

MKAAJI MPYA asbl

# CANP

CONGOLESE ACADEMY OF NEGOTIATORS PROGRAMME

## POLITICAL ADVOCACY NOTE

For the effective inclusion of young people in environmental negotiation processes  
and in the steering mechanisms of the Rio Conventions and other Multilateral  
Environmental Agreements at national level  
in the Democratic Republic of Congo



March, 2025



**For effective environmental diplomacy in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the time has come to include competent young people at all levels in the negotiation process and in national steering and implementation mechanisms.**

### **Note to know**

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This political advocacy note has been drawn up within the framework of the Congolese Academy of Negotiators Programme - CANP, which to date brings together 15 young professionals from 7 Provinces, specialized in the environmental field. They were selected from 1,123 applications to form part of the first cohort of fellows trained in Environmental Negotiations, covering the three Rio Conventions and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs). The training was provided by MKAAJI MPYA asbl, with financial support from the British Government through the Climate Ambition Support Alliance (CASA) and technical support from the British Embassy in Kinshasa.





## PREAMBLE

**R**ecognising that youth is an essential driving force for development and change in any society, it is important to stress that according to the African Youth Charter adopted in 2006 by the African Union and redefined by the national youth policy, a young person is a person aged between 15 and 35.

This age group represents a significant proportion of the African population, particularly in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where over 60% of the population are young people. However, despite this demographic importance, their participation in decision-making processes remains marginal, particularly in international negotiations on environmental issues.

International negotiations play a central role in defining global policies and commitments to combat climate change, preserve biodiversity and combat desertification. These negotiations are framed by the three Rio Conventions - the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). In addition to these three major conventions, there are other specific multilateral agreements that contribute to global environmental governance, defining the commitments of States to sustainable and resilient development.

As a country both rich in natural resources and vulnerable to climate change, the Democratic Republic of Congo occupies a strategic position in international environmental negotiations. With its vast equatorial forest, which is the planet's second green lung after the Amazon, the DRC plays a key role in regulating the global climate and conserving biodiversity.

However, although the country is a party to these conventions, it is directly affected by global problems such as climate change and biodiversity loss. These issues, which are regularly debated at international negotiations, have consequences for both current and future generations. However, it is young people who will carry the country's position into the future. It is therefore crucial that young people, who will be the next generation in the near future, are better trained, represented and heard in these forums where the decisive decisions for their future are shaped.

Unfortunately, despite this importance, the voice of Congolese youth is still not heard enough in these discussions.

Therefore, during the simulation sessions of the negotiations on the Rio Conventions and other multilateral agreements on the environment, held in Kinshasa in March 2025 as part of the Congolese Academy of Negotiators Programme (CANP), *it was clearly felt that the inclusion of young people in the process of international negotiations is imperative and strategic. As future leaders and key players in sustainable development, even though they are vulnerable, they must be integrated into this process as well as into the mechanisms for implementing these conventions at national level (steering framework). Their involvement would offer innovative perspectives, strengthen the DRC's representativeness in these arenas and ensure the durability of the commitments made at international level, by creating intergenerational links within the negotiations and in the negotiating teams.*



## THE ISSUE OF THE NON-INCLUSION OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE NEGOTIATION PROCESSES AND IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS OF THE RIO CONVENTIONS AND OTHER MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENT AGREEMENTS (MEAs) AT NATIONAL LEVEL

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a country rich in exceptional biodiversity and a key player in international environmental negotiations, is struggling to ensure the effective participation of young people in these strategic forums, let alone in the implementation mechanisms at national level. Although all these Conventions encourage the involvement of young people at all decision-making levels, the reality is that Congolese youth are poorly represented in these negotiations, at international, national and local levels. In this context, the work carried out as part of the Congolese Academy of Negotiators Programme (CANP) has identified several major challenges that explain this worrying situation:



### LIMITED ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND WEAK ENVIRONMENTAL DIPLOMACY CAPABILITIES

It was pointed out that one of the main barriers to the participation of Congolese youth is limited access to information on international negotiations relating to the environment. The lack of suitable platforms for disseminating this information, as well as the absence of specific training, hampers understanding of the processes and reduces young people's preparedness. In addition, environmental diplomacy skills, which are essential for navigating these complex arenas, remain underdeveloped among Congolese youth. Yet international environmental negotiations are highly competitive fields that require a thorough grasp of tactics, procedures and global environmental issues.



