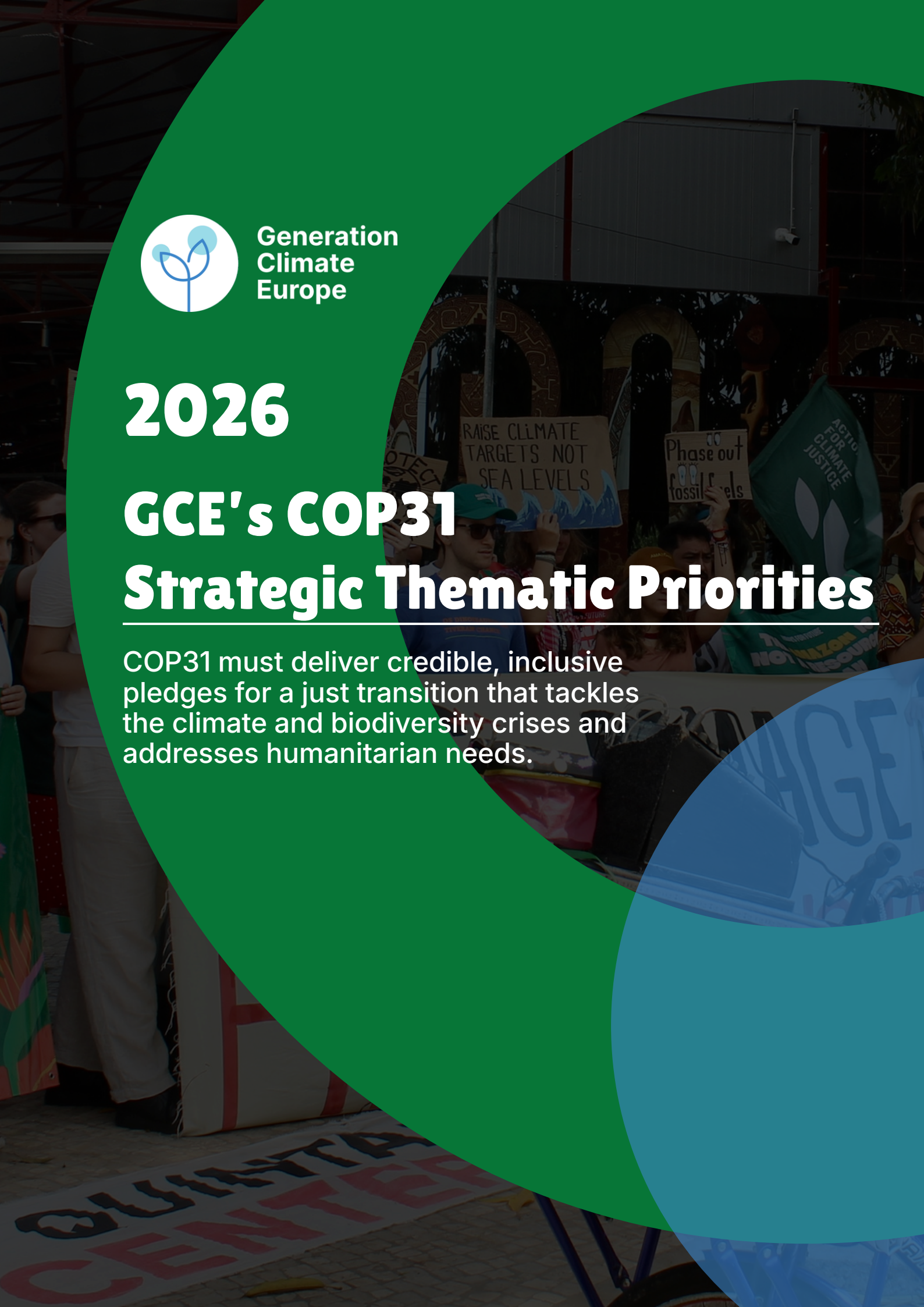
Generation Climate Europe

2026 GCE's COP31 Strategic Thematic Priorities

COP31 must deliver credible, inclusive pledges for a just transition that tackles the climate and biodiversity crises and addresses humanitarian needs.

