



## **Civil Society Representatives Stand in Solidarity with and Support Fridays For Future Global Student Strikes**

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

*For Immediate Release*

**Thursday 14 March** - Decades of dependence on a carbon-based economy has produced grave injustices on a global scale. Our children, grandchildren and the many vulnerable communities and species on the planet now have to carry the burden of a crisis that they have not caused. The youth are forced to act like grown-ups.

Faced with government inaction despite the stark warnings from scientists to act, young people chose to leave school to confront a system that failed us all, but particularly those with the least power. Years of empty promises to address the climate emergency have created intergenerational mistrust. Our children and grandchildren don't trust us as adults, citizens, business people and politicians.

Around the world, young people are taking to the streets to reclaim a safe future. They are not alone in this fight. They have inspired us to join them in saying: no, our future is not for sale and governments must ensure that fossil fuels are kept in the ground.

We will exert all efforts to guarantee their victory. This newly generated grassroots power is putting the last nail in the coffin of the fossil fuel industry and advocating for true, rights- and evidence-based solutions to climate change. It is essential that governments act on climate and work with vulnerable communities to protect them from dangerous warming while we ensure ecosystems can thrive and restore. The science is clear we must move faster to avoid catastrophe by decarbonizing the economy, cutting emissions by half by 2030 to reach zero emissions by 2050.

We, the members of civil society, stand in solidarity with students worldwide demanding climate justice. We shall relentlessly support their effort until they meet the success of their struggle through concrete government action to resolve the climate emergency.

## Quotes:

### **Manuel Pulgar-Vidal, leader of WWF's global climate and energy practice said:**

“We should all be showing solidarity with the inspiring actions being taken by young people all over the world. Whether it is the school strikes and street marches demanding climate action, or young people who are suing their governments over climate change, the youth are demanding that we stop stealing their future. As Swedish youth activist Greta Thunberg said at COP24, 'we are running out of time. Change is coming whether you like it or not.' It is young people like her that are challenging us to show that change is possible, and we must rise to the challenge.”

### **May Boeve, Executive Director 350.org said:**

“The thing with the climate crisis, that these children know is: it’s not going anywhere. Change is coming whether we like it or not, so we have to face up to the choices we can make in order to avoid the worst case scenarios of climate change. We can shape those changes to benefit our communities and humanity as a whole.

The time to do so is now. We should not have needed our children to take to the streets to realise that. But it has come to that.

So right now, we need to join these young people. The real impact begins when we (adults) use our power, join in and don’t just applaud from the sidelines.”

### **Josianne Gauthier, Secretary General, CIDSE – Together for Global Justice said:**

“As leaders within civil society, used to speaking with decision-makers, we need to stand by and march along with the young people who have taken to the streets. It’s a matter of coherence, intergenerational justice, and legitimacy. We must allow ourselves to be swept up in the real emotion of their impatience and their hope. They are reminding us that talk is not enough, and that action, and sometimes reaction is required. The change is here and they are leading it. For once, we just need to listen and do what is right.”

### **Kyle Meyaard-Schaap, National Organizer and Spokesperson, Young Evangelicals for Climate Action said:**

“Kids shouldn’t have to worry about whether they’ll have a safe and productive world when they grow up. Yet decades of inexcusable political intransigence and cynical pursuit of profit from the adults in the room have left them no choice. In the age of climate change, we can add our children’s innocence to the laundry list of sacrifices offered on the altar of greed.

The moral clarity if these courageous children is a gift. When few others are, they are leading with energy, creativity, and hope, and they deserve our full support. Their actions honor God the Creator, they honor their neighbors hard hit by climate impacts, and they honor themselves and generations to come. May our leaders have the courage to see them and to respond.

May we all have the courage to see them and to respond.”

**Bridget Burns, Director, Women’s Environment and Development Organization, said:**

“WEDO stands in solidarity with the thousands of inspiring young people, in all their diversity and from all over the world, as they continue their unwavering quest for environmental justice. The current state of the climate crisis and its impacts are a clear threat to the future of humanity and our planet, and as advocates for environmental integrity, we proudly join these fearless, powerful voices - including many amazing young women leaders - as they continue to push for real action from governments and decision-makers at the frontlines. We must continue to collectively rise up across all generations, and vigorously fight for change.”

**Caroline Kende-Robb, Executive Director for CARE International, said:**

“The worsening impacts of climate change threaten us all, especially the next generation. Will leaders act now or continue to ignore the climate crisis as youth protests and school walkouts ripple across the globe? CARE joins their fight and Greta Thunberg’s criticism of leaders’ inaction on climate change. Our children have made climate action a priority, and we must heed their call.”

**Sanjeev Kumar, CEO & Founder of Change Partnership, said:**

“Young people around the world are highlighting the grave injustice of inadequate action and empty rhetoric which has blighted meaningful action on climate change for decades. We stand with them in the struggle to stop polluters polluting and defending the rights of victims everywhere.”

**Nouhad Awwad, National Coordinator, Arab Youth Climate Movement-Lebanon, said:**

“AYCM as a grassroots movement run by youth urge policymakers to take immediate actions to raise climate ambitions. We will be protesting in Lebanon on the 15th of March to say that our children in schools deserve a better future. School strikes are an awareness tool for our fellow people and an alert for leaders to go in line with the Paris Agreement. Greta Thunberg said “We will have to go for a very, very long time, I think” and we are ready to go with her in the climate action road.”

