

## Joint Declaration of Boys, Girls, and Teenagers: #EcoHope – the Only Viable Path

Translation: Daniel Corredor

The planet stands at a crossroads, teetering between the survival and extinction of its inhabitants, owing to the devastating impacts of climate change. Regrettably, the measures undertaken by those capable of mitigating this phenomenon have proven to be inadequate, lacking ambition, and shrouded in vagueness. While climate change exerts multiple repercussions on the lives of human beings, it disproportionately affects specific population groups, particularly children and teenagers in the global south. To ensure the fundamental rights of children, we urgently require policies that both mitigate and adapt to climate change, while prioritizing those who suffer the most severe consequences. Our present and future hang in the balance.

Under the banner of the Guardians for Life Movement, we have rallied diverse organizations and platforms representing children in the Americas and Europe to establish the “*Coalition of EcoHope*.” Our mission is to mobilize and demand our right to a healthy environment as an inherent human right, amidst a planetary crisis that imperils life itself. The *Coalition of EcoHope* operates on the fundamental premise that children and teenagers are political actors possessing influential voices and an inherent citizenship, which we channel towards safeguarding life. Through our collective actions, we strive to cultivate environmental consciousness among citizens, fostering hope for a sustainable future, while calling upon governments to govern for life and to take immediate, responsible climate action.

Despite the sluggish progress in integrating our voices and agendas into arenas of participation, representation, and political influence, we lament that we continue to be marginalized guests in the discussions that supposedly “consider” us. This exclusionary treatment extends not only to governmental bodies but also to entities purporting to work “for children and infancy.” It appears that the motto remains “by the children, for the children, but without the children.” The spaces for citizens under the age of 14 to participate are virtually non-existent, and we are condemned to silence, or at best, face criticism for daring to engage in decisions that directly affect us.

Therefore, and firmly convinced that we are empowered citizens of the present, we aim to advance this Declaration to demand real, representative, substantial, and equitable participation for children. We do not view ourselves as being adequately represented within declarations made by other age groups, such as young adults, as the experiences, expectations, and challenges faced by children and teenagers are distinct and incomparable. We affirm that when we are included within these spaces of demands and proposals, it is often done superficially, merely to “fill” a void that fails to capture our true sentiments.

Hence, through deliberation and collective effort, we have compiled the following petitions, firmly believing that we contribute to the construction of a society that transcends adult-centrism, which stifles and harms us. By doing so, we strive to overcome the most formidable crisis that humanity confronts—the crisis of a bleak future: the climate crisis.

## REQUESTS:

**GUARANTEE OF RIGHTS:** *Despite the progress made in legislation and international agreements to protect children worldwide, it is disheartening that many of our fundamental rights remain unfulfilled. This is especially evident in the regions of the global south, where children continue to suffer from famine, food insecurity, lack of access to clean water and basic sanitation, inadequate education due to limited connectivity in remote areas, and even the absence of properly constructed roads in places like South America and Africa.*

*Addressing these issues requires a strong political will from governments and civil society. It is crucial to prioritize the guarantee of these rights, particularly in the context of the climate crisis, to ensure that no child in the world is left violated or vulnerable.*

*Furthermore, we urge for the genuine right to a healthy environment. This encompasses clean air, green spaces in cities, seas free from plastics and pollution, preserved rivers, mountains, snow-capped peaks, wetlands, and other vital ecosystems.*

**CITIZENSHIP, CLIMATE, AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION:** *We are currently facing the most severe crisis in recent history—the climate crisis—which poses a grave threat to human life and biodiversity. This crisis is a result of societal failure, rooted in an education system that often overlooks the value of life and perpetuates a warlike mentality in our actions.*

As children who witness the compromised state of our present, we demand that governments provide us with the following education:

1. *Citizenship Education: We need to be empowered as political subjects who understand that individual actions carry collective consequences. It is essential to mobilize for causes that improve the world, as it is our legitimate right to do so.*
2. *Environmental Education: We require the knowledge and understanding to recognize the rich biodiversity present on our planet. We must learn to love, respect, care for, and defend it.*
3. *Climate Education: Equipping us with a comprehensive understanding of climate change, its impacts, and providing us with tools for mitigation and adaptation is crucial. Climate change affects our lives and childhoods, and we need the knowledge and skills to respond effectively.*

However, we acknowledge that teaching to love and appreciate life is not solely the responsibility of governments. Families and communities also play a significant role in cultivating these values.

**REAL POLICIES FOR ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE IN TERRITORIES:** This entails implementing adaptation measures in infrastructure and promoting sustainable cities that respect all forms of life. We strongly oppose the idea that children in the global south should risk their lives when pursuing education due to undignified conditions exacerbated by the climate crisis.

As inhabitants of the global north, we are fully aware of the injustice stemming from the inequalities between our regions and the global south. We stand in solidarity with the children who have not had the same access to rights that we have enjoyed.

**GREATER SPACES FOR REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING:** We are encouraged by the increasing opportunities for representation and participation in decision-making processes. However, we firmly believe that these spaces should extend beyond mere representation; they should enable active participation. We demand recognition as a distinct population group, separate from other age groups, and the chance to develop leadership skills. To achieve true empowerment, we require favorable conditions that allow us to utilize our citizenship in favor of life. This transformation is vital, given the demands of this critical moment in history.

Finally, we implore governments worldwide to prioritize the decarbonization of life and the economy. It is imperative to exert every effort to prevent a temperature increase of more than 1.5°C, as committed to in the Paris Agreement.

Our present and future lie in your hands. Do not allow history to remember you as those who permitted this assault on life! Count on millions of us across the planet to face the challenge of building a biocentric society with [#ecohope](#).



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