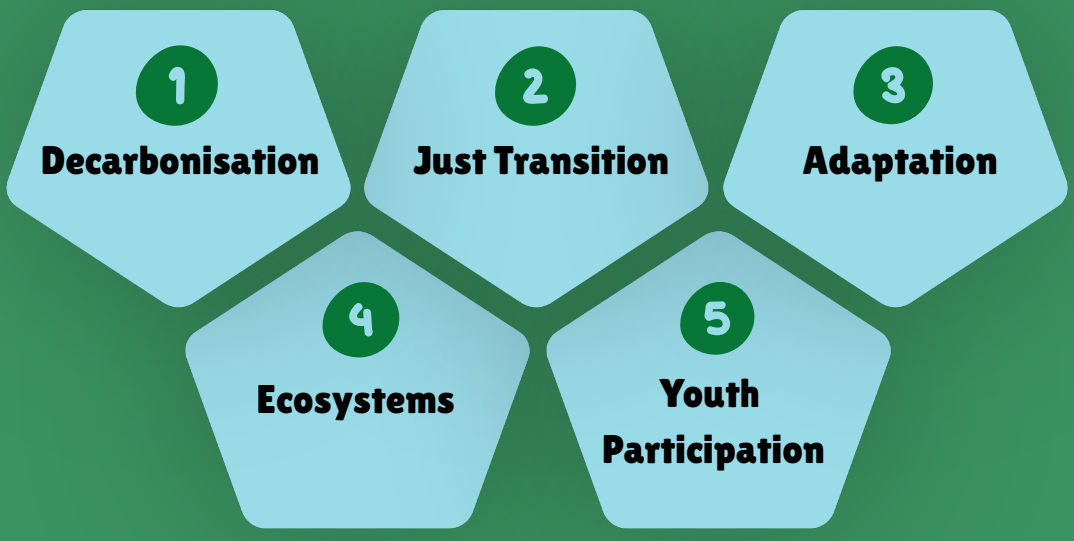


Introduction

The **2026 UN Climate Change Conference (COP31)** will take place in Antalya, Türkiye, **from 9 to 20 November 2026** at a critical breaking point for climate action, with global temperature rise set to cross 1.5°C within the next few years and 2025 recorded as the third warmest year both globally and in Europe.[1] As previous international climate negotiations have been unsuccessful at producing climate justice, the **joint Türkiye-Australia Presidency partnership** has framed COP31 as an "Implementation COP" and "COP of the Future" with a focus on translating climate commitments into trackable real-world progress.

Against this backdrop, **Generation Climate Europe (GCE)**,[2] the largest coalition of youth-led networks on climate and environmental issues at the European level, calls on Parties to deliver on their obligations under the Paris Agreement as reaffirmed by the **International Court of Justice (ICJ)**,[3] through accelerated and measurable action that is **transparent, science-based, rights-based and accountable** to present and future generations, in **five priority areas.**

Overview of priority areas



[1] See State of the Global Climate Report 2025 - WMO as well as Limiting Overshoot Report 2026 - UNEP
[2] GCE brings together 381 national organisations across 46 countries and represents the voices of more than 20 million young Europeans
[3] See Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change 2025 - ICJ

Our demands

1. **Accelerate the reduction of emissions and a just transition away from fossil fuels**
   a. Continue the Mitigation Work Programme and its Global Dialogues.
   b. Establish, by 2030, a clear framework within the UNFCCC process for transitioning away from fossil fuels.
   c. Ensure that the 35x35 electrification target is rooted in clean energy production.
   d. Call for the EU Member States to ban big polluters and fossil fuel lobbyists from their delegations.