**Wendel Trio, Director of Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe, said:**

“The strikes make it clear to leaders that they need to take ambitious and immediate action. EU leaders meeting next week simply cannot ignore this powerful call to address the climate crisis. They need to work towards taking a decision on reducing greenhouse gas emissions to net zero as soon as possible, and massively scaling up emission cuts by 2030. If leaders harness the momentum for more climate action that the youth create, we will still be able to avoid the most devastating impacts of climate change.”

**Carroll Muffett, President, Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL), said:**

“Children around the world are standing up and speaking out on climate change because they must. Their rights, their lives and their future are at stake—as are the rights, lives, and future of all of us. While the US President tweets climate denial, the Speaker of the House dismisses the Green New Deal as a dream, and the countries and companies most responsible for climate change embrace inertia over ambition, children around the world are taking action. They are leaving classrooms, entering courtrooms, and taking to the streets. That is where they belong until the world takes the urgent and meaningful climate action that is needed. It’s where we all

belong. CIEL is proud to stand in solidarity with their efforts and follow their leadership. We urge those in office—or seeking office—to do the same.”

**Hannah Mowat, Campaigns Coordinator, Fern, said:**

"Today Fern's offices are closed in solidarity with the tens of thousands of young people who are taking to the streets to protest against politicians' frightening lack of action on climate change. Their demand is simple: governments must act on the irrefutable science, and that science is clear: without forest protection and restoration, climate change will be impossible to stop."

**Nick Mabey, CEO, E3G (Third Generation Environmentalism), said:**

“Politicians have a duty to represent everyone's interests not just those who vote for them. They must listen to the unprecedented voice of young people who are striking so that for their future has its rightful place at the decision making table. Politicians should also realise that they and their parties are now under scrutiny by the next generation of voters, who will remember who stood up for their rights and their safety in this critical time.”

**Floris Faber, Director, ACT Alliance Advocacy to the European Union, said:**

"Youth are leading the way, and the world should follow suit. Climate change is a devastating threat to us all. This is especially true for poor and vulnerable communities, who are already facing the effects of climate change. Severe droughts, floods and destructive hurricanes are jeopardizing the development we all want to see. The multilateral response on climate change must include both transition towards a green and sustainable economy, and urgent support for adaptation, to increase communities' resilience. There is no time to waste!"

**David Howell, Climate and Energy lead at SEO/BirdLife in Spain, said:**

“Our youth are our future, and their protests are showing us the path we need to follow to guarantee them their future, in what is their century. Across Spain the number of planned student protests has increased tenfold in two weeks, and we expect more in the coming weeks and months. Their message is crystal clear and should be at the forefront of the thinking of any serious politician in a key election year for Spain. In purely selfish terms, a political party which wants the support of younger voters must have a clear, coherent and ambitious programme for the future of the economy in the fight against climate change.”

**Jagoda Munic, Director of Friends of the Earth Europe, said:**

“The young people on strike today speak with the authenticity of those whose lives will be dominated by climate breakdown, a crisis they did not cause.

Climate change still feels distant to many – but it is close to home for the youth taking action today. Their demands for real, massive and immediate action for a fossil-free society must be heard. Friends of the Earth gives them our full support.

“If decision makers were to act in line with youth climate strikers' demands, they would be tripling our renewable energy goals, shutting off trade deals with climate deniers, and switching finance off fossil fuels to the fossil-free future we need.”

**Øyvind Eggen, Director for Rainforest Foundation Norway, said:**

“All parent generations have called for the younger generations to take responsibility, and history tells us they do. We are in a unique moment in history when the young ones not only take responsibility for their own time and their future, but also struggle to compensate for several previous generations’ wrongdoing. It is sad for the elder generations that they have to, but extremely encouraging to see that they are picking up the fight. And it is a very strong message to our generation: To make it possible at all for the young to take responsibility for the world, we must stop emissions now and save the remaining rainforests, so we have something to hand over to them.”

**Alden Meyer, Director of Strategy and Policy Union for Concerned Scientists, said:**

“We stand in solidarity with student climate strikers around the world, and support their demand that our political leaders address the climate crisis with the urgency and focused action that the science so clearly requires. We are inspired by their moral clarity, and are hopeful that their actions will help drive the transformational changes that are needed to come to grips with the climate crisis.”

**Sanjay Vashist, Director, Climate Action Network South Asia, said:**

“Future leaders of this world refuse to watch the destruction of planet. Climate change today threatens the sustainable needs of the present and future generations. These needs should be dealt with urgency, but leaders today are driven by vested interests and have failed in decision making. Strikes by school students is among the most effective ways to demand for a secure future for the next generation that can only be ensured by today's leaders.”

**Nithi Nesadurai, Regional Coordinator, Climate Action Network Southeast Asia, said:**

“We fully empathise with the strike actions of school students. They have been completely let down by our political leaders, at the global and national levels, entrusted with the responsibility of safeguarding their future against climate change. As current leaders have wholly failed in their duty and still do not display any sign of urgency this crisis demands, it is only natural that students fill the vacuum created by seizing the leadership on addressing climate change which forecasts a bleak future for them in particular. We salute the students’ vision and determination and hope their actions are finally able to break the impasse and lethargy displayed by current leaders and bring about the dynamic changes required to tackle the climate crisis head on.”