IACGB Youth Champions

GLOBAL BIOECONOMY SUMMIT 2026

BIOECONOMY YOUTH CHAMPIONS

SECOND YOUTH COMMUNIQUÉ

From a Shared Vision to Collective Action

Global Bioeconomy Summit 2026

Dublin, Ireland | 20–21 October 2026

Young people are not only beneficiaries or consultees — they are partners in co-creating the bioeconomy.

Executive Summary

GBS2024 in Nairobi launched the first IACGB Youth Communiqué. It outlined a shared vision centred on education and inclusive policies, access to resources, collaboration and meaningful youth participation.

Building on two further years of regional engagement and the 2026 Global Youth Survey, this Second Communiqué asks a more practical question: what conditions are needed for young people—already co-creating the bioeconomy—to turn knowledge, ideas and ambitions into action, livelihoods and impact? Our goal is to move from a shared vision to collective action. **We call for action: connect education, finance, participation, markets and local partnerships rather than address them in isolation. We outline five connected priorities:**

01

Youth are already co-creating— now. Enable them to act

Youth are already contributing as researchers, entrepreneurs, farmers, community leaders, innovators and decision-makers. The task is to remove barriers that prevent them from turning participation into action, livelihoods, innovation and influence.

02

Finance alone is not enough.

Finance and resources are major barriers, but they interact with policy and institutional constraints, skills gaps, weak coordination and limited market pathways. Funding has greater impact when linked to mentorship, institutional support, implementation and market access.

03

Skills must lead to real opportunities.

Education and training are essential, but young people need practical pathways from learning and research to incubation, enterprises, value chains, markets, employment and livelihoods. Preparing people to innovate is not enough if the surrounding system cannot absorb their ideas.

04

Youth participation must move from consultation to influence.

Being heard is not the same as shaping decisions. Young people should have structured opportunities to contribute knowledge, co-design solutions and influence policies, programmes and investments, while ensuring participation is accessible to those facing greater financial or professional barriers.

05

Shared global goals need locally grounded pathways.

Regional priorities differ even when underlying challenges are shared. Global cooperation should support exchange, resources and common ambition, while solutions are adapted to local ecosystems, production systems, cultures, knowledge and livelihoods, including rural, indigenous, coastal, freshwater and marine contexts.

1. From a Shared Vision to Collective Action

Bioeconomy as a shared vision

The global transition toward a bioeconomy is no longer a future aspiration; it is a shared responsibility that requires action now. The International Advisory Council on Global Bioeconomy (IACGB) defines the bioeconomy as encompassing the production, utilisation, conservation and regeneration of biological resources, together with related knowledge, science, technology and innovation, to provide sustainable solutions across economic sectors and enable a transformation into a sustainable economy (IACGB, 2024a).

Bioeconomy policy and strategy development is also gaining momentum across countries and regions (Commission, 2025; FAO, 2026; Gardossi *et al*., 2023). **We explicitly recognise terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems as integral contexts for bioeconomy development, reflecting the growing relevance of aquatic resources and the blue economy.**

From 2024 to 2026

Ahead of the GBS2024 in Nairobi, the Bioeconomy Youth Champions (BYC) issued the first Youth Communiqué

A Shared Vision for a Sustainable Global Bioeconomy, representing voices of 18 nationalities. It called for three broad priorities: education and inclusive policies; infrastructure and access to resources; and stronger collaboration across local, regional and global levels (IACGB, 2024b). Two years on, the Global Youth Survey: Solutions for a Sustainable Bioeconomy shows that these priorities remain relevant, while also identifying the conditions that determine whether opportunities can become action.

Why youth matter

> *Young people are essential, not only as future beneficiaries of the bioeconomy but also as active contributors, innovators, researchers, entrepreneurs and decision-makers shaping their future.*

Their meaningful participation can bring new ideas, lived experience and long-term perspectives into the design and implementation of bioeconomy policies (Bartmann *et al*., 2024; Dietershagen & Bammann, 2023; Schlecht *et a*l., 2024; WFF, 2025). Young people also have a large and immediate stake in this transition. In 2024, approximately 1.27 billion people aged 15–24 accounted for nearly 16% of the global population, a number projected to reach 1.35 billion by 2030 (United Nations, 2024). Yet 20.4% of young people aged 15–24 was not in employment, education or training in 2023, with the rate among young women more than twice that among young men (ILO, 2024). These structural inequalities can limit young people's

ability to acquire skills, enter the labour market and contribute to emerging bioeconomy sectors (Mazaraki *et al.*, 2025).