2. **Operationalise progress on just transition**
   a. Operationalise the Belém-Antalya Mechanism (BAM) as a permanent constituted body under the CMA.
   b. Embed justice and meaningful rights holders' participation in the governance of the BAM.
   c. Ground the BAM in rights, decent work and the transition away from fossil fuels.
   d. Deliver accessible, public and grant-based finance for just transition.
   e. The EU in particular should support a BAM that mobilises grant-based, non-debt-inducing finance, rather than a mechanism limited to coordination.
   f. Ensure that human rights are upheld in the production and use of critical minerals.

3. **Speed up adaptation for climate resilience**
   a. Operationalise the Technical Task Force on Indicators and agree on an inclusive composition and modalities for it, with child- and youth-sensitive data and methodologies.
   b. Triple adaptation finance to reach at least $120 billion by 2035.
   c. Ensure adaptation finance reaches communities and youth-led initiatives directly.

4. **Reconcile the climate and biodiversity negotiations agendas**
   a. Scale up ecosystem protection and restoration to deliver climate and biodiversity goals.
   b. Put ecological limits at the heart of maritime spatial planning.
   c. Back a moratorium on deep-sea mining and the implementation of the High Seas Treaty.
   d. Make maritime transport climate-neutral and pollution-free.

5. **Promote youth participation and action for climate empowerment (ACE)**
   a. Institutionalise youth participation as a cross-cutting element of climate governance.
   b. Strengthen the next ACE Action Plan to support meaningful participation.

1

Accelerate the reduction of emissions and a just transition away from fossil fuels

COP31 marks a **critical point for climate change mitigation and the transition away from fossil fuels (TAFF)**. Parties must decide whether to continue and expand **the Mitigation Work Programme (MWP)**[4] and formalising within the formal negotiating tracks the momentum on transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems[5] following the **Santa Marta process** and a **roadmap initiative launched by the COP30 Brazilian Presidency.**

We call Parties to:

a. **Continue the Mitigation Work Programme (MWP) and its Global Dialogues** beyond 2026 with a structured, transparent and enhanced ambition and action-oriented implementation that delivers on pre-existent targets and commitments, including aligning with the first global stocktake (GST) findings and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) cycles. In parallel, the Global Dialogues should serve as a space for exchange among Parties to ensure that discussions and political outcomes are translated into concrete pathways to advance implementation.
b. **Establish, by 2030, a clear framework within the UNFCCC process for transitioning away from fossil fuels that aligns with the ICJ advisory opinion and the 1.5°C goal.**[6] The new framework should set a concrete global phase-out date, supported by science-based transition pathways in ambitious, updated NDCs. It should include incentives for clean energy investment, support mechanisms for developing countries, and stronger accountability and transparency on fossil fuel influence within the UNFCCC.
c. **Ensure that the COP31 Presidency 35x35 electrification target addresses increasing energy demand with a commitment to clean energy production.** This target must be met with only new clean, renewable energy, phasing out coal, and is aligned with growing total energy demand.
d. **Call for the EU and EU Member States to ban from their delegations big polluters and fossil fuel lobbyists** to mitigate undue influence of polluting industries in official negotiations spaces, and to advocate for excluding such lobbyists from COP negotiations entirely. The EU must also advocate for climate science free from fossil fuel conflicts of interest, especially in the IPCC.[7]

[4]The MWP was established at COP26 in the Glasgow Climate Pact to "urgently scale up mitigation ambition and implementation" and to complement the global stocktake by helping Parties to deliver and enhance their NDCs. Since its creation, it has provided a valuable platform for technical exchange, knowledge sharing, and stakeholder engagement, while it has fallen short in catalysing measurable mitigation action at the scale and speed required to close the emission gap.
[5] TAFF was a key commitment to the UAE consensus at COP28, see paragraph 28(d) of decision 1/CMA.5 Outcome of the first GST.
[6] See paragraph 243 of the ICJ advisory opinion, the first GST outcome (1/CMA.5, paragraph 27) and paragraph B.6.1 and Table SPM.1 of the IPCC AR6 - Summary for Policymakers.
[7] Particularly in light of recent investigations revealing ties between authors of the IPCC and fossil fuel industries, see The Guardian.

