



# Narrative Report

A Need for Greater Capacity  
to Support Urgent Action on  
Environmental and Climate Justice



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## 1.0 Introduction

The climate movement in recent years has seen many young people and students from both secondary and tertiary education taking the lead in raising awareness about human-made climate change and its catastrophic consequences for our planet. Students and young people have been at the forefront of worldwide protests, climate strikes, and advocacy action in formal and informal international decision-making spaces. The Global Student Forum (GSF) Environmental Justice team set out to advance the GSF's impact in terms of advocacy, networking, and capacity building by developing a sustainability policy paper, student-led campaigns for net zero emissions by 2030, and programmes related to climate justice in education. The working group further engaged in exploring new ways of linking the informal youth and student-led climate movement closer to the formal student movement represented in the membership of the GSF.



## 2.0 Activities Undertaken

### 2.1 Global Students COP-27 Pre-Summit



Ahead of the 27th session of the UN Climate Change Conference 2022 (COP27), which took place from November 7–18, 2022, in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, we organized a Pre-COP Student Summit on climate justice and advocacy to synergize student and youth voices at the global level to inform policy at COP27. Using masterclasses, expert panels, mock sessions, and workshops, the Accra Summit built solidarity among student unions globally and ignited the momentum needed to actively affect policy at COP27.

The Global COP27 Student Pre-Summit was organized in collaboration with the All-Africa Students Union in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration (MFARI) of Ghana. The Summit was held from October 10–15, 2022, at the Ange Hill Hotel in Accra, Ghana. We invited various stakeholders, including students, student leaders, climate activists, and political decision-makers. In total, sixty (60) participants from over fifteen (15) countries traveled to Ghana to contribute to policy formulation ahead of COP27 in Egypt.

The training and summit culminated in a climate justice outcome statement from the international student movement for COP27, the COP27 Global Student Declaration. This is a statement of youth and students, co-written by student representatives at the Summit.

The statement calls for urgent action on climate justice. It seeks solutions to the climate crisis which acknowledge that those who are least responsible are facing the impacts of anthropogenic climate change faster and to a far greater extent than those who have financially and politically benefited. The statement highlights the main issues of concern to the students and youth from representative and democratic movements globally, as well as their aspirations for COP27. These include climate justice and quality climate change education, training, and financing, including loss and damage. Other aspirations include practicing democratic decision-making for climate solutions and accountability, as demonstrated by the student movement.

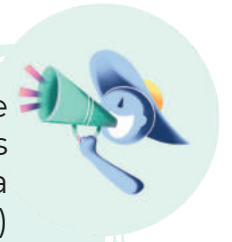
In the aftermath of the summit, the GSF oversaw a coordinated advocacy campaign in which pre-summit delegates utilized the student declaration to lobby their national COP delegates in favor of the international student movement's demands adopted in Ghana. The student declaration also found exposure at various COP pavilion events attended by delegates from the GSF membership. GSF Steering Committee and Secretariat members participated in virtual panels but respected the decision of the Steering Committee to abstain from in-person participation over security concerns stemming from long standing activism in support of political prisoners in Egypt. [A detailed report of the pre-summit can be accessed here.](#)

## 2.2 GSF Policy on Environmental Justice and Sustainability

From its inception, the GSF aspired to incorporate sustainability as a cross-cutting value by mainstreaming it into the political priorities and the day-to-day operations of the organization. This effort was formalized through the creation of an internal sustainability policy. The Environmental Justice team has drafted the GSF Policy on Environmental Justice and Sustainability to guide the organization's activities in the climate space. The policy reflects the GSF's commitment to reducing its carbon footprint and the responsibilities of the leadership in ensuring that resources are made available to put the policies into action.



## 2.3 Act on Your Climate Science (AOYCS) Campaign



We started working on the #ActOnYourClimateScience campaign with the Climate Student Movement and Students Organizing for Sustainability (SOS) International. This is a worldwide effort to hold higher education institutions (HEIs) accountable for their actions and encourage them to take the lead in reducing their countries' climate impacts.

