

Event Concept Note

Pushing Boundaries Through Collective Action: How can citizens drive systems change and catalyze climate action?

2 December, 3:30 pm to 5 pm – Room XVII - Palais des Nations

1. Purpose, context and scope

Since April 2024, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) Office in Geneva, in partnership with the Geneva Environment Network (GEN), has hosted a series of climate events. These events bring together UN agencies, member states, academics, CSO, Indigenous Peoples and advocates to discuss society's recent progress towards achieving the objectives of the Paris Agreement.

The current narrative on climate often focuses on the doom, gloom and catastrophic impacts of the climate crisis. This series argues that humanity is making progress, albeit not at the pace and scale needed. Hope matters. It galvanizes energy and incentivizes commitment. It creates a positive dynamic for action. As we underscore the importance of planetary boundaries and addressing the alarming trajectory, the goal of the series is to show that humanity can take meaningful actions that are forward-looking and move the needle. The series is an informative exercise to raise awareness of the climate crisis and to encourage individuals to take an active part in finding solutions while calling for ambitious climate policies.

The series is part of a wider advocacy effort to mobilize energy towards achieving the Paris Agreement and influencing climate policies to deliver ambitious nationally determined contributions (NDCs) by UN Climate Conference COP30. Altogether, the series of events in Geneva aims to contribute to the UN Secretary-General's global campaign advocacy to deepen efforts to keep the 1.5° goal alive.

International Geneva, being at the center of numerous debates and negotiations in the fields of science, health, human rights, development, trade and green finance, employment, peacebuilding and security, disaster risk reduction, humanitarian issues, as well as new technologies and innovation, offers the unique cross-disciplinary expertise to encourage progress in meeting the challenges of climate change.

2. Focus of the December event

As part of the climate action series, this event aims to bring to light initiatives showing how citizens around the world are catalyzing climate action, pushing out of "business-as-usual", and adding a transformative impetus to the political agenda.

The event will deep-dive into the concept of public participation with a goal of better understanding how citizens' actions can complement and influence the multilateral processes such as the COPs or government-led actions. We define public participation as “any process that involves the public in problem-solving or decision-making and that uses public input to make better decisions”.

Citizens around the world have become a driving force to push for climate ambition and are contributing their own knowledge, wisdom and creativity to challenge experts, policy makers and institutions. Many see civic engagement as a powerful approach to reframe the very process of participation – including citizens' significance in policy and decision-making – to shape top-down initiatives and propose alternatives.

This event aims to learn from case studies of citizen-led climate action initiatives around the world and reflect on the diverse angles and participation approaches which work towards policy changes to keep the 1.5° alive. We want to give an idea of the variety and evolution of collective mobilization for climate advocacy and understand how citizens' actions complement and influence multilateral processes such as the COPs or government-led actions within the institution. We want to assess the impact of climate-related civic engagement in the last 10 years and understand why, despite so many hurdles, citizens keep going with multiple forms of engagement to fight the climate crisis.

We do not want to instill division. Instead, we wish to promote cooperation by creating an inclusive forum for a variety of stakeholders to express their views. The event intends to empower participants as agents of change and inspire them to act, whether it be individual steps to collective mobilization. As such, this gathering is also organized as part of another series of events to celebrate the **25 Years of the Geneva Environment Network** – the pivotal platform of international Geneva dedicated to enhancing collaboration among stakeholders in the fight against the triple planetary crisis – exploring and highlighting frameworks and partnerships that can strengthen environmental governance and inspire action across all levels.

3. Leading questions to frame the event

- How have citizens been a driving force of the transition towards sustainability and have been influencing the move towards low carbon intensive production and consumption systems?
- How can we connect the dots between individual engagement and systemic change?
- How can we build better and more effective forms of public participation?
- How can citizens and [local and multilateral] authorities collaborate in view of advancing ambitious climate policies?
- What can be the advice to citizens worldwide to effectively be agent of change?

4. Target audience

Organized as an advocacy event, this session targets a wide audience with an aim of

- Permanent missions, including donors and developing countries Member States
- UN agencies
- Academia and think tanks, students
- Private sector
- Local authorities
- Climate advocates

5. Moderation

The event will be MC and moderated by [Claire Ransom](#) who is the Assistant Scientific Officer in the Climate Monitoring and Policy division of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

6. Draft Programme

Setting the scene – Why is the timing right to discuss civic engagement to push for climate ambitions (NDC 3.0)? [Agi Veres](#), UNDP Geneva Director

On Stage

XXX – From Baku to Geneva, Looking back at COP29. Main take aways on civic engagement at the COP? [Geraldine Pflieger](#), Director of the Institute for Environmental Science, University of Geneva (TBC)

On Stage

Keynotes – Can collective climate mobilization defeat the climate crisis? An overview of the different dimensions of civic climate engagement in the last 20 years, the evolution of climate mobilization and how it has managed (or not) to drive policy and system changes – [Dr Dana Fisher](#), Director of the Center for Environment, Community, & Equity and Professor in the School of International Service at American University

Online

Fireside chat – Does civic engagement matter?

[UNDP Peoples' Climate Vote](#) shows that over 80% people in the world demand high climate ambitions, with a majority of respondents expressing a desire to engage. What does really matter in terms of engagement to create lasting impact? How to bridge individual engagement to meaningful impact? How to avoid tokenization of youth climate activism? – [Nisreen El Saim](#), Former Chair of the UN Secretary-General's Youth Advisory Group, Junior negotiator for the African Group of Negotiators.

On Stage

Case study – How Indigenous Peoples can catalyze climate action on the ground and influence climate policies? - Jemuel Perino, Chairman of the Council of Elders of the Bukidnon Umayamnon tribe in The Philippines

Online

Thought leadership – Can climate protest movements create lasting policy change? – Max Voegtli, Swiss Youth Climate Activist and community mobiliser, ActNow

On stage

Case study – The global assembly for biodiversity: How deliberative climate talks can reform the political agenda? - Nicole Curato, Professor, Canberra University

Online

Thought leadership – Many Youth leaders are trained to participate to multilateral processes including COPs, How can their participation truly shape international climate diplomacy? - Anastasija Đorđa Bosančić, Young European Ambassador to the Western Balkans and Member of the Youth Advisory Body of the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH)

On stage

Case study – The story of *We Don't Have Time*, leveraging social media to fuel climate advocacy. Does it work? – Ingmar Rentzhog CEO of We Don't Have Time
Pre recorded video

Fact checking – What does science and statistics tell us about the impact of our individual engagement? Where should citizens focus their energy and commitment? Geneva Graduate Institute, TBC

On stage

Thought leadership – Why can citizens be an efficient driving force of the transition to sustainability and influence the move towards low carbon intensive production and consumption systems? - Cyril Dion, French climate activist

Pre-recorded video

Fireside chat – Klima seniorinen, when citizens create ripple effects to influence climate policies ambition - Elisabeth Stern, Board member of Klima Seniorinen interviewed by Stephanie Feeney, Remor)

On stage

Thought leadership – A human rights-based approach to climate action, with

inclusive and respectful participation of all communities affected by climate change. Benjamin Schachter, Team Leader for climate change and the environment at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner (TBC)
On Stage

Closing – From Geneva to Belém, How can we strengthen civic engagement at COP30? Brasil PM (TBC)
On Stage