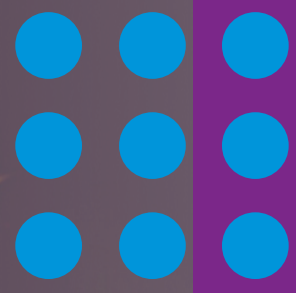
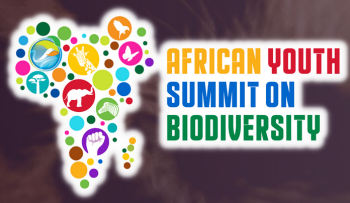


**RALLYING  
YOUTH VOICES  
FOR BIODIVERSITY**



**APRIL 21-23, 2022**

**AFRICAN YOUTH  
SUMMIT ON  
BIODIVERSITY  
YOUTH STATEMENT**











Global Youth  
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Network - Africa



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# PREAMBLE

Africa is currently dealing with the unprecedented and disproportionate impacts of the three planetary emergencies - biodiversity loss, climate change, and pollution. Without being addressed adequately, this trend will continue to have serious consequences on Africa's development progress and the continent's ability to grow sustainably.

The African Regional Chapter of the Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN Africa), in partnership with the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), hosted the first-ever African Youth Summit on Biodiversity (AYSB) from April 21-23, 2022, to provide an informative and engaging space for African youth to define the future they envision within the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and underline specific actions that will inform the transformative response to the current crisis.

Increasing meaningful youth engagement in biodiversity policy and conservation is necessary to achieve the 2050 goal of living in harmony with nature and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). African youth are key actors in the implementation of these two goals, and are critical to making transformative change on the ground.

This statement is drawn from the perspectives of the 447 youth participants from 32 African countries, who in turn represent the voices of thousands of young people throughout Africa.





# THE REALITY WE FACE

We acknowledge that Africa is rich in biodiversity, which is essential to our survival. African leaders from all walks of life have made significant efforts over the years to address the triple planetary crises that we face, namely biodiversity loss, climate change, and pollution. However, our national governments must move beyond pledges and allocate adequate funding and training opportunities that enhance the capacity of young people, encourage youth-led innovation, and green job creation.

We note with sadness that although African youth make up more than half of Africa's population, youth's existential marginalisation from most policy-making and governance structures remains. Youth must be recognised as effective agents of change in democratic systems and the environmental policymaking process.

To do so, Africa's leaders must implement urgent, efficient, and transformative frameworks that prioritise youth empowerment and meaningful participation in leadership and decision-making processes at the local, national, and global levels. These are critical components to ensuring inclusive, representative, and sustainable democratic societies.

Africa's youth are critical to the success of the Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. An inclusive process must take our interests and voices into account, from the design of biodiversity-related interventions to their implementation and monitoring.





# Our Key Messages



## Intergenerational Equity

Young people in Africa constitute a heterogeneous group with a variety of experiences, skills, and abilities to bring to the table, such as intercultural communication and technological innovation. National governments and other stakeholders must take advantage of this opportunity to engage youth in meaningful ways.



## Biodiversity Crisis

The moment for our leaders to act on biodiversity loss and climate change is now, and we will not wait to deal with any future environmental problems that our collective inaction will accelerate. Young people in Africa are a driving force behind finding innovative solutions to the environmental challenges..



## Inclusive Biodiversity Conservation

Collaboration with the indigenous peoples and local communities is essential for the sustainable use of biological resources. African governments must support African youth in their commitments by broadening the space necessary to create an environment in which human rights are the foundation for a more peaceful, just, and inclusive society, as well as a resilient and sustainable future.



## Economic Benefits

Africa's biodiversity is underutilised, and we are losing it at the same time. The full potential of our biodiversity economy must be realised. African governments must streamline frameworks for ensuring the continent's mega-diverse ecosystems deliver economic benefits, especially to youth in communities living adjacent to or with the resources.



## Transformative Change

Transformative change is urgently needed in the continent's education systems to restore and preserve its biodiversity. Africa's governments must mainstream traditional knowledge and science-backed interventions into education systems to help redefine conservation narratives and approaches.





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# OUR CALL TO ACTION



**We, the African youth, call upon local and national government leaders to:**

**1**

## **Ensure meaningful youth engagement in biodiversity decision-making processes at all stages of planning and implementation, as measured by:**

- Recognising the capacity of youth as the leaders of today and seeing them not just as beneficiaries, but also as actors and partners.
- Involving youth, either through a youth advisory committee and/or other appropriate youth-led groups, in the inception, planning and implementation of national policies impacting biodiversity.
- Supporting youth participation in multilateral environmental agreements by establishing a youth delegate program where youths are included and supported to participate in their respective national delegation.
- Providing professional training for youth to pursue professions in leadership roles and fostering the development of young professionals who are confident, accountable, multidimensional, and quality leaders in sustainable biodiversity conservation and environmental management.
- Ensuring or specifying a quota of critical roles for young people in decision-making bodies.
- Establishing funding opportunities for youth-led initiatives and ensuring that they are accessible to youth.
- Providing a safe space to encourage and enable youth networks and organisations to mobilise their activism or participate free from intimidation or retaliation.
- Partnering with youth-led organisations.
- Enhancing the continent's biodiversity economy and harnessing the entrepreneurial thinking of youth so that biodiversity sustainably contributes to alleviating poverty.