The goal of the campaign is to get HEIs to sign on to a GSF climate framework made up of four strategic steps and GSF guidelines. The goal of the campaign is also to encourage and build strong climate leadership in HEIs. The campaign requires HEIs to commit to:

1. setting and committing net-zero targets;
2. developing an action plan within a year;
3. publicly declaring a climate emergency; and
4. reporting to our sustainability ranking, which is currently under development. In our engagements, we successfully put together a brochure and framework for the campaign and have begun drafting guidelines for the application of the framework.

We also made contact with some regional student organisations, including the All-Africa Students Union (AASU) and the European Students Union (ESU), met with them, and discussed how student collaboration can be secured for the execution of this campaign. Again, zoom calls were arranged with the coordinators for sharing and discussion sessions with them.

In October, we held two (2) introductory sessions where we shared about the campaigns and held short discussions with participants about different possibilities in order to recruit Green Office Ambassadors and AOYCS national campaign coordinators.

We started a pilot academy programme for the coordinators which is planned to be rolled up all the way to around mid-2023. In the programme, we have covered:

- ◆ Basics of climate science: GHG emissions, carbon footprint, systemic actions, IPCC reports (AR6), etc.
- ◆ Developing a campaign: What the campaign is about, what resources we share (eg. templates, links to other resources, etc.), basic tips for starting a team, resource mapping, as well as some proposed starting activities and actions

- ◆ Team management and leadership: definitions and different types of leadership and management, how to keep the work we do sustainable, how to build up yourself and your team, what a campaign cycle could look like, SMART action plans, building up a good team structure and culture, how to monitor and evaluate the work we do.

Moving forward, we also plan to cover communication methods, resource management, event planning, and advocacy strategy.

## 2.4 Environmental Justice Advisory Board

In March 2022, we sent out a call for experts with knowledge and interest in environmental justice and sustainability in order to form the GSF's Environmental Justice Advisory Board. From the applications we received, we formed a seven-member board, comprising persons from different countries, with which we worked throughout the year to scale our impact and inform campaigns and advocacy.

## 2.5 Partnership Building

The team successfully built partnerships with organizations such as the Climate Student Movement (CSM), Students Organizing for Sustainability (SOS) International, and the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF). We harnessed our role in connecting others and promoting shared learning and began to develop a network of student representatives and student-centered organizations to advocate for climate justice.

### **3.0 Impacts of our Activities**

The environmental justice team's activities and engagements made it possible for student-led organizations and movements in different parts of the country to connect with each other in a meaningful way. The activities allowed for best practice exchanges, peer-to-peer learning forums, capacity-building opportunities, campaigns, and projects. We were able to bring informal climate movements led by youth and students closer to formal student governance structures and policymakers at every level. Steering Committee and Secretariat representatives have furthermore worked intensively on the promotion of quality climate change education and sustainability in their capacities as keynote speakers and panelists throughout a variety of international political fora and conferences, including the United Nations, where together with the World Youth Group, the GSF is working on having member states adopt a UN resolution in favor of Climate Change Education within national curricula.

### **4.0 Grant Expenditure**

The funds were used to finance the engagement of two part-time consultants based in Accra, Ghana, as well as, throughout the second half of 2022, a consultancy with Students Organizing for Sustainability (SOS), supporting the efforts around the implementation of the COP27 Student Pre-Summit and its facilitation. The remaining budget was used to finance the travel costs of delegates for the summit and fund logistical arrangements on site, such as transport and multimedia support. A detailed financial overview is provided in the financial report.



## 5.0 Conclusion

In 2022, we made substantial progress in bringing together the student movement to advance climate justice and sustainability. Some key successes that have contributed to this include: the COP 27 Pre-Summit in Accra, Ghana; the draft of the GSF environmental justice and sustainability policy; the initiation of the Act On Your Climate Science Campaign; the setting up of the GSF Environmental Justice Advisory Board; and the partnerships built within and by the student movement. Some challenges to progressing this work related to mixed levels of engagement by some regional student unions and, therefore, a lack of direct access to relevant contacts in National Student Unions (NSUs); however, we are certain we made good use of what we had and we utilized alternative pathways for engaging key stakeholders.

In 2023, the Environmental Justice team aims to critically reflect on what we could have done better in 2022 and improve the strategic approach. We will consider our challenges and find ways to make them our strengths. Finally, we want to build on what we did in 2022 by harnessing our role as a convener and platform for the student movement to increase its overall impact and contribution to climate justice.





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