



the **Pontifical Academy of Sciences**

Final Statement of the Brazil Climate Summit "From Climate Crisis to Climate Resilience"

Children and Climate Action: Priorities and Commitments towards COP30

AN INITIATIVE

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On 15-17 May, 2024, the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences held a *Climate Resilience summit* at the Casina Pio IV, in the Vatican, with Governors of States, Mayors of Cities and civil society climate activists which elevated resilience through Mitigation, Adaptation, and Societal Transformation (MAST), with an emphasis on locally led actions and systemic change.

At the end of the summit, a *Planetary Call to Action* was developed and signed by Pope Francis and the participants, which recommended the planning and holding of “*Regional Climate Summits*,” among which a “*Regional Climate Summit in Brasilia*.”

Accordingly, on October 2-3, 2025, the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, in partnership with the Alana and COP 30, organized a summit in Brasilia on “***Children and Climate Action: Priorities and Commitments towards COP 30***”, which affirmed their our unwavering commitment to advancing a climate-resilient Latin America, acknowledging the essential involvement of diverse stakeholder communities in this endeavor.

The Brazil Summit addressed the issue of climate resilience from a child rights perspective. We examined technical guidelines for public policies that aim to protect, educate, care for, and empower children, whose rights must be upheld according to the principle of the best interests of the child as a primary consideration (Article 3 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of

the Child).

We emphasized the unique and central role Brazil plays in global climate resilience. The Amazon River Basin, which includes regions adjacent to Brazil that were represented at the Summit, deserves special attention as a critical component of the planet's future. We showcased studies of positive outcomes that will leave a lasting legacy of hope and optimism for how policy and strategy can drive change through MAST. We also presented an overview of existing child-centered solutions that are already being implemented in Brazil and South America. In the process we identified states and municipalities where effective climate resilience and adaptation actions are underway, as well as strategies to prioritize children in the climate agenda.

Strategic Orientation

MAST: A Three-Pillar Resilience Framework - We endorsed the MAST framework as a cornerstone of Latin America's climate resilience strategy:

- **Mitigation:** We support urgent actions to bend the global warming curve well below 2°C from pre-industrial levels. Mitigation must be scaled with justice, recognizing Latin America's right to sustainable development as it transitions toward a low-carbon future.
- **Adaptation:** Given Latin America's acute exposure to climate risks, we called for adaptation as an existential priority. Local resilience must anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from climate shocks—from droughts, heat waves, and floods to food and water insecurity.
- **Societal Transformation:** We endorsed the idea that profound behavioral, institutional, and systemic shifts are essential. This includes promoting sustainable land use, circular economies, the transformative role of forests and nature-based solutions, and education to build climate resilience.

Scientific Foundations

The scholarly consensus of leading Brazilian and international climate scientists, as guided by the World Academy of Sciences, informed our discussions. The scientific white paper, included as Addendum 1, authored by Tercio Ambrizzi, Paulo Artaxo, and Carlos Nobre, noted:

Climate and Weather Impacts

The region has experienced a 1.55°C rise in global temperature above pre-industrial levels, and continental warming in some Brazilian areas has reached 2.4°C, posing a threat to agriculture, water resources, and public health. Extreme weather events—including heatwaves, droughts, storms, and floods—have increased nearly fortyfold in frequency and intensity, resulting in higher

food and energy prices, social hardship, and mounting recovery and adaptation costs.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Risks

Global annual greenhouse gas emissions continue rising, reaching 57 billion tons of CO₂ equivalent in 2024, with fossil fuels accounting for 92% of the total. Atmospheric CO₂ concentration surged from 280 ppm in 1850 to 426 ppm in 2024. The persistence of these gases means their damaging effects will reverberate for centuries. IPCC datasets show global surface temperatures and sea levels have already increased, with projections indicating future warming of 4–4.5°C in continental South America if emission trends continue.

Amazon Tipping Points

We noted that deforestation has claimed approximately 19% of the Amazon, weakening its capacity as a carbon sink and impacting its biodiversity. The region faces worsening droughts, frequent fires, and a looming risk of ecosystem collapse, potentially releasing 120 billion tons of carbon into the atmosphere. Such climate “tipping points”—if crossed—could trigger abrupt, irreversible global changes, with dire impacts for local communities and Indigenous peoples.

