

Takeways from the Youth Climate Summit

Youth Climate Summit: A Convening of Global Solidarity

By Mayumi Sato, Green Ticket winner from Japan



Photo: UNIC Tokyo

On September 20th, hundreds of young people convened at the UN Headquarters in New York City in search of solidarity and space to voice their concerns on the climate crisis. The Youth Action Summit gathered young activists, students, entrepreneurs, and scholars from around the world seeking to ignite a new movement of climate action.

As the media swarmed around the premises to deliver international coverage of the Summit, the real energy was brewing inside. Youth hailing from Poland to India pitched tech-based solutions on the potential of data storage and media applications in solving today's climate challenges. Southeast Asian activists asserted the importance of championing young women as solution-bearers to climate change. Young people from the Island States called for international solidarity, underscoring the disproportionate burden their countries carry from the climate crisis.

While leaders of our countries spoke of national efforts undertaken to mitigate climate change during the General Assembly, young leaders often spoke about the collaboration between countries and people required to address the crisis. This embodies the essence of youth-led approach to climate action - seeing beyond geographical borders and the politics between them in understanding that without full cooperation, grave consequences emanating from our inaction is imminent.

From my participation at the Summit, I learned that the solution to the climate crisis is not a linear one. Addressing climate change through nature-based solutions, feminist leadership, sports and entertainment, grassroots activism, and political advocacy marked some of the multi-faceted and intersectional ways in which I observed young people mobilise for environmental justice. Through this approach, young people are also unpacking other structural issues that are exacerbated by climate change and plague our society, such as racism, classism, ageism, and gender inequality.

So what are the expectations for the future? Young people have called upon world leaders, knowledge producers, and policymakers to respond to youth on the frontlines of climate action. We have made it clear that climate action is not simply a "hot topic" in the development lexicon or an issue of ephemeral interest. There is no more room for denial, complicit behaviour, and inaction, and youth are leading the way in proving this.