

Cancun 9 December 2010 – As the UN climate conference is entering its final days, children from Latin America and Indonesia reminded delegates of what climate change and increased disaster risks means for their daily lives.

‘I am 14 years old, and in my short life I already experienced fourteen hurricanes and countless floods -- also the earthquake the last January.,’ said Coralie, ‘It is too much.’

Fourteen year old Coralie is a UNICEF climate ambassador from Haiti, one of four young people sponsored by UNICEF to attend the Cancun climate conference in order to sound the alarm and share their experiences with government representatives, youth activists, and media.

Coralie spoke alongside other young people in a panel discussion with Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and President of Realizing Rights, Yvo de Boer, former Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and Helena Molin-Valdés, Deputy Director of the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR). The panel was co-organized by the Children in a Changing Climate Coalition (CCC), a network of organizations promoting child-led climate action of which UNICEF is a member.

Climate leaders noted that children are the primary victims of climate change and can be key contributors to creating a low-carbon and sustainable future.

‘I believe children have a more profound understanding of the climate change issue than adults,’ said Mary Robinson. ‘They have the right perspective. They are thinking 100 years ahead. They are thinking way beyond 2050.’

Yvo de Boer reaffirmed that children should have a more prominent role in the discussions on climate change and asked them to make their voices heard loud and clearly. Calling children ‘the conscience of the process’ he said ‘We need to keep reminding ministers what they are negotiating about – the lives of children and young people.’

Access to education and information were identified as fundamental in equipping young people to meet this challenge. Helena Molin-Valdés also encouraged children to use new technologies and networking capabilities to create a broad united front. She highlighted the importance of national and local action with which children can impact local governance.

The Climate Ambassadors provided good examples of such initiatives: Ana-Lucia, 17, from Bolivia runs an environmental radio programme targeted at children; Wendolyn, 17, from Mexico, participates in a mangrove restoration initiative in a highly-polluted zone of the country; and Walter, 12, from Belize, plants trees. Coralie, from Port-au-Prince, together with UNICEF Climate Ambassadors from Canada and Morocco founded EcoHaiti, a campaign to rebuild Haiti in a sustainable manner.

Robinson urged UNICEF and others to continue to provide platforms for engagement of children and youth on climate change.

“It will help the climate debate as a whole and it will change the narrative,” she said. “If we have more children’s voices, children’s stories, children’s actions, we will understand that the climate issue is not just about finance, the environment and glaciers melting in the distance. We need to hear more about people and particularly those most affected, and that means children.”

Source: [UNICEF](#)

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