A more evidence-based agenda	Since 2024, youth engagement has grown across agrifood systems, climate action, sustainable livelihoods and territorial development.

Statements from young farmers and other youth networks have highlighted unequal access to land, finance, technology and other resources, as well as the need for meaningful participation in decision-making and stronger local value creation (Foro de Juventudes Montevideo +10, 2023; International Young Farmers' Forum, 2025, 2026; UN Food Systems Coordination Hub, 2025; WFF, 2025). Some of these voices also raise concerns about sovereignty over land, seeds and knowledge, and about whose interests the bioeconomy ultimately serves. We take these concerns seriously: inclusion, equity and local control are essential to the bioeconomy we seek to build.

The BYC's regional workshops and Global Youth Survey build on these experiences by asking young people to identify barriers, explain regional differences and propose practical solutions. In parallel, the Youth Voices for a Bioeconomy Initiative collected perspectives and examples from youth-led and youth-co-organised initiatives worldwide.

Our shared purpose

This Second Communiqué moves from a shared vision toward collective action. We stand for a bioeconomy that is inclusive, participatory, equitable and territorially responsive, grounded in respect for diverse knowledge systems and local realities.

A shared global vision does not imply a single model: implementation must leave room for approaches shaped by different ecosystems, production systems, cultures, resources and societal needs. Young people should not be treated only as future stakeholders or invited simply to contribute their views; they should have meaningful opportunities to learn, create, access resources, enter markets, influence decisions and build solutions in the places where they live and work.

2. What Young People Are Telling Us

Regional workshops and the Global Youth Survey together provide the evidence base for the findings and recommendations in this Communiqué.

How we listened

2025 Four regional workshops	2026 The Global Youth Survey	Survey Reach Eight regional categories
Identified priority challenges, explored underlying barriers and co-developed possible solutions	Collected 156 responses; 142 complete responses were analysed	The largest groups were from Latin America and the Caribbean (55), Sub-Saharan Africa (33), Europe (29) and Asia (14).

How to read the findings

The survey was not statistically representative; the results show shared and context-specific priorities rather than a global measure of youth opinion. The number of responses varied across regions, so regional findings should be read as indicative perspectives rather than representative regional views.

> **The Global Youth Survey highlights a consistent message:** respondents see significant potential in the bioeconomy, but access to opportunities is uneven (**Figure 1).** The barriers they described often reinforce one another, affecting livelihoods, innovation, community resilience and young people's ability to contribute.

Potential exists, but opportunities are uneven. Limited access to finance and resources, gaps in education and skills, and vulnerability to climate-related impacts can prevent young people from turning ideas into action. For communities whose livelihoods depend directly on natural resources, climate change is already changing what can be produced, where and under what conditions.

> *"Climate change affects everyone, but not everyone has the financial resources to adapt."*
>
> **— Survey respondent, Europe**