Adaptation and Resilience Strategies

We endorsed seven urgent adaptation strategies:

- Improving water resource management and urban infrastructure
- Protecting and restoring vulnerable ecosystems
- Developing drought- and flood-resistant crops and applying climate-resilient agronomic practices
- Building resilience within public health systems to cope with the impacts of climate change on physical as well as mental health, especially that of children.
- Expanding disaster planning and community training
- Raising climate awareness through education
- Fostering scientific collaboration across disciplines

Policy, Governance, and COP-30 Agenda

We further emphasized the urgent need for transformative action by governments and the private

sector. This involves shifting from extractive, carbon-intensive practices to renewable energy and the circular economy, and adhering to strict sustainability targets, along with transparent criteria and mechanisms for climate justice. Brazil's hosting of COP-30 offers a unique opportunity to drive global change by bringing together science, policy, business, and civil society to advance practical, nature-based, and evidence-based solutions.

In a sobering reflection, we noted that in a world where limiting warming to 1.5°C or even 2°C seems increasingly unattainable, catastrophic impacts are likely without drastic reductions in emissions and robust adaptation measures. Achieving climate resilience in South America requires coordinated efforts aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, with science and policy playing central roles in shaping mitigation, adaptation, and global equity.

COP-30's critical test will be bridging the gap between the urgent climate reality and slow political and economic response by:

- Ending fossil fuel dependence through fair, science-based transition roadmaps.
- Placing science at the core of global commitments and climate governance.
- Mobilizing fair, fast, and equity-focused climate financing for vulnerable regions.
- Rethinking value chains to achieve true carbon neutrality.
- Centering climate justice and broad social engagement, especially for Indigenous and marginalized communities.
- Combatting greenwashing with strict metrics and transparent accountability.
- Reinventing governance to ensure all nations deliver on their climate targets—moving from pledges toward verified, measurable, real-world action.

Children are Our Priority

“ May we always care for our children, not counting the cost, so that they ... always know their infinite worth.” [Pope Francis](#)

“ Even as children, we can learn to be builders of bridges and seek opportunities to help others.” [Pope Leo XIV](#)

We noted that children — persons under age 18 — must be at the heart of all climate resilience efforts—not as passive victims, bystanders, or soon-to-be adults, but as key actors, indeed as “builders of bridges” in a new planetary ethic of care. Since the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences ten years ago called for more attention to children's

rights and their role as agents of change, matters have not improved.[1] The recent summits of the Pontifical Academies, reflecting the core traditions of humanism and the visionary leadership of Pope Francis, have noted the sobering fact that approximately one billion children live in areas severely affected by climate disasters, making their engagement both a moral duty and an existential necessity. This is not a distant appeal; in this moment of planetary peril, justice demands that we summon the socio-emotional sensibilities, energy, and imagination of the young to build climate resilience. Their voices reveal risks—and solutions—forged in the crucible of climate disruption, and their agency energizes the work of resilience with hope and resolve. We noted that if we do not incorporate children's experiences and ideas today, we close the door on the promise of intergenerational justice tomorrow. The path to climate resilience, steep and dangerous, can only be crossed by uplifting the youngest among us—inviting them to co-create the world they will inherit. Thus, the eyes of the world were on Brasilia, the first of the ten regional summits of the Pontifical Academies to foreground the voices and experiences of children, as well as to call for adapting essential services to and for children systematically.

Further, we committed to:

- **Children's Engagement** - as the fundamental component of the summit, combined with the optimism and hope our children's voices provide toward ensuring a more resilient future, including but not limited to:
 - o Resilient and culturally congruent education
 - o Children and human rights
 - o Children's participation in developing climate action plans
 - o Climate impact on children's health and mental health
- **Regional Context:** Tailor solutions to Brazil's and the region's unique and diverse climate challenges and socio-economic, political/governance, and cultural contexts, including exploring the role of forests and related nature-based solutions.
- **Community Engagement:** Collaborate with and empower local communities, Indigenous Peoples' leaders, and regional stakeholders in discussions and decision-making processes.
- **Regional Collaboration:** Foster regional and international cooperation and knowledge sharing to develop effective, innovative, and scalable child-centered climate solutions with consideration of Indigenous Peoples' knowledge systems.
- **Equity:** Ensure that we prioritize equity and the protection of the poorest and most vulnerable

populations, including Indigenous people, children, and those who have the least to do with greenhouse gas emissions yet face the most significant burden. Address the disproportionate impacts of climate change on marginalized communities and incorporate diverse perspectives in climate planning.

