

The Club of Rome Global Youth Summit 2020

It is undeniable that we are in the midst of an unprecedented time in global history. Our planetary boundaries are approaching their limits, global economic and financial systems are no longer accessible for many, and the polarization of our political systems is creating mistrust in our governments as a functional avenue to avoid these wicked and intertwined problems that are putting our future at risk.

We often see youth at the forefront of activist approaches through leading protests or petitions, but youth voices are commonly relegated to the sidelines when it comes to crafting policy, excluded by those in positions of power due to their 'lack of wisdom or experience.' These ageist attitudes stigmatize the young (and old), impeding their ability to influence policy and the future of their world. Youth have the most to lose from a future that has failed to consider their perspectives, but they also have the most to gain from being integrated into these conversations to help determine what this future should look like.

Meanwhile, policy is crafted by those who tend to draw upon a set of experiences that don't accurately reflect the lived reality of many in the younger generation. By bringing together both young and old, we all can benefit from sharing wisdom, hopes for the future, and discover how our perspectives and approaches can develop transformative strategies and create a shared perspective. With the Club of Rome's mission to address the "future of humanity and strive to make a difference," it is imperative that all generations are represented and empowered to fulfill this mission. The Club's fifth pillar, "Youth Leadership and Intergenerational Dialogue," is the first step in responding to an overwhelming call from young people to participate in the dialogue. For an organization that convenes a diverse and expert group of government, business, and academic leaders, it also has the obligation to also develop a network of young leaders elevating their voice in consort with these world-renown experts.

Young people are not a homogenous group. Their perspectives and lived experiences differ across cultures, religions, geographic regions, and ethnicities, yet are all connected by their age and the need for collective action to ensure a prosperous future. There is a small set of youth leaders that have gained international recognition, like Greta Thunberg, but there are tens of thousands of Gretas in the world who have not been given the platform. We need to intentionally seek out and welcome diverse participation regardless of socio-economic, cultural, or geographic boundaries ensuring that we capture voices from the margins of society. Therefore, it is not enough to just include a small group of young people charged with representing their entire country or a token young person to speak on behalf of their generation in conversations that dictate their futures.

The inaugural success in the Youth Summit during the 2019 Club of Rome gathering in Cape Town demonstrated that convening a global youth summit through the Club of Rome is not only appropriate but greatly beneficial to all involved. Youth need a formalized space to gather and critically discuss issues of our present and future, find their collective voice, and shape their future. And, in turn, youth leaders can embolden policymakers and international leaders to integrate moral courage and care for future generations into their work.

The purposes of this proposal are to:

1. develop a cohort of global youths' readiness to engage with each other, increasing their ability to genuinely listen, build diverse relationships and their capacity to engage with peers about global issues;
2. provide a structure for youth to use these skills to engage their peers in regional listening sessions;
3. synthesize these findings and submit a formal report to the Club of Rome; and
4. develop a framework on how to initiate a culturally inclusive international and intergenerational dialogue.

This will be done by:

1. Convening a full day session (*proposed for Oct 6th*) for youth to connect and discuss a variety of issues surrounding the Club of Rome's Impact Hub topics;
2. Hosting an intergenerational dialogue between youth and Club of Rome members (*proposed for Oct 7 during the Club of Rome's formal meeting*); and
3. Building the foundation for year-long youth listening sessions engaging youth across the globe.

In more detail, the approach for a Global Youth Summit and Program is four-part:

First, we will convene a full-day session on October 6th. During this day-long session, attendees will meet as a cohort of youth starting to organize a global action network. Underpinning this network is the need for connection with people outside of our regional, ethnic, and demographic comfort zones. We intend to construct a space where our participants can practice cultural humility, share their personal stories, ask each other questions, and be willing to learn and unlearn history that derives our perceptions of each other.