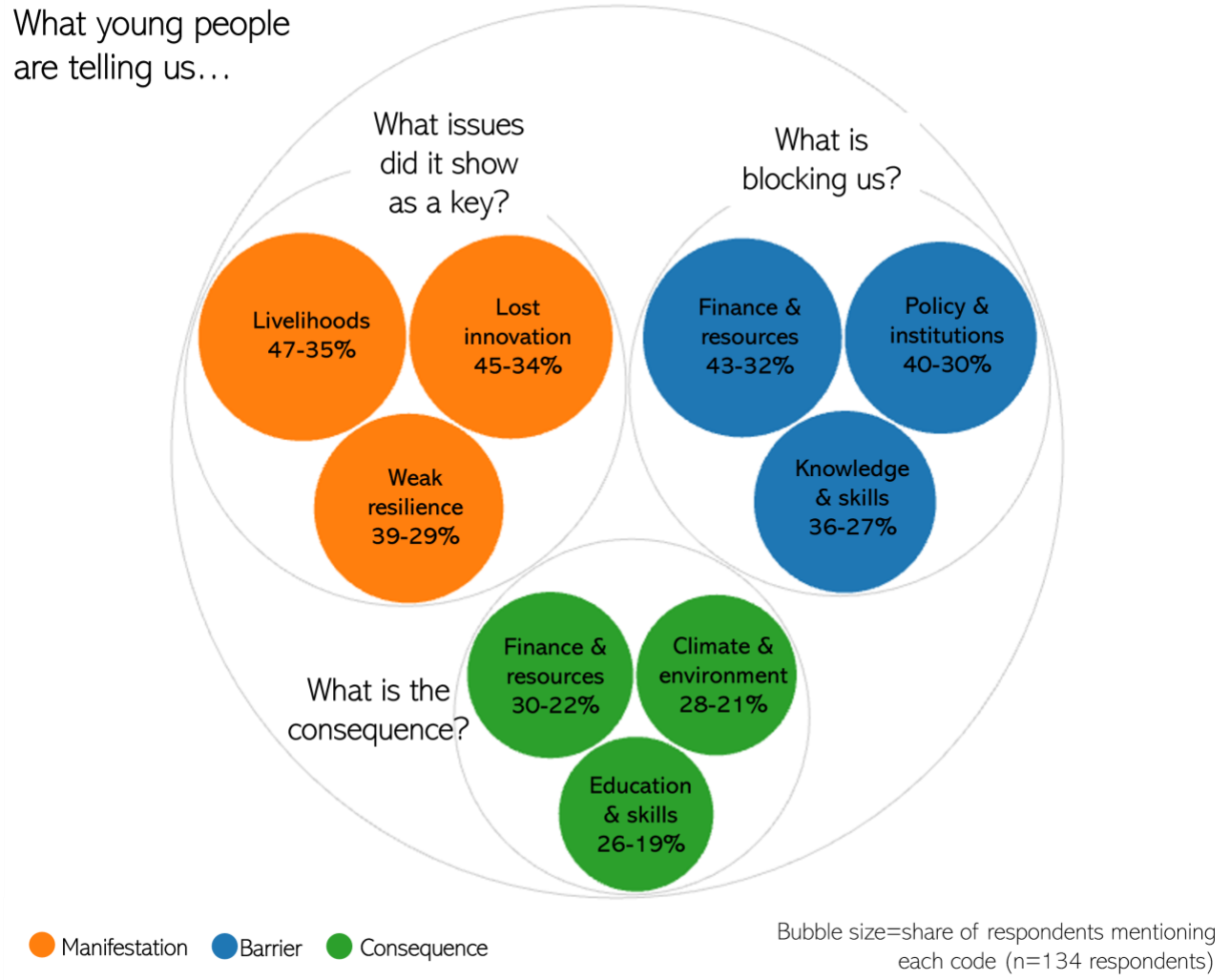

Figure 1. Key themes emerging from the Global Youth Survey

The figure distinguishes manifestations, barriers and consequences identified in the responses

Funding alone is not enough. Limited access to tailored grants, scholarships and startup capital emerged repeatedly as a constraint, but respondents also identified policy and institutional barriers, weak coordination among actors, gaps in knowledge and skills, and difficulties connecting innovation with products and markets. Access to funding does not automatically create an implementation pathway. Young people also need mentorship, institutional support, partnerships, market demand and opportunities to move from prototypes to real-world use.

> *"The lack of financial support can discourage young people from engaging in community initiatives, leading to reduced civic participation, loss of motivation."*
>
> **— Survey respondent, Sub-Saharan Africa**

From training to real opportunity. Education, skills and mentorship remain essential, but what happens after training matters. Young people need pathways connecting learning and research with enterprises, markets, institutions, value chains and livelihoods. Preparing young people to innovate is not enough when the surrounding system offers no way for their ideas to be adopted, purchased or scaled.

> *"Young people are being trained with specific skills, yet there is no concrete integration into the market, finance, and chain links for them."*
>
> **— Survey respondent, Asia**

From being heard to having influence. Respondents distinguished between being invited into discussions and having meaningful influence over outcomes. Participation becomes meaningful when young people can contribute knowledge, challenge established approaches, help design solutions and see their ideas reflected in decisions. Participation itself can also carry costs in time and resources, potentially privileging those who can afford to participate.

