

ASEAN Youth Collective Statement on a Just and Inclusive Green Transition

We, the youth of Southeast Asia, come together at a defining moment for our region. As ASEAN faces escalating climate impacts, environmental degradation, and deepening social inequalities, we reaffirm that the path toward sustainability must be grounded in justice, inclusion, and human rights. A green transition that prioritizes speed over fairness, or technology over people, risks reproducing extractive development patterns that have historically marginalized communities across our region.

While ASEAN has made important normative commitments—including recognizing the right to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment—the gap between declaration and implementation remains wide. Climate change is not a distant threat for Southeast Asia; it is already disrupting livelihoods, displacing communities, intensifying disasters, and exacerbating existing inequalities. Youth, Indigenous Peoples, women, persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ and marginalized communities are often the most affected, yet remain the least included in decision-making processes.

Drawing from collective deliberations across plenary and parallel discussions, we identified shared structural challenges that must be addressed to achieve a truly just and inclusive green transition in ASEAN. These discussions affirmed that climate action must not be framed as a purely technical, economic, or behavioral issue, but as a systemic transformation rooted in participation, protection, and dignity.

We hereby call on ASEAN, governments, civil society organizations, donors, the private sector, and youth across the region to act on the following thematic concerns and recommendations:

1. Human Rights–Based Green Transition and Meaningful Participation

We acknowledge ASEAN's progress in establishing regional environmental and human rights frameworks. However, regional declarations alone are insufficient without strong national implementation. Human rights–based approaches must guide climate and development policies, ensuring that those most affected by environmental decisions are recognized as rights-holders, not merely stakeholders.

Participation must move beyond procedural consultation toward meaningful influence and shared decision-making power. Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) must be upheld as a genuine consent process, particularly for Indigenous Peoples and local communities whose lands, resources, and ways of life are directly impacted by transition policies. Conservation and climate solutions that disregard community rights risk becoming new forms of dispossession under green labels.

We call on ASEAN and Governments to:

- Translate regional environmental and human rights commitments into concrete national action plans and binding regulations;

- Institutionalize meaningful public participation across all stages of climate and development policymaking;
- Uphold FPIC as a non-negotiable standard, not a symbolic consultation process;
- Ensure accountability mechanisms that allow communities and youth to influence outcomes, not merely attend consultations.

2. Equitable Climate Finance and Support for Grassroots and Youth-Led Action

Despite growing global climate finance commitments, access to funding remains deeply unequal. Youth-led, grassroots, and community-based initiatives—particularly in Southeast Asia—face structural barriers due to bureaucratic requirements, donor-driven priorities, and imbalanced power relations. As a result, resources often circulate back to donor institutions rather than reaching communities on the frontlines of climate impacts.

We emphasize that climate finance is not only a technical or fiduciary issue, but a question of trust, partnership, and justice. Short-term, project-based funding models undermine sustainability and exclude informal yet impactful community initiatives.

We call on Donors, ASEAN Institutions, and Governments to:

- Shift toward long-term, trust-based and flexible funding mechanisms;
- Recognize and support informal and community-led initiatives that may lack legal status but demonstrate strong local impact;
- Strengthen intermediary organizations that bridge global funding systems and grassroots realities;
- Prioritize funding for adaptation, social protection, and locally driven solutions, particularly for vulnerable communities.

3. Social Inclusion, Protection, and Decent Green Futures

A just green transition will fail if it excludes women, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, rural communities, LGBTQI+ communities, and other marginalized groups. “Leave no one behind” must be operationalized through concrete institutional practices, not rhetorical commitments.

We stress that green transitions inevitably produce social consequences. The key question is not whether transition occurs, but who benefits and who bears the costs. Social protection systems must function as safety nets for communities affected by economic shifts, land-use changes, and environmental policies. At the same time, green economies must provide decent, accessible, and inclusive livelihoods—particularly for youth entering the workforce.

We call on Governments and the Private Sector to:

- Integrate gender, disability, Indigenous, and intersectional perspectives into all transition policies;
- Expand reskilling, mentorship, and inclusive entry pathways for youth in green sectors;
- Ensure social protection systems respond to transition-related vulnerabilities;

- Move beyond symbolic representation toward genuine power-sharing with marginalized communities.