### LACK OF A FRAMEWORK FOR KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER AND INTERGENERATIONAL COLLABORATION

It was clearly observed that, although a number of young people have demonstrated their ability to make a significant contribution to negotiations, there is no structured framework for the transmission of knowledge between experienced negotiators and young people. This lack of a formal mechanism and of intergenerational collaboration prevents the transfer of expertise, and hampers the development of the skills needed by the next generation. What's more, the lack of mentoring and coaching for young people in negotiations deprives them of the essential tools for navigating complex environments. As a result, this void in the transmission of knowledge and intergenerational collaboration generates a significant generation gap, limiting the involvement and impact of young people in environmental decision-making processes and the DRC's preparedness to defend its interests on the international stage.



### YOUNG PROFESSIONALS NOT INVOLVED AND THEIR SKILLS UNDER-UTILISED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

It has been found that young professionals, despite their skills and knowledge, are not sufficiently involved in the development of national policies and strategies, such as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), the National Adaptation Plan (NAP), etc. This exclusion is felt in the implementation mechanisms at national level, particularly in the steering framework of the Rio Conventions and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs). Their absence from these important processes limits their ability to positively influence environmental decisions and hinders the integration of innovative perspectives adapted to current environmental issues.





## LACK OF ACCESS TO FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Participation in international negotiations requires substantial financial resources, in particular to cover travel, accommodation and training costs. However, many Congolese youth do not have access to these financial resources, which limits their participation in these events. In addition, their poor command of working languages, particularly English, is a further obstacle, making it difficult for them to participate in and contribute to international discussions.



## LACK OF STRUCTURED INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT CONGOLESE YOUTH IN INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS

Except for the Congolese Academy of Negotiators Programme set up by MKAAJI MPYA asbl, which has trained only one cohort to date and does not cover all the provinces of the DRC, there is a marked absence of structured initiatives to coach young people in international negotiations. Opportunities for mentoring and coaching in these processes are scarce, and few institutional or associative initiatives aim to prepare young people for the demands of international negotiations. This limits their ability to acquire the experience they need to become credible and competent players in these decision-making arenas, capable of supporting and defending their country's interests, and is a major obstacle to their participation in the entire process at both national and international level.



## GEOGRAPHICAL INEQUALITIES AND ISOLATION OF RURAL AREAS

Young people in rural areas and certain provinces remain largely excluded from opportunities linked to international negotiations. Unlike some urban areas which benefit from better access to new information and communication technologies, these regions face major obstacles to entering the negotiation process. The first cohort of the Congolese Academy of Negotiators Programme, which covered only 7 of the 26 provinces, is a case in point. This lack of support mechanisms in certain provinces and rural areas persists, even though the agreements and other MEAs have no geographical limits in their implementation.





## WHY INCLUDE YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS AT ALL LEVELS AND IN THE IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS OR STEERING FRAMEWORK AT NATIONAL LEVEL?

Effectively integrating young people into environmental negotiations in the DRC is a strategic necessity to ensure sustainable governance that is adapted to current realities. By supporting the older generations, young people show greater flexibility in adapting to new paradigms and innovative approaches. Their ability to question traditional methods, propose alternative solutions and adapt quickly to changes in international negotiations makes them key players in strengthening Congolese influence on the global environmental scene.

In addition, young people represent an essential new generation to support experienced negotiators at international and national meetings. Their dynamism and willingness to learn enable them to quickly assimilate technical and diplomatic language, including foreign languages, which are essential in international exchanges.