> *"Ensuring that youth voices are not only heard but also reflected in actual decisions is key to building trust and sustained participation."*
>
> **— Survey respondent, Asia**

Why context matters

No single bioeconomy pathway will work everywhere. Respondents highlighted rural, coastal, Indigenous and other territorial contexts.	Local production systems, ecosystems, knowledge, culture and genetic resources shape what can realistically be developed. Global cooperation can provide shared direction and exchange, but successful implementation requires adaptation to local realities.

Together, these findings suggests that youth participation cannot be separated from the wider conditions that make participation possible. Young people need access to finance and markets, education and practical pathways, meaningful influence in decisions, and connections across institutions and communities. The message is not simply to create more opportunities for young people within the bioeconomy, but to create the conditions that enable them to shape it and benefit from it.

> *"Define R&D pathways for local food crops that are respectful of local genetic resources and local culture."*
>
> **— Survey respondent, Latin America and the Caribbean**

3. Regional Realities, Shared Priorities

Across regions, respondents identified many of the same challenges, but not always with the same emphasis (Figure 2). The patterns below describe the priorities most frequently selected within each of the four largest respondent groups.

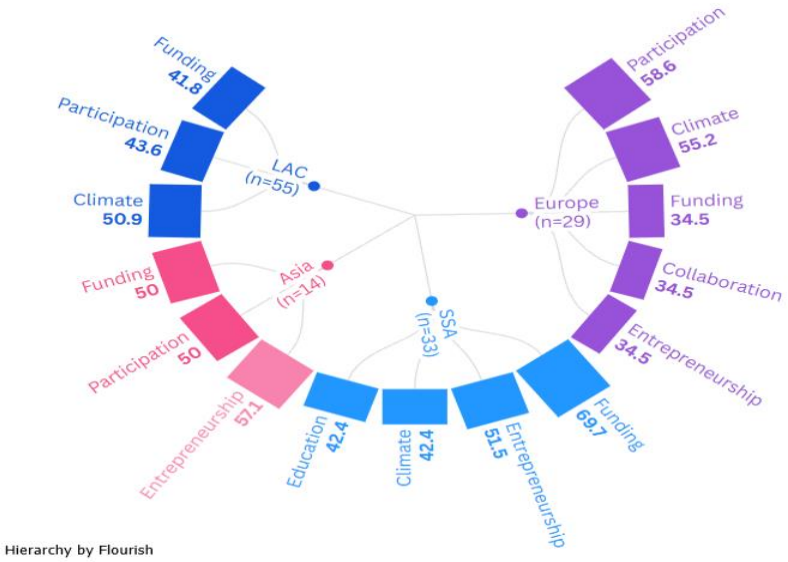

Figure 2. Most frequently selected challenges to youth participation in the bioeconomy by region. Percentages are calculated within each region; respondents could select multiple challenges, so percentages may exceed 100%.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Funding for youth-led initiatives stands out particularly strongly, alongside entrepreneurship and market access.

Europe

Youth participation in decision-making and climate change adaptation are more prominent.

Asia

Entrepreneurship and market access are especially visible.

Latin America & the Caribbean

Climate change adaptation is the leading concern identified by respondents.

> *"Copy things that help in other countries and adapt it in our own country."*
>
> **—Survey respondent, Latin America and the Caribbean**

Regional differences also change what a barrier means in practice. Access to finance may be a common concern, but the surrounding conditions matter: infrastructure and technology, institutional capacity, political commitment, knowledge and evidence, and links between skills, innovation and markets can determine whether finance creates a real opportunity.

Respondents also cautioned against transferring bioeconomy models from one place to another. Global cooperation can support knowledge exchange, finance and partnerships, while regional and local actors shape solutions around their own ecosystems, production systems, cultures, resources and communities.

> *"Access to finance remains very limited. Youth often lack: (a) collateral required by banks; (b) access to tailored financial products; (c) information about funding opportunities."*
>
> **—Survey respondent, Sub-Saharan Africa**

Taken together, the survey supports a global youth agenda that shares direction without prescribing identical pathways. Young people need opportunities to participate, build livelihoods, contribute knowledge and innovation and influence decisions. How these opportunities are created must reflect the institutions, markets, ecosystems, cultures and communities around them.

