical norms, values, attitudes, skills, and lifestyles necessary to ensure sustainable development globally in the 21st century.

The Strategy is implemented in accordance with the targets of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and is based on the following international agreements:

- **Doha Work Programme on Article 6:** Education, training, and public awareness.
- **Lima Ministerial Declaration on Education and Awareness Raising** under the Climate Convention.

- **The UN ECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development:** This strategy notes that education for sustainable development will "equip people with knowledge and specialized skills for sustainable development, increase their competence and confidence, and empower them to lead healthy and productive lives in harmony with nature and to care for social values, gender equality, and cultural diversity."

These documents emphasize the importance of increasing awareness, understanding and adoption of the values of sustainable development among young people and their involvement in solving social, economic, and environmental problems at the local, regional, and global levels.

This Strategy has been developed in partnership with children and youth actively involved in the climate agenda in the region of Central Asia, Turkiye, Azerbaijan and Hungary. It is responsive to the interests and demands of young people in the corresponding countries.

CHAPTER 2: ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND GREEN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Green education is a critical element in the global response to climate change, yet its implementation varies widely across regions. This Strategy acknowledges the need for a more coordinated and systematic approach to green education worldwide, integrating it into both formal and non-formal education systems.

Environmental education and green skills development programmes should be integrated in curricula and extracurricular education at all levels starting from preschool.

In the context of preschool education, the introduction of environmental education and green skills should involve cognitive-research activities, such as observing natural phenomena, conducting experiments, and engaging in situational conversations. At the school level, an integrative approach is necessary to develop resource conservation skills among students, which includes increasing the number of practical lessons. These lessons should enable students to participate actively in various projects, both inside and outside the classroom, thereby linking educational programs with real-world environmental challenges.

To further develop environmental education, schools should introduce programs that empower children and youth to become active participants in environmental initiatives. This practical approach will not only develop environmental and social skills but also help embed an environmental culture into the lives of students, preparing them to address future environmental challenges effectively.

CHAPTER 3: SUPPORT YOUTH CLIMATE ACTIONS

Current children and youth are the generation that will experience the long-term effects of environmental degradation. Climate change is shaping both their present and their future.

In this context, adolescents and youth are more actively taking the lead through grassroot movements participating in awareness raising and mobilization of their communities through youth-led eco initiatives. Moreover, youth are increasingly engaged in climate negotiations, such as the UN Climate Change Conferences (COPs), through the institutionalized youth platforms, e.g. YOUNGO, UNFCCC Presidency Youth Climate Champion.

Children and youth need sustained support and investments in youth-led programmes and initiatives that would foster youth engagement and champion positive change. Young people need institutionalized platforms to participate in climate-related decision-making processes at local, national and regional levels. Young people need access to information and skills to effectively advocate, negotiate and conduct campaigns.

CHAPTER 4: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of this Strategy is to develop and adopt institutional and administrative measures, creating the necessary conditions for realizing children's rights to a healthy environment, access to environmental education and green skills development and opportunity for participation in the environmental agenda at the national, regional and global arena.

The main objectives of this Strategy include the following:

- Ensuring that children and youth worldwide have access to education, information, and resources that enhance their understanding of climate change and climate governance processes and equip them with the skills to adapt to and mitigate challenges of the future.
- Developing a common global vision and relevant national policies and action plans to mainstream green education, and develop the relevant teaching and learning materials.
- Developing a common vision and relevant national platforms to facilitate youth engagement into decision- and policy-making processes on environmental issues at the national and international levels;
- Establishing partnerships and fostering cooperation among countries and various stakeholders to support and enhance the efforts of school-age children and youth in combating climate change.
- Building the capacity of educational institutions to support green education, establish sustainable infrastructure, and create green educational environments in schools and preschools.

CHAPTER 4: IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

To achieve the goals and objectives of this Strategy, it is essential to ensure coordination among all relevant authorities at the national and international levels. The Strategy emphasizes the importance of creating partnerships at the global level, fostering collaboration between countries, and ensuring that all children and youth, regardless of their socio-economic background, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability status have the opportunity to engage in environmental actions.

The Strategy also calls for the development of supportive environments where children and youth can practice sustainable behaviors at the grassroots level—such as reducing plastic use, minimizing electricity consumption, and participating and leading in green solutions. Promoting green solutions in the construction and renovation of educational institutions, maintaining green spaces, and conducting practical lessons on science and ecology in the field will serve as effective methods of demonstrating sustainable practices.

The implementation of this Strategy will be guided by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and will align with international agreements such as the Doha Work Programme on Article 6, the Lima Ministerial Declaration on Education and Awareness Raising under the Climate Convention, and the UN ECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development.

CHAPTER 5: YOUTH PROPOSALS

1. Realization of Children's Inalienable Right to a Healthy Environment

- Recognize children as uniquely vulnerable to the consequences of climate change and pollution, especially those living in rural and marginalized communities.
- Invest in child-centered adaptation strategies that build resilience in communities, ensuring access to food, sanitation, healthcare, clean water, and air.
- Ensure children's awareness of their rights and opportunities by incorporating child-friendly accessible versions of climate and environmental documents and policies.
- Advance the energy transition to clean energy, focusing on electricity, heating, and cooking in households through a comprehensive strategy.
- Build regional and global partnerships to protect children's rights in ecology, climate change adaptation, and mitigation (disaster risk reduction).

2. Expansion of Meaningful Participation of Children and Youth in Climate Change Processes

- Include youth in the decision-making process by creating national youth parliaments and youth advisory groups within governmental bodies, international organizations, and civil society organizations (CSOs).
- Establish a "Youth Climate Foundation" to raise funding and support youth-led initiatives on climate change at regional and global levels.
- Create a Youth Climate Network to foster joint initiatives, collaborations, and transboundary solutions, connecting youth from different regions and countries.
- Increase global representation of youth in climate decision-making platforms by providing more opportunities for their involvement in international forums and negotiations.

3. Strengthening the Potential of Children and Youth through Continuous "Green" Education and Formation of Environmental Culture

- Educate children about their rights and raise environmental awareness through national and global media, creating accessible educational content (TV programs, documentaries, animations, songs, books, gamification, etc.).
- Promote climate education among youth by integrating it into school curricula or adding a new subject on climate change according to national education policies.
- Incorporate climate issues into extracurricular activities such as debates, UNFCCC COP simulations, art contests, tours to climate-affected areas, youth-led eco-clubs, and environmental volunteering.
- Increase parents' awareness of the safety and importance of environmental and climate activism through school workshops, parent meetings, and community outreach programs.

4. Ensuring Education Policies at Pre-school and School Levels are Aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

- Develop a curriculum specific to SDGs that is engaging, child-participatory, and age-appropriate for pre-school and school education.
- Provide contextual education tailored to local cultural, economic, and religious practices, ensuring children's understanding of their roles in the ecosystem.

- Equip children and youth with green skills, using the best local solutions on climate adaptation and natural resource management, and transferring their knowledge into practice.
- Further promote and engage talented students in local and national governments.
- Mainstream climate change and SDG education, and incorporate an intersectional perspective in the preparation of future educators and teachers.
- Build the capacity of the teaching staff on SDGs in an accessible format by incorporating the topic into regular training course materials with the opportunity for certification.
- Provide peer-to-peer teaching opportunities with the involvement of climate champions and SDG advocates.
- Provide funding for SDG-focused initiatives, specifically considering vulnerable and marginalized groups, children, and youth.