Educating for Resilience

Universities Driving Global Climate Action

UNFCCC COP31 Side Event, 17 November 2026, 15:00 – 16:30
Antalya, Türkiye - Blue Zone, Room 6

Online: https://unfccc.int/cop31/virtual-meeting-platform

Organizers: Union for the Mediterranean – Mediterranean Universities Union – UNIMED; Heliopolis University for Sustainable Development (Egypt); Monash University (Australia); Office for Climate Education - French Meteorological Society (France); Yale Student Environmental Coalition (USA).

This side event presents higher education as a driver of resilience, connecting curricula, campus practice, and community engagement to the COP31 agenda.

The session is anchored in two items of the COP agenda: Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) and the Climate Action Education 2035 milestone, referenced in a recent letter from the COP presidency. The milestone extends beyond climate literacy to skills and leadership, which allows higher education to be framed as preparation of young people to make a difference.

Partner contributions span a broad spectrum of action, from **transforming higher education curricula** and **strengthening campus infrastructure** to **supporting sustainable community development**. Their impact becomes particularly tangible when campuses are framed not merely as educational facilities, but as living laboratories and community hubs where innovation, civic engagement, and resilience-building converge. In this sense, universities can play a pivotal role in translating knowledge into action and supporting local responses to climate and sustainability challenges.

The discussion will also incorporate two complementary perspectives. First, climate education must be approached as a **continuum that bridges secondary and tertiary education**, ensuring a coherent progression of knowledge, skills, and values throughout the learning journey. Second, **efforts should extend beyond the higher education sector itself**. At a time when climate-related issues are increasingly affected by misinformation and political polarization, universities have a responsibility to engage wider audiences, foster public understanding, and strengthen trust in science. Achieving meaningful impact will require collaboration not only within academia, but also with schools, civil society, policymakers, and local communities.

Agenda

Opening Remarks

- **Fadi Hajali**, Secretary General, Union for the Mediterranean
- **Marcello Scalisi**, Director, Mediterranean Universities Union- UNIMED (online)

Moderation: **João Lobo**, Project Analyst, Union for the Mediterranean
Rapporteur: **Laila Ayman**, Head of Research and Innovation Support Unit, Heliopolis University for Sustainable Development, Egypt

Round 1: Education for Resilience

Curricula and climate literacy; skills and leadership in line with the 2035 milestone; transition from secondary to tertiary education.

- **Abdelhamid El-Zoheiry**, Founding President and Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Heliopolis University for Sustainable Development, Egypt
- **Benjamin Quesada**, Dean and Climatologist, Universidad del Rosario, Colombia
- **Guy Jackson**, Senior Lecturer, Centre for Pacific Action for Climate Transitions, Monash University, Australia
- **Emily Khym**, Student, Yale Student Environmental Coalition, USA
- **Djian Sadadou**, Head of International Relations and Communications, Office for Climate Education, France

Round 2: Campuses and Communities

Campuses as spaces to engage local communities and build resilience; community development and rural programs; the role of youth in governance and action; accountability and mobilization of resources, with indicators and benchmarking; infrastructure examples.

- **Ahmed Elshazly**, Vice-President for Community Development and Partnereships, Heliopolis University for Sustainable Development, Egypt
- **Taban Malihi**, Student, Yale Student Environmental Coalition, USA
- **Julia Bekin**, Founding Director of ARANDU, Monash University, Australia
- **Adil Salhi**, Coordinator of UNIMED's Subnetwork Climate and Environmental Change and the Euromed University Initiative for Climate Action, Abdelmalek Essadi University, Morocco

Language: English only

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