4. Youth Solutions for a Bioeconomy

Respondents proposed ways forward that connect education, finance, participation, entrepreneurship, collaboration and place-based action **(Figure 3).** The common thread is connecting participation to opportunities to create value.

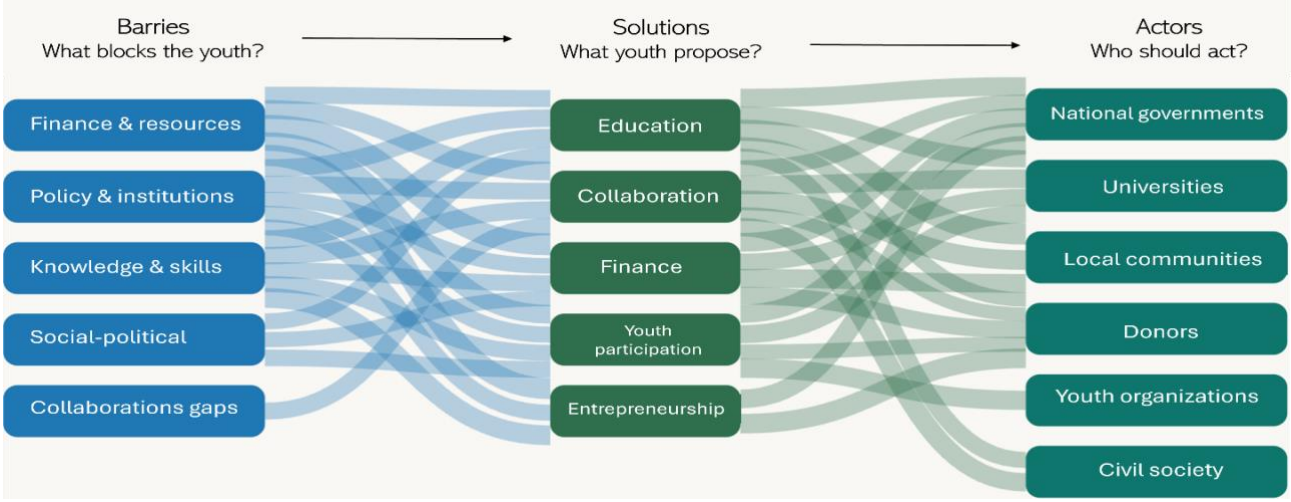

Figure 3. From barriers to action: connecting challenges, proposed solutions and actors.
Connections show how elements identified across responses come together; they do not represent individual causal pathways.

Turn learning into opportunity.

Education and capacity building should be connected to practical experience, mentorship and incubation. Young people also need clear routes from learning and research to enterprises, value chains and local development.

"Develop blended incubation programs (finance + skills + mentorship)."— Survey respondent, Sub-Saharan Africa

Make finance work for young people.

Financial support is more useful when combined with technical assistance, mentorship and pathways to implementation and markets. Financing systems should recognise that young initiatives may lack collateral, established networks or long track records.

Respondents called for financing that youth-led initiatives can realistically access, including tailored grants, scholarships and startup capital.

Move from consultation to shared decision-making.

Young people should have structured opportunities to contribute knowledge, help design solutions and influence policies, programmes and investments. Participation should also be accessible so that financial, professional or practical constraints do not determine whose voices are heard.

"… youth need to be seen as co-creators of the policy as opposed to passive beneficiaries."— Survey respondent, Asia

Connect innovation to markets and livelihoods.

Young entrepreneurs and innovators need opportunities to test products, meet standards, access business support, connect with buyers and participate in value chains. Stronger links between research, incubation, procurement, investment and markets can bridge the gap between an idea and implementation, while enabling communities to benefit from value generated from their biological resources.

"Innovation in incubation to go beyond mere training programs and incorporate market readiness initiatives such as product standardization, pricing policy, certification services, and face-to-face buying and selling experiences."— Survey respondent, Asia

Build partnerships around local realities.

Many solutions require different actors to work together. Governments can create enabling policies and programmes; universities and research institutions can connect knowledge with application; communities can ground solutions in local realities; donors and investors can unlock resources; and youth organisations and civil society can connect young people with decision-makers and opportunities.