4. Systemic Change, Public Communication, and Low-Carbon Living

We reject narratives that place the burden of climate action solely on individual behavior. Environmentally harmful practices are often the result of structural constraints, including production systems reliant on extractive resources, lack of affordable alternatives, and inadequate infrastructure.

Public awareness is important, but insufficient without systemic support. Sustainable and low-carbon living must be enabled through policy, infrastructure, market regulation, and producer responsibility so that environmentally responsible choices are accessible to all, regardless of income, gender, or geography.

We call on Governments, Businesses, and Media to:

- Strengthen producer responsibility and regulate environmentally harmful production and consumption systems;
- Invest in accessible community-level solutions for waste, energy, and sustainable consumption;
- Counter misinformation through inclusive, culturally grounded communication and storytelling;
- Support independent media and knowledge-sharing platforms that connect policy, data, and lived realities.

5. Strengthening Community Voice and Local Knowledge in Green Transition Planning

A just and inclusive green transition must be grounded in the lived realities of communities across Southeast Asia. While technical expertise and national planning are essential, the integration of representative community voices in policy design and sectoral planning remains limited. Without structured mechanisms for community participation, transition policies risk overlooking local contexts and reinforcing existing inequalities.

Community knowledge, lived experiences, and local narratives should therefore be recognized as valuable inputs in climate and energy transition governance. Independent media, community storytelling initiatives, and local communication platforms can help document and communicate the social and environmental impacts of transition policies.

Strengthening collaboration with local governance structures at the village, sub-district, and district levels is essential to connect national transition agendas with community realities. Youth networks can further contribute by facilitating dialogue, education, and knowledge exchange between policymakers, practitioners, and communities.

We call on ASEAN, governments, civil society organizations, and development partners to:

- Establish structured mechanisms for integrating community narratives and lived experiences into transition planning and policy evaluation;
- Establish transparent monitoring and evaluation frameworks that track community participation and social equity outcomes in green transition initiatives, with publicly accessible reporting mechanisms;
- Support independent media, community storytelling initiatives, and local knowledge platforms that document environmental and social realities;
- Strengthen collaboration with local governance institutions to facilitate inclusive and participatory community engagement;
- Invest in capacity-building programs that equip communities with the knowledge and tools to engage in energy transition discussions;
- Encourage youth networks to act as facilitators of dialogue and knowledge exchange between policymakers, practitioners, and communities.

6. Energy Democracy and a Just Transition for Affected Communities

A green energy transition in Southeast Asia must confront the reality of who owns, controls, and benefits from our energy systems. Too often, renewable energy development mirrors the extractive logic of fossil fuels—large-scale projects that displace communities, concentrate profits, and fail to address energy poverty. We cannot replace one form of extraction with another.

We assert that the transition must be democratic. This means shifting from centralized, corporate-controlled energy systems toward decentralized models where communities, cooperatives, and local governments can generate and manage their own power. It also means ensuring that workers and communities currently dependent on the fossil fuel economy—coal miners, power plant workers, and informal laborers—are not abandoned but are actively supported through the shift.

Furthermore, we recognize the deep injustice embedded in the supply chain. The minerals powering the global green transition are often mined on the lands of Indigenous Peoples and rural communities in our region under conditions of exploitation and environmental destruction. A truly just transition must address this harm at its source.

We call on ASEAN, Governments, and the Private Sector to:

- Prioritize decentralized, community-owned renewable energy solutions that guarantee affordable and reliable access for all, especially in rural and off-grid areas;
- Develop and fund concrete Just Transition plans for fossil fuel workers and communities, including social protection, reskilling, and alternative livelihoods co-designed with workers themselves;
- Enforce strict environmental and human rights standards in the mining of transition minerals, including full respect for Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) and mechanisms to hold companies accountable for abuses across their supply chains;
- Resist large-scale renewable energy projects that result in land grabs, forced displacement, or destruction of biodiversity, ensuring that affected communities are the first beneficiaries of new energy infrastructure.

Our Commitment as ASEAN Youth

We, the youth of Southeast Asia, commit to building bridges—between policy and practice, institutions and communities, and regional frameworks and local realities. We will continue to organize, advocate, and collaborate across borders to ensure that climate action advances justice, dignity, and solidarity.

We believe that a just and inclusive green transition can only succeed if it is built with people, not for people. We call on all stakeholders to act with urgency, accountability, and courage, so that justice is not reduced to rhetoric, but realized as lived reality for all in ASEAN.

Signatories:

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