Children under age 18 make up about 30% of the global population. The United Nations recognizes them as rights holders, whose voices and perspectives must be considered in decisions that affect their lives and communities. They are agents of change, and investing in children today is not only a matter of fulfilling their rights but also a strategic approach to ensuring sustainable development across generations.

We articulated an intergenerational perspective underscoring that empowering children contributes to stronger societies and more resilient futures. Yet, we noted, despite their agency, children remain among the groups most severely affected by the climate crisis, facing disproportionate risks to their health, education, right to play and leisure and to simply be children, as well as their overall well-being – as outlined in the [UNCRC’s General Comment No. 26 on children’s rights and the environment, with a special focus on climate change](#). Data from UNICEF also reveal that almost 250 million children and adolescents had their education disrupted by climate-related crises in 2024.

Children and adolescents are rights-holders and cultural agents whose voices must be meaningfully included in policies, laws, and projects that impact their lives—especially those related to climate policy. Research conducted by Alana Institute and LACLIMA – Latin American Climate Lawyers Initiative for Mobilizing Action – highlighted that references to children in negotiations have shifted from sporadic mentions to more strategic recognition, from COP1 to COP29.

Since the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and Brazil’s Statute of the Child and Adolescent (1990), the right to participation has been recognized. Genuine participation strengthens citizenship, leadership, and personal development.

There have been essential advancements and decisions under the UNFCCC that call for integrating children into climate policymaking and recognizing their roles in education, communication, and leadership. Brazil is also one of almost 70 countries that have signed the Intergovernmental Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action, a commitment to accelerate inclusive, child and youth-centered climate policies and action at national and global levels.

However, we observed that significant gaps still exist. Despite being heavily impacted by climate change, children and adolescents are still excluded from decision-making processes, often because of adult-centered structures and symbolic or manipulative participation practices.

To ensure safe, meaningful, and inclusive participation, efforts must:

- Avoid tokenism, manipulation, or control.
- Respect developmental stages, cultural diversity, and lived experiences.
- Guarantee informed consent, privacy, and voluntary participation.
- Be guided by trained adults who prioritize children's well-being.
- Reduce access barriers and acknowledge intersecting inequalities.
- Create spaces—both physical and symbolic—that foster genuine influence and feedback.

Participation should be flexible, either indirect (through consultations and research) or direct (via councils and advocacy). It must lead to concrete outcomes and respect the diversity of childhood and adolescence, especially those of marginalized groups.

We also note that for the protection, education, care, and empowerment of children to be fully achieved, the focus must expand to women—specifically mothers—who are the primary caregivers for their children's well-being. Mothers are a vital link in securing children's rights, representing the voices of the youngest children, who are among the most affected by the climate crisis but are not yet able to speak for themselves as adolescents can. By supporting the well-being and resilience of mothers, we ensure the genuine, safe, and inclusive participation of children.

Children are not only victims of the climate crisis; they are also agents of change and part of the solution. During the Summit, they presented innovative initiatives to tackle challenges and asked thoughtful and incisive questions. Adolescents from an Afro-Brazilian community in Pernambuco showcased their project *"From Waste to Resource,"* which uses a filtering system to decrease pollutant loads in cassava flour production. Others highlighted the important role of schools as spaces for resilience and nature-based education. Another notable example of meaningful participation was the *mini COPs*—local, autonomous experiences promoted by schools, civil society organizations, and community groups to amplify children's voices in climate dialogue.

They also expressed their concerns and suggestions through performances, such as music and poetry.

"When the forest falls, it does not fall alone; the rain that waters your land falls, and the air you breathe falls. The future falls, which your children will seek"— excerpt from a poem recited by an Indigenous teenager as closing remarks at the summit.

The questions raised by children reflected not only their concern for their own rights but also for those of others – such as how to break social barriers and reach the most vulnerable populations, including people without access to formal education or those in the workforce; as well as questions related to ocean protection and expectations for what could be done differently at COP30.

[1] [Children and Sustainable Development. Ecological Education in a Globalized World.](#)

Proceedings of the Workshop 13-15 November 2015. A.M. Battro, P. Léna, M. Sánchez Sorondo, J. von Braun (eds). Scripta Varia 135 pp. 433 | Springer © 2017.