By getting involved right away, young people acquire skills that it also enables them to develop the skills needed to play an active role in developing

national strategies and policies in relation to the implementation mechanisms and steering frameworks, in a professional and complementary manner. It is also important to emphasise that global environmental governance increasingly relies on digital technologies, whether for data collection and analysis, climate modelling or the communication of commitments and results, and so on. Involving trained, competent and professional young Congolese and familiarising them with these digital tools will give them an edge in strengthening the DRC's participation in international discussions and in effective implementation mechanisms at national and local level. It is therefore essential to integrate young people into the negotiation and decision-making processes in order to respond effectively to the country's environmental challenges.

## WHAT ARE THE MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS ?

Following the work of the negotiation simulation sessions held in Kinshasa at the Centre d'accueil THERESIANUM from 24 to 29 March 2025 as part of the Congolese Academy of Negotiators Programme-CANP, and taking into account exchanges between stakeholders, current challenges and the crucial importance of including young people in negotiation processes and steering mechanisms at national level, the following recommendations have been made:

### To the Congolese Government:

**1** Organise national summits to clearly define the DRC's position on the three Rio Conventions, involving young people, each time before the Conferences of the Parties (COPs). This will make it possible to document young people's contributions and incorporate their proposals into the positions that the country's negotiators will have to defend at these conferences;

**2** Effectively integrate young professionals, who are competent and trained, into the steering mechanisms of the three Rio Conventions at national level, in order to guarantee their active participation and contribution to the implementation of the country's environmental policies;





1 Develop and/or support capacity-building programmes in international negotiations, and/or strengthen existing programmes such as the the Congolese Academy of Negotiators Programme- CANP- on capacity-building for young people in negotiations under the Rio Conventions and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements, and give it due recognition;

2 At the Conferences of the Parties to the three Rio Conventions, gradually integrate young people trained in environmental negotiations into national delegations and give them tasks and responsibilities to give them the opportunity to learn "Learning by doing" alongside experienced negotiators.

### Technical and financial partners

1 To provide technical and financial support to the Congolese government and the National Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development in organising national summits to clearly define the DRC's position on the three Rio Conventions, involving young people on each occasion before the Conferences of the Parties (COPs). And make it easier for young people's contributions to be incorporated into the country's proposals in line with the COPs agenda.

2 To support the Congolese Academy of Negotiators Programme (CANP) in organising regular annual training cohorts for young Congolese professionals in the environmental sector. This will help build their capacity in international environmental negotiations and their involvement in the implementation mechanisms (steering framework) of the three Rio Conventions, at both national and local level, for greater impact.

### To MKAAJI MPYA asbl

1 Mobilise technical and financial partners to organise other training cohorts as part of the Congolese Academy of Negotiators Programme (CANP);

3 Set up a system to monitor and evaluate young people's progress in environmental negotiations, as well as their involvement in policy steering mechanisms at national level, in order to identify gaps and learn lessons;

2 To ensure the continuity of the network "CANP Community" alumni from the cohorts of the Congolese Academy of Negotiators Programme - CANP;

4 Strengthen collaboration with state institutions at all levels, in particular with the National Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development, to ensure effective and productive implementation of the next cohorts of the CANP.





## CONCLUSION

To ensure sustainable environmental governance in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the inclusion of young people in the environmental negotiations in the three Rio Conventions and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), but much more so in the steering mechanisms at national level, is a strategic priority. This will bring innovative perspectives and ensure the continuity of more sustainable and inclusive environmental policies and strategies. However, it is crucial to support and consolidate the Congolese Academy of Negotiators Programme (CANP). This programme, which is already in place, offers targeted and practical training, building the capacity of young people to participate actively in decision-making processes at national and international level. By encouraging their inclusion in delegations and negotiation processes, the DRC will be preparing a new generation of negotiators, capable of defending the country's interests and implementing sustainable environmental strategies and policies for future generations.