2

Operationalise progress on just transition

A just transition places **social justice and equity at the centre of climate action** from the phase out of fossil fuels to the growing reliance on critical minerals through locally-led transition pathways adapted to each country's economic and social context, across mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage. A **whole-of-society and whole-of-economy approach** must involve all stakeholders meaningfully into shaping these pathways.[8] Building on the landmark outcome of COP30 with the decision to establish a Just Transition mechanism, COP31 must deliver on its operationalisation.

We call Parties to:

a. **Operationalise the Belém-Antalya Mechanism (BAM) as a permanent constituted body under the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA)**, with a credible pathway to finance, not only to knowledge.
b. **Embed justice and meaningful rights holders' participation in the governance of the BAM.** This should include guaranteed and meaningful participation of youth, women, Indigenous Peoples, people of African descent, workers and marginalised groups in both governance structures and access to financial resources, supported by clear timelines, progress indicators and accountability mechanisms.
c. **Ground the BAM in rights, decent work and the transition away from fossil fuels.** In line with the COP30 decision, the ICJ advisory opinion and the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Guidelines, just transition pathways must uphold human rights and access to remedy, protect civic space and environmental defenders, and guarantee decent work, social dialogue, social protection and reskilling, with targeted measures for youth employment and green skills. The BAM should also support fossil fuel transition plans and economic diversification in dependent countries and regions, including coal regions in Europe and the Western Balkans, so that no worker or community is left behind.
d. **Deliver accessible, public and grant-based finance for just transition.** Public, grant-based finance should form the core of just transition funding, with a simplified and dedicated funding window and technical assistance for youth-led and community-led initiatives. Financing should also address structural barriers that restrict fiscal space, including debt burdens, unfair tax systems returns and investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) provisions that allow fossil fuel investors to challenge climate policies.
e. **The EU in particular should support a BAM that mobilises grant-based, non-debt-inducing finance, rather than a mechanism limited to coordination.** Two concrete measures should support this:
    i. earmarking revenues from the EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) for international just transition finance, which would also respond to developing countries' concerns about CBAM's impacts, and
    ii. securing a strong just transition spending line in the EU's 2028–2034 Multiannual Financial Framework.
f. **Ensure that human rights are upheld in the production and use of critical minerals.** This includes aligning with the UN Guidance for Action on Critical Energy Transition Minerals,[10] respecting Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), ensuring community co-benefits, and preventing environmental and social harms.

[8] UNDP. (2026). What is "just transition" and why is it important for climate action? UNDP Climate Promise.
[9] See 4th Global Dialogue under the UAE JTWP: Youngo submission & NewClimate Institute. (2025). Just transition policies.
[10] See the seven guiding principles of the UN Guidance for Action on Critical Energy Transition Minerals 2025

3

Speed up adaptation for climate resilience

With **Europe warming at more than twice the global average**[11] and facing unprecedented climate impacts, **scaling up adaptation is as critical as mitigation.** Meanwhile, **vulnerable countries worldwide,** particularly in the Global South, continue to bear the brunt of climate impacts while **adaptation finance remains severely underfunded**, with needs in developing countries 12-14 times as much as current flows.[12] The failure to reach a decision on adaptation at SB64 underscores the urgent need for concrete commitments at COP31.

We call Parties to:

a. **Operationalise the Technical Task Force on Indicators and agree on an inclusive composition and modalities for it, with child- and youth-sensitive data and methodologies.** The indicators play a key role in measuring progress on the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) and informing the second GST. The EU must advocate for meaningful youth inclusion in its work to ensure adaptation efforts are inclusive and responsive to the needs of young people.
b. **Triple adaptation finance to reach at least $120 billion by 2035.** Securing this commitment in the COP31 negotiated text, with a clear baseline against which progress can be measured, building on the Mutirão Decision of COP30.[13] The EU in particular must prioritise accessible, grant-based public adaptation finance for developing countries, ensuring funds are linked to the design and implementation of National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and their monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems, rather than disproportionately financing stand-alone projects.
c. **Ensure adaptation finance reaches communities and youth-led initiatives directly.** Simplified access and a dedicated window for locally-led and youth-led adaptation should sit alongside support for NAPs, so that finance reaches those closest to the impacts of climate change.

