

EU-Caribbean Partnership

Meet the Leaders

Civil Society and Youth Forum

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Joint Recommendations

On the 28 and 29 May 2024, a group of 40 youth and civil society organisation representatives from across the Caribbean region participated in the EU-Caribbean ‘Meet the Leaders’ Civil Society and Youth Forum. Hosted in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, the event sought to strengthen the EU-Caribbean Partnership through a constructive dialogue on youth and civil society recommendations. The first day’s schedule included four breakout sessions designed to develop recommendations in priority areas identified by the group through a preparatory exercise. After achieving consensus on these recommendations, youth and civil society representatives presented their conclusions to the EU Commissioner for International Partnerships, Ms Jutta **Urpilainen** and the Dominican Republic’s Minister of Economic Affairs, Planning and Development, Mr Pavel **Isa Contreras**.

The group presented the following recommendations across four areas. These areas were selected following a consultation process among all participants:

1. Environmental Sustainability and Climate Resilience

- *Promote economic growth while preserving the environment in alignment with the Minamata Convention and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), by:*
 - Investing in and supporting local and inclusive innovation projects and proposals.
 - Using waste metals and long-lasting products to manufacture industrial materials such as lumber, blocks, and tiles for infrastructure, adhering to the Basel Convention’s guidelines on hazardous waste management and disposal.
 - Ensuring the abolition of slavery practices in rural settings across the Caribbean region.
 - Incentivising R&D and accelerating the establishment of new industries that use and/or leverage climate issues as opportunities, like sargassum seaweed, specifically when these have a global use potential.
- *Provide incentives to curb global greenhouse gas emissions through promoting new green and blue ocean industries, creating sustainable jobs, and stimulating economic development, by:*
 - Offering incentives to invest in the Caribbean region through sustainable climate practices.
 - Providing donations, rather than loans, and provide friendly capital to local entrepreneurs, to address natural disasters and climate change impacts.
 - Incentivising the adoption of local climate innovations through tax elimination on renewable energy sources, such as solar panels, and on the importation of low-carbon

emission vehicles, in accordance with the Paris Agreement's goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

- *Integrate climate sustainability as a core element of education in OACPS countries, by:*
 - Incorporating climate sustainability into school curricula to promote regional development.
 - Using education to empower the climate movement and support environmental initiatives, focusing on organisational instruments like NGOs, and providing scholarships for local tertiary environmental programmes.
 - Investing in and supporting mission-driven special projects and competitions to foster environmental innovation.
- *Ensure that environmental agreements remain consistent and effective despite political changes by including clauses in agreements to prevent modifications due to political changes, and lobby for the incorporation of multilateral environmental agreements into relevant domestic law.*

2. Human and Social Issues, Gender Equality, Justice and Inequalities

- *Provide a comprehensive sexuality education to young people, by:*
 - Supporting Caribbean countries in developing a curriculum taught by experts in schools, including by strengthening the Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) curriculum.
 - Enabling advocacy about sexual health by providing information to organisations that work in sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- *Strengthen the inclusion of men in policies for gender equality and increase cooperation projects that target the role of men in society and address the misnomers, misconceptions and misguided ideologies associated with masculinity, in order to promote a whole-of-society transformation that ensures men are allies of gender equality.*
- *Guarantee the use of data and evidence in decision-making processes to promote equality, by:*
 - Ensuring that data used is available and accessible to the public.
 - Providing funding to conduct research and evidence-based data collection to relevant stakeholders, such as public entities, civil society organizations, think tanks and universities, to promote the production of more and better-quality data.
 - Disaggregating data at the local level, as well as by gender, age and other relevant characteristics, to enable targeted policy-making, and prioritise funding for inclusive communication in data sharing (such as data visualisation and social media data summaries).
- *Empower citizens to be agents of change through access to information and education to enable their equal participation in society, by:*

- Developing systems and channels for young people to understand public processes that are presented in a digestible and open format, paying careful consideration to young people who not have specific training in public affairs or administration, who should receive training in this regard.
- Conducting needs assessments on the degree of literacy of the general public on issues that affect them to target awareness-raising campaigns.
- Building their capacities to participate in public policy-making, including through innovative means such as social media channels.