Participants will also participate in small-group roundtable discussions focused on the Club of Rome's Impact Hubs: Climate-Planetary Emergency, Emerging New Civilization, and Economics/Finance. In addition to the Impact Hub discussions, a fourth roundtable discussion will be focused on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. This year has further revealed injustices and inequities, inefficient structures and systems, and global challenges in addressing these systemic issues. From a worldwide outcry surrounding the George Floyd murder to the health disparities made apparent because of COVID-19, a conversation around justice is relevant and critical for today's youth. To conclude the day, all participants will convene for a plenary discussion to summarize the various discussions.

Second, we will convene a two-hour session that converges with the October 7th Club of Rome membership meeting. We hope that this time could be built into the formal Club of Rome agenda so members can participate in an intergenerational dialogue - listening to and seeking to understand youth perspectives on the various Impact Hub topics. The youth attendees will have the opportunity to discuss their fears and hopes for the future, while building off of the previous day's discussions. The Club of Rome members will be asked to bear witness, listening to the youths' concerns, summarize the key takeaways from what they heard, and share these thoughts back with the rest of the Club of Rome members, as well as their own personal and professional networks.

Third, on October 8th, the final installment of the summit will reconvene these youth leaders for regional 2-hour workshops to shape the next steps for our youth peer engagement program. Our goal is to provide our youth leaders a framework for organizing and facilitating meaningful virtual listening sessions for the diverse constituencies within their geographic region. Starting in October 2020 until April 2021, these regional coordinators will coordinate with local schools, non-profits, and other youth development agencies within their country to set up virtual conversations with youth groups. During these sessions, facilitators will listen and understand what the youth have to say about their concerns and aspirations for the future, as well as identify youth leadership triumphs and tribulations in their area.

Lastly, in April 2021, the draft of the listening session report will be given to the Club of Rome members based on the compilation of comments the regional coordinators gathered from the youth they heard from. This report will be finalized by the October 2021 Club of Rome meeting and published as the inaugural Global Youth Report. At this same time, a concrete plan of the continuation of a Club of Rome youth program will be proposed.

Invitation for Feedback & Proposed Next Steps: We welcome any and all feedback and discourse on how to refine specific thematic areas, bring people together, and form spaces that empower youth - rather than tokenize them. We are excited to continue discussing these ideas with people and gaining a global network of leaders to be able to foster this vision into a reality. We are looking forward to hearing feedback from the Club of Rome members on this proposal so that this global youth summit will be impactful not only for youth but for the Club of Rome members as well.

If this proposal is accepted our next steps will be to work closely with the Club of Rome membership to:

- Continue to meet with Club of Rome (and National Association) members, UNESCO Chairs and other relevant University connections to
 - refine the best philosophical and pedagogical approaches for youth engagement;
 - identify and train a regionally diverse cohort of facilitators to serve on a coordinating committee, develop learning outcomes, and act as facilitators for the discussions;
 - and identify general youth participants to attend the summit and coordinate listening sessions for youth in their region
- Finalize and submit a logistical plan (schedule, communications, etc.) for the three-day summit

Contributors to date:

- [Paul Shrivastava](#), Chief Sustainability Officer, Penn State University, and Club of Rome Member
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- [Jill Engle](#), Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Penn State School of Law
- [Sam Richards](#), Teaching Professor of Sociology, Penn State University
- [Chris Uhl](#), Professor of Biology (ret), Penn State University

Potential Future Partners:

- [Network for Education and Research on Peace and Sustainability](#), Hiroshima University (Japan)
- [Indian Institute of Management Shillong](#) (India)
- [Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation](#) (Egypt)
- [Young Enough Ambition](#) (Brazil)
- [Africa Youth for Peace and Development](#) (Sierra Leone)
- [The Global Youth Network](#) (North Africa)
- [Bhutan Youth Development Fund](#) (Bhutan)
- [Young Persons Plan for the Planet](#), Mark Stafford Smith, CSIRO (ret)
- [UNICEF Youth for Climate Action](#)