

20 to attend COP28 climate talks under initiative to groom young green advocates

Cheryl Tan

A group of climate advocates in the making met Minister for Sustainability and the Environment Grace Fu on Saturday to discuss a wide range of topics, including domestic and international climate policies.

Aged 18 to 35, the 40 young people form the inaugural cohort of a six-month climate youth development programme launched by the Government in July.

The initiative aims to groom and empower sustainability champions by building their knowledge and skills, and giving them access to policymakers, climate change

advocates and experts, key events and platforms.

The programme is co-led by the Ministry of Sustainability and the Environment (MSE), the National Climate Change Secretariat and the National Youth Council.

“We found that, over the years, there has been a lot of youth energy in advocating for the environment and many other related causes,” Ms Fu told the media after the fireside chat with the group at the Halogen Foundation in Smith Street on Saturday.

“We thought that it’s a great opportunity for us to find areas where we can co-create... with youth advocates. But in order to do that, they need (a better) understanding of our policies and our national context.” This will allow them to have more meaningful discussions with policymakers, she said.

The initiative included an immersive five-day workshop in July where the youth were introduced to topics such as the Singapore Green Plan, energy transition and the United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP) climate summits. It also included learning journeys to Jurong Island and Sungei Buloh.

The programme has allowed youth to engage with Singapore’s climate change negotiators, policymakers and other experts from both the public and private sectors.

Twenty of the young people have been selected as delegates to attend the upcoming COP28 conference in Dubai in 2023.

“The chosen delegates represent a diverse mix of youth who are interested and have a good understanding of climate change and sustainability issues, as well as a keen interest to give back to the

wider community, whether through their individual or professional capacities,” said MSE.

Among them is Yale-NUS environmental studies major Hannah Ng, 23, who expressed hope that attending the conference with like-minded young people and witnessing international climate action will ignite a fresh sense of empowerment when it comes to her work in Singapore.

“There’s a lot of discussion about the importance of climate action at a large scale, and a push for systemic change. So I’m hoping to see a lot of that happening both on a country level and an international level,” said Ms Ng, who co-chairs the Inter-University Environmental Coalition.

The organisation, which comprises environmental groups from six local universities, hopes to

bring together a larger, diverse collective of young people to exchange ideas and create collaborations across the different universities, governmental entities and other stakeholders.

Ms Fu said she hopes the programme can help to develop a generation of youth leaders who are not only passionate about the environment, but also have the skill sets that allow them to engage with the community, industries and policymakers effectively.

“Because for the whole nation to transit to a greener future, we need to bring everyone along... And I think youth have the innovation, the ability to engage, particularly on social media, for example, to really shape attitudes and shape social norms.”

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