3. Youth Empowerment, Education and Health

- *Operationalise peer-to-peer support for young people to empower them, by:*
 - Mobilising their networks together in order to build common views on challenges that affect them.
 - Providing an enabling environment for young people to organise themselves and share their views with decision makers.
- *Moving beyond box-ticking exercises to meaningful action through:*
 - Recognising the importance of involving young people beyond only mere consultation.
 - Considering youth views carefully and implementing them with sustainable and transparent action plans.
- *Guarantee the right to health by:*
 - Recognising that the right to health and access to healthcare is fundamental and universal right for all.
 - Developing healthcare systems and facilities that are a safe space for young people and all population groups to gain treatment and care in a setting without stigma.
 - Supporting the development of health policies to ensure that health care professionals have clear guidelines to follow in their work.
 - Urging that Caribbean citizens have access to information on good nutrition practices, with education systems promoting these sustainable practices, including through the presence of trained nutritionists in school facilities.
- *Recognise that education is a fundamental right for all, and foster standardisation in education systems by:*
 - Reducing inequalities between public and private education establishments in order to bridge social, digital and gender gaps.
 - Increasing funding for STEM programs in schools to acquire modern equipment, develop updated curricula, and support the professional development of teachers in this field.
 - Widening the education lens beyond traditional academia by promoting vocational education and training for the Caribbean region, and engaging in communication campaigns to remove stigma around technical subjects outside traditional education routes.

4. Economic Growth, Trade and Jobs

- *Increase direct support for agriculture and rural development in the Caribbean, focusing on empowering producers to enhance their productivity and economic impact while adapting to new EU environmental and organic regulations, by:*
 - Providing technical assistance and equipping producers with the tools and resources necessary to become more competitive and adapt to market demands.
 - Developing high-end products from local crops that meet EU regulatory standards, retaining wealth within these communities, fostering economic growth and stability.
 - Providing grants and other technical support to cooperation projects that create value-added products from local crops, or that communicate or incorporate local science and technology research or inventions towards product innovations.

- *Implement policies and programs that create employment opportunities for youth in the Caribbean, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, technology, and trade, while also promoting research and innovation for sustainable development, by:*
 - Developing tailored training programs that align with market needs, fostering entrepreneurship, and creating pathways for young people to contribute to economic growth.
 - Fostering a culture of innovation to help Caribbean nations develop unique competitive advantages in the global market, including by inclusively communicating opportunities for innovation from local or regional science and technology research inventions.
 - Training the local workforce to use advanced technologies and encouraging innovative approaches that blend traditional knowledge with modern techniques, ensuring sustainability and resilience against industrial and environmental challenges.

- *Adapt trade agreements to better fit the specific economic and cultural contexts of Caribbean countries and invest in enhancing inter-Caribbean trade and transportation infrastructure to boost regional economic capacity and integration, by:*
 - Breaking down trade barriers and ensuring that agreements are flexible enough to support the unique agricultural and economic conditions of each country.
 - Implementing effective dispute resolution mechanisms to effectively remove trade barriers that impede the true spirit of the EPA.
 - Strengthening maritime and air transportation within the Caribbean can facilitate easier trade between Caribbean nations, fostering regional economic development.
 - Investing in inter-Caribbean connections through the Global Gateway, to create a more integrated and resilient Caribbean economy.

- *Enhance access to education and scholarships for Caribbean youth to ensure they are adequately trained and prepared for future opportunities, by:*
 - Providing more scholarships and educational resources to help bridge the training gap faced by young people in the Caribbean.

- Empowering them to pursue higher education and improve their competitiveness in the international market, ultimately contributing to the region's overall economic growth.

The EU-Caribbean CSO-Youth Forum held in Santo Domingo on the 28th and 29th of May 2024 concluded with a set of robust recommendations reflecting the voice of youth and civil society representatives in the region. These recommendations, aimed at enhancing the EU-Caribbean partnership, emphasised the necessity for greater youth engagement in decision-making processes, a commitment to the rule of law and human rights, and a steadfast commitment to environmental sustainability. Key points included fostering economic opportunities and job creation, improving access to quality education and healthcare, and ensuring that trade policies support sustainable development. The forum's collaborative efforts resulted in a comprehensive set of recommendations presented to the EU Commissioner for International Partnerships and the Dominican Republic's Minister of Economic Affairs, Planning and Development, highlighting the critical role of an inclusive and transparent governance framework that prioritises the needs and potential of the Caribbean's youth and civil society groups in shaping a resilient and prosperous future.

