

#### ***Session 4. Youth for Climate Action***

**Topic:** “Youth in the Age of Climate Disaster: How Youth Can Impact the Future”

**Description:** This session will explore how youth-led initiatives are significantly impacting environmental policy, sustainable practices, and community awareness. Participants will share stories of collaboration, innovation, resilience, and collaboration that illustrate the power of youth engagement in tackling global climate challenges. The session aims to inspire further action and highlight how young leaders can mobilize communities and influence decision-making for a sustainable future.

Youth engagement in climate action has surged dramatically in recent years, driven by a growing recognition of the urgent need to advance a whole-of-society approach to address climate change. According to the United Nations, half of the world’s population is under 30, and this demographic is increasingly active in environmental issues. The Global Youth Climate Network (GYCN), for instance, has reported a significant rise in youth-led environmental initiatives, with over 2,000 projects launched in the past five years across more than 120 countries.

In an era marked by unprecedented environmental and ecological crises, young leaders serve as powerful catalysts for positive and lasting change, significantly impacting environmental policy, sustainable practices, and community awareness. Through collaboration, innovation, and resilience, youth are not only serving at the frontlines of addressing global climate challenges, but are also inspiring further action and influencing decision-making processes toward a sustainable and resilient future for all. As reflected in the [Pact for the Future](#), sustained collaboration across generations, faiths, cultures, peoples, and sectors is urgently needed to build a future in which human dignity and human rights are guaranteed for all of humanity. In this context, all religious and faith traditions call upon their followers to work together for the common good of all people and the planet. As foundational pillars of society and critical agents of change, youth are well-positioned to serve alongside religious and faith actors, policymakers, and governmental and intergovernmental entities in tackling global climate challenges and advancing a sustainable future for all.

It is with this understanding that *Religions for Peace* has built a legacy of over 50 years in advancing multi-religious, multi-sectoral, and intergenerational collaboration and action to address the world’s most pressing issues. As an international, non-sectarian nongovernmental organisation with general consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), *Religions for Peace* works through its affiliated Interreligious Councils (IRCs), Women of Faith Networks (WoFNs) and Interfaith Youth Networks (IYNs) in nearly 100 countries to build peace, promote just and harmonious societies, advance human development, and protect the earth. Across the globe, religious and faith leaders from the *Religions for Peace* movement advance common action for our common home, alongside women and youth leaders, and in partnership with other civil society organisations, policymakers, and governmental and intergovernmental entities.

At the heart of *Religions for Peace* is a commitment to advance the cooperation of the world's religious and faith communities to ensure that no one is left behind. Under the stewardship of our international governing board – the [World Council](#), which includes the [International Youth Committee](#) – *Religions for Peace* advances [Six Strategic Priorities](#) that are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals: particularly, building just, peaceful, and inclusive societies; advancing gender equality; nurturing a sustainable environment; championing freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; cultivating interreligious education; and, strengthening multi-religious collaboration and global partnerships.

Serving as equal partners in our work, our interfaith youth leaders and communities bring moral agency and innovative solutions, as they serve at the frontlines of responding to the world's most intractable issues. In 2021, *Religions for Peace* co-hosted the [Symposium on Youth and Faith in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century](#), which convened, catalysed, and facilitated multi-religious collaboration through consultations with the youth on critical global issues such as peace and security, environment, and humanitarian action. The discussions highlighted invaluable perspectives and contributions of youth on these key areas, which are captured in the first volume of [Youth Engagement with Religion and Faith in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century](#), along with background papers on the importance of youth engagement in conflict mediation, environmental conservation, peacebuilding, and ensuring access to education across the globe.

As key stakeholders in peacebuilding, interfaith youth leaders and communities have also stewarded the *Religions for Peace* global movement in “walking the journey for peace” since 2019. This journey began during our [10th World Assembly](#) in Lindau, Germany, where over 900 women, men, and youth leaders walked together as an alliance of “common action” for the common good of all life and humanity. In November 2022, *Religions for Peace* continued this journey with the first [International Forum on Youth and Environment](#) hosted with the Manresa City Council in Spain, where youth, members of religious and faith communities, as well as policymakers and academic experts, walked side-by-side for the first time, on the [Camino Ignaciano](#) multi-faith pilgrimage, and laid the groundwork for tangible solutions to social and environmental crises. The forum paved the way for the historic signing of the [Manresa 2022 Pact](#) – the first multi-religious, intergenerational, and multi-sectoral commitment to address the climate crisis, and contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 11 in ensuring inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities.

As reflected in the Manresa Pact, “we must create inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable cities to alleviate the effects of the social and environmental crises that impact everyone, particularly the most vulnerable.” As the most critical agents of change, the youth are well-positioned to lead and participate in efforts that serve the most vulnerable and advance the common good – for our common home, and for all life and humanity. Listening to the voices of youth is the only way to serve youth, and to serve all of humanity. Young leaders are key to identifying new solutions to the world's most intractable issues. As future custodians of our common home, they also stand to lose the most if we do not respond to the multi-religious and multi-stakeholder imperative to work together in addressing the “triple planetary crisis.” It is with this understanding that *Religions for Peace* remains committed to serving for and with the youth.