

Youth Closing Statement

Maximum: 300 words

Madam Chair, distinguished delegates,

On behalf of children and youth, we welcome the opportunity to deliver our closing remarks as members of the UNCCD Youth Caucus.

We appreciate the progress achieved, yet we must acknowledge that children and youth remain underrepresented and continue to face systemic barriers to accessing decision-making spaces. The impacts of land degradation, desertification, and drought disproportionately affect children, youth, women, Indigenous Peoples, and persons with disabilities are affected by the impacts of DLDD.

Youth engagement is becoming more visible and over the course of this week, we have witnessed genuine commitment firsthand. Young people care deeply about this process, we are ready to contribute, and we will not apologize for being here; we have earned our place in these spaces and we thank all Parties and partners who have supported youth inclusion. So let's all collectively reflect on how to keep each other accountable.

- First, our ask is that Parties should intentionally support youth-led initiatives and mainstream gender across all mechanisms to reduce barriers to financing for women, youth, rural, Indigenous as well as local communities, and provide equitable support for land and human rights defenders and their organizations.
- Second, we ask Parties to integrate food security, sustainable land and soil management into national policies as well as increase research in water resource management, soil health, and sustainable agriculture.
- Third, we affirm the right to ownership and use of land for all children, youth, women and Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities and call on the Parties to secure land rights for all.
- Lastly, we call on the Parties to support the implementation of the Youth Engagement Strategy at National level to ensure meaningful and inclusive participation of young people at all levels and not leave it just to the secretariat and the youth caucus.

As young people, we are ready to strengthen partnerships with Parties, civil society, and the private sector to work with us as we collectively accelerate land restoration, drought resilience, and youth engagement. We urge Parties to reinforce decisions that enable meaningful youth inclusion across decision-making, design, implementation, and monitoring of UNCCD-related actions, recognizing youth as active partners and unlocking the full potential of our generation in implementing the Convention.

Thank you.

And HAPPY WORLD SOIL DAY!!!