Partnerships should reflect territorial diversity, including rural, Indigenous, coastal, island, freshwater and marine contexts. International cooperation can add value when it supports adaptation and exchange rather than replacing locally grounded approaches.

"Promote a sustainable bioeconomy, based on scientific knowledge, local knowledge of farmers, foresters, and public and private support to leverage bioeconomy products."— Survey respondent, Europe

Build resilience where climate pressures are already felt.

Climate change is already reshaping what can be produced, where and how. Youth initiatives in the bioeconomy should support adaptation and resilience by strengthening local responses and drawing on relevant local and Indigenous knowledge. Finance, research and partnerships can help communities adapt to changing conditions.

Taken together, these proposals show why isolated interventions are unlikely to be enough. Training needs routes to finance and markets; finance needs support and connections;

participation needs influence; innovation needs routes to implementation; and global cooperation needs local grounding. **The task is to build these connections deliberately so that young people can turn knowledge, ideas and local resources into lasting economic, social and environmental value.**

5. A Common Agenda for Action

The survey findings point to sharing responsibilities across the bioeconomy. No single actor can resolve the barriers identified by respondents. What is needed is coordinated action that connects learning and ideas to implementation, livelihoods and impact.

Challenge	What needs to change	Who should act
Uneven opportunities	Increase access to education, finance and practical pathways, especially for youth-led initiatives that face barriers to conventional support.	**Governments and public institutions**: accessible education and youth-focused financing. **Universities and youth organisations**: outreach, mentorship and engagement pathways.
Climate vulnerability	Strengthen place-based resilience and adaptation where climate pressures affect livelihoods, production and participation.	**Regional and local authorities**: resilience and prevention planning. **Communities, researchers and international partners**: knowledge exchange and adaptation networks.
Limited implementation pathways	Connect skills, research and ideas to institutions, standards, finance, enterprises and real markets.	**Universities and research institutions**: incubation and applied partnerships. **Private sector and investors**: testing, procurement, standards, certification and market access.
Youth participation without influence	Move from consultation toward structured participation in policy and programme design, implementation and review.	**Governments, international organisations and the IACGB**: sustained youth mechanisms with clear routes for influence. **Youth organisations**: representation and accountability.
Regional diversity	Develop common direction while adapting strategies to local ecosystems, cultures, resources and livelihoods.	**Governments and regional actors**: place-based strategies. **Academia, private sector, civil society and youth organisations**: interdisciplinary and intergenerational collaboration.

These recommendations are interconnected. Education without opportunity, finance without pathways, participation without influence, or innovation without markets cannot fully address the barriers identified through the survey.

6. The Time to Act Is Now

The evidence from the past two years gives us a clear message: young people are ready to contribute to the bioeconomy, but willingness and ideas alone are not enough. The next step is to build the pathways that make participation possible — accessible education, appropriate finance, meaningful decision-making, connections to markets and value chains, and partnerships grounded in local realities. We call for a bioeconomy in which young people are not only beneficiaries, consultees or future stakeholders, but active partners in shaping what comes next. The time to act is now.

Our key message

Young people are not only beneficiaries or consultees — they are partners in co-creating the bioeconomy.

7. Acknowledgements & Contributors

This Communiqué was developed collaboratively by the Bioeconomy Youth Champions, drawing on regional consultations, the Global Youth Survey, and contributions from youth-led initiatives. The editorial and writing team comprised the following members: Jose Alvarado Vargas, Ana Del Hierro Calvachi, Nicolás Domke Venegas, Isabella Garcia Caffaro, Carolina Huertas Bernal, Johann Liebeton, Jerome Ramirez, Bertha Shifeta, Kosuke Shiraishi, Absalom Iyeleka Shitalangaho, George William Ssendagala, Liza Vernyuy Kengran, Sandra García Jácome, Lorena Diaz Fernández de Quincoces, and Kunle Ademikanra, who contributed to the dissemination of the Global Youth Survey, the writing, review and editing of the Communiqué, and the development of the Youth Initiatives, including the accompanying video.

We gratefully acknowledge all other youth-led organisations, youth leaders, institutions, and individuals who supported survey dissemination, regional engagement, youth initiatives, and the preparation of this Communiqué.

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