[11] European State of the Climate Report 2025 - WMO
[12] Adaptation Gap Report 2025 - UNEP
[13] See Global Mutirão decision, paragraph 53, which reaffirms the doubling of adaptation finance by 2025 under decision 1/CMA.3, paragraph 18, and calls for efforts to at least triple adaptation finance by 2035. The decision does not specify a baseline or a figure. The $120 billion demand reflects tripling the Glasgow target of $40 billion, as proposed by the LDC Group at COP30, and is assessed as achievable by 2035 in WRI analysis.

4

Reconcile the climate and biodiversity negotiations agendas

Oceans and biodiversity are fundamental to climate stability, human well-being, and resilient economies, yet are among the systems **most severely affected by climate change and ecosystem degradation.**[14] Ensuring greater coherence among climate and ocean actions is a priority of the COP31 Presidency.

We call Parties to:

a. **Scale up ecosystem protection action and restoration to deliver climate and biodiversity goals.** The EU should demonstrate leadership by accelerating implementation and proper enforcement of the EU Nature Restoration Regulation and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF).[15] These efforts should be grounded in science, supported by sufficient and dedicated financial resources similar to the LIFE program, and provide meaningful opportunities for scientific evidence to reach and inform decision-makers. The EU should also ensure that climate action, biodiversity protection and ocean governance are mutually reinforcing and translated into concrete policies, investment and implementation, including through the forthcoming European Ocean Act, which should provide a framework for managing increasing pressures and competing uses of marine space.
b. **Put ecological limits at the heart of maritime spatial planning.** Ensure the European Ocean Act establishes ecosystem-based maritime spatial planning by 2030 that accounts for cumulative pressures, climate impacts and biodiversity objectives, and makes the expansion of offshore energy, shipping and other maritime activities compatible with healthy marine ecosystems.
c. **Back a moratorium on deep-sea mining and the implementation of the High Seas Treaty.** The EU and its member states should join the States calling for a moratorium or precautionary pause on deep-sea mining, ratify the High Seas Treaty (BBNJ Agreement), which entered into force in January 2026, and bring forward proposals for marine protected areas on the high seas.
d. **Make maritime transport climate-neutral and pollution-free.** Accelerate the transition to zero-emission shipping and ports through increased funding to innovative technologies developed in Europe, while tackling air pollution, underwater noise, plastics and marine litter in line with Target 7 of the KM-GBF, ensuring that decarbonisation measures themselves do not create new pressures on biodiversity or marine ecosystems.

[14] See IPCC SROCC Summary for Policymaker and PBES Global Assessment Summary for Policymakers
[15] Including enforcing target 1 and 2 of the KM-GBF (the aim of bringing the loss of areas of high biodiversity importance, including ecosystems of high ecological integrity, close to zero by 2030, and placing at least 30% of degraded terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems under effective, community-led restoration by 2030, backed by transparent monitoring).

5

Promote youth participation and action for climate empowerment (ACE)

With now almost all **children and youth exposed to climate hazards**,[16] and future generations at even greater risk, strengthened youth participation and empowerment must be a cross-cutting priority. At GCE, we are guided by the **principles of intergenerational equity, human rights, intersectionality, climate justice and meaningful youth leadership,** recognising young people not only as those most affected by long-term climate decisions, but as essential partners in shaping and implementing solutions.

We call Parties to:

a. **Institutionalise youth participation as a cross-cutting element of climate governance.** The EU should establish permanent, legally mandated mechanisms for youth participation in climate policy-making and COP negotiations, supported by accessible finance and capacity-building.
b. **The next ACE Action Plan should build on this by moving beyond consultation towards sustained participation and co-creation**, strengthening links with NDC implementation and other UNFCCC commitments, and requiring transparent reporting on how youth input has shaped policies and negotiating positions.



[16] See Children's Climate Risk Report 2026 - UNICEF.