## 2

### **Transform the basic and higher education systems by:**

- Promoting and encouraging the understanding of biodiversity conservation and how it is connected to other socio-economical and ecological goals, and also including these topics as part of educational programs.
- Ensuring that conservation education is mainstreamed from basic education levels to provide a more fluid flow of information on biodiversity conservation among the younger generations.
- Promoting programmes that offer more practical, contextualised, and hands-on activities to help young people understand and address biodiversity loss's root causes and impacts.
- Providing more opportunities for experiential and interactive learning that will empower the youth with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes needed to act as agents of change.
- Establishing public libraries in districts and/or regions and fully equipping them with information about biodiversity and other environmental issues to increase access to knowledge while increasing awareness of biodiversity conservation.
- Developing mentorship programmes for young aspiring biodiversity professionals and other related fields.

## 3

### **Bridge the digital divide in urban and rural areas by:**

- Improving internet connectivity and access to enhance digital literacy, particularly for youth in rural areas and disadvantaged communities such as ethnic minorities and indigenous people.
- Increasing funding for broadband deployment projects in rural areas, including access to electricity.
- Promoting and supporting digital literacy training initiatives, especially for youth from marginalised and indigenous communities.



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4

## Act on the climate emergency by:

- Recognising the close linkage between biodiversity loss and climate change in Africa.
- Adopting an emergency response to climate change and ecological breakdown.
- Prioritising climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts in response to our continent's economic crises.
- Accelerating the transition to renewable energy resources while making them easily accessible to everyone.
- Making funding accessible to youths with climate change mitigation and adaptation response initiatives and/or innovations.

5

## Include the voices of vulnerable people who are critical to biodiversity conservation in decision-making by:

- Fostering the active inclusion of women and girls in decision-making processes for the management of biodiversity.
- Acknowledging the pivotal role of women and their contribution to biodiversity conservation, particularly in preserving local cultures, and taking the necessary actions to ensure the necessary legislation is in place to protect their rights and provide equitable opportunities.
- Recognising, protecting and promoting local and ancestral systems of knowledge, cultures and languages that encompass traditional methodologies and expertise to safeguard biodiversity;
- Including in discussions, the social justice issues faced by Indigenous people and local communities.
- Integrating the current conservation strategies with indigenous strategies for sustainable biodiversity conservation.
- Providing opportunities and/or platforms where the voices of local and indigenous people should be heard on issues of biodiversity conservation within their respective landscapes.



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## CROSS CUTTING CALL

6

**In support of the calls mentioned above, we encourage NGOs, CSOs and the private sector to:**

- Provide support for the youth through financial, mentorship and educational programs to increase their capacity to create on-ground change and contribute to biodiversity conservation
- Provide avenues for the youth to be included in biodiversity policy decision-making discussions on the national and international biodiversity platforms. Young people have meaningful contributions to these discussions but often do not have access to the platforms to voice their concerns and ideas.
- Recognise the critical role of youth-led organisations as part of intergenerational civil society movements for the planet, amplify their voices, and partner with them.
- Support the youth in strongly encouraging representatives of the media to report on biodiversity issues and produce stories that investigate new threats to biodiversity, as well as innovative, potentially-scalable conservation solutions.





# OUR COMMITMENTS

**We, together with other young people in Africa, are ready to contribute by;**

1. Engaging through an annual African Youth Summit on Biodiversity, where young people can share their expertise, learn, network and determine priorities.
2. Continued involvement and capacity-building of youth, as well as active participation in Multilateral Engagement Agreements (MEAs).
3. Creating sustainable partnerships that will put Africa on the road to recovery by 2030 for the benefit of the planet and people, as well as helping to protect biodiversity in order to meet the 2050 objective of living in harmony with nature.
4. Acting as change agents in our communities by addressing biodiversity loss via well-coordinated initiatives with other young people and stakeholders.
5. Strengthening regional networks to enhance South-South youth synergies that empower local and regional youth structures.
6. Promoting and living an eco-friendly, sustainable and ethical lifestyle.
7. Contributing to conservation education and science by engaging early-career conservation professionals and sharing information based on various research backed by conventional science and traditional knowledge.
8. Using social media and emerging technologies to advocate, share ideas, and communicate efficiently about Africa's biodiversity.
9. Holding African leaders accountable for their commitments and ensuring they adhere to existing local, national, and international laws enacted to conserve biodiversity, to which they are signatories.
10. Contributing coherently to biodiversity conservation and policy-making at all levels, from local to global, for sustainable conservation and utilisation of our valuable natural resources.





## ABOUT THE SUMMIT ORGANIZERS

### Global Youth Biodiversity Network - Africa

GYBN Africa is the regional chapter of the Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN), the coordination platform for young people in the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Founded in 2017 to serve as a conduit for GYBN's mission, GYBN Africa supports its regional activities and biodiversity advocacy efforts in Africa. GYBN Africa currently has chapters in 20 African countries.

### African Wildlife Foundation

The African Wildlife Foundation is the primary advocate for the protection of wildlife and wildlands as an essential part of a modern and prosperous Africa. Founded in 1961 to focus on Africa's conservation needs, we articulate a uniquely African vision, bridge science, and public policy, and demonstrate the benefits of conservation to ensure the survival of the continent's wildlife and wildlands.