In-person attendees of the Brazil Summit included:

Name	Affiliation
Adriana Coutinho Do Nascimento	Acompanhante
Alessa Sumie Nunes Noguchi Sumizono	WWF - Brasil
Ana Carla Pecego Da Silva	ALANA
Ana Cecilia Sabbá Colares	Ministério das Relações Exteriores
Ana Claudia Leite	ALANA
Ana Paula Felizardo	Secretaria Nacional dos Direitos da Criança e do Adolescente
Ana Potyara Tavares	ANDI - Comunicação e Direitos
Andrea Adriana Da Silva Melo	Secretaria Municipal de Educação/Departamento Pedagógico de Educação Infantil E Pacto Municipal Pela Primeira Infância
Andrea De Lima E Silva Lemos	OAB Águas Claras
Andreia Santos	CMEI Maria Honória Ribeiro
Angel Priscila Da Mota Dos Santos	Acompanhante
Anne Caroline Luz Grudtner Da Silva	Ministério da Saúde
Anne Emanuelle Cipriano Da Silva	Conselho Regional de Psicologia/UNB Grupo de Estudos Ecohumana

Belisa Cesar Rotondi	ALANA
Bianca Hammerschmidt	MPI
Cainan Silva Da Silva	SEDUC RS
Camilla Kafino	Polícia Federal
Capitu Maciel	ALANA
Carla Robécia Nascimento	Acompanhante
Carolina De Brito Maciel	ALANA
Cila De Castro Silva	ALANA
Claudia F Vidigal	Van Leer
Claudia Fleury Abdalla	ALANA
Claudia Lins	Confederação Nacional de Municípios
Claudio Marcelo De Faria Rodrigues	Prefeitura Municipal de Mogi das Cruzes
Cristiane Aparecida Buzo De Lima	Prefeitura Municipal de Jarinu
Daniel Porcel	Instituto Talanoa
Daniela Teixeira Santos	Fundação Visconde de Cabo Frio
Danielle Perali De Medeiros	Fundação Visconde de Cabo Frio
Danilo Moura	UNICEF
Davi Candido De Oliveira	UCB
Debora Cristina Do Prado Belinello	Prefeitura Municipal de Jarinu
Debora Parker Chagas Carvalho	Exército de Salvação
Denise Da Costa Eleutério	OABDF Subseção de Taguatinga
Diego Rodrigo Marra	Ação Social do Planalto
Dirlene Tikuna	Ministério dos Povos Indígenas
Edgard Gouveia Júnior	Livelab
Elisa Meirelles	UNICEF
Emanuella Ribeiro Halfeld Maciel	ALANA

Fabiola Galli	ALANA
Fabricia Estevão Da Silva	Secretaria De Educação do DF
Fernanda Santana De Oliveira	DEA/MMA
Flavia Luciana Guimaraes	
Marçal Pantoja De Araujo	Prefeitura de Belém do Pará
Flavia Moura França	Secretaria Municipal de Educação de Santo Antônio do Descoberto - Go
Francieli Lisboa De Almeida	Ministério dos Povos Indígenas
Gabriel Adami	Comitê Participativo - PYCC
Gerivaldo Nogueira Da Silva	Escola de Contas do TCDF
Gerusa De Oliveira Moura Cardoso	Prefeitura de Jundiá
Giane Boselli	Childfund Brasil
Gilson Domingos De Paiva	Escola de Contas TCDF
Gregory David Bulit	UNICEF
Guilherme Barros Pereira	Prefeitura de Jarinu
Guiliana Bergamo	ALANA
Heloisa Oliveira	Instituto Opy de Saúde
Hyorrana Da Silva Cruz	Secretaria Municipal de Educação
Ilona Szabo	Igarape Institute
Iracleide De Araujo Silva Lopes	Prefeitura De Caruaru – Secretaria Executiva da Primeira Infância
Irani Da Silva Pereira	Secretaria Municipal de Educação
Isabela Souza Julio	Secretaria Estadual da Educação do Rio Grande do Sul
Isabella Henriques	ALANA
Ivania Ghesti	TJDFT
Jade Gabriella Koivula	Embassy of Finland
Jamille De Lima Vieira	Prefeitura Municipal de Crato Ceará
Joao Paulo Mello Amaral	ALANA
Julia Guzmán Carvalhosa	Bike Anjo

Juliane Dos Santos Rodrigues Cruz	ALANA
Julio César Farias De Oliveira Júnior	Faculdade de Direito, Universidade de Brasília
Kamila Camillo	Instituto Crias do Tijolinho
Karina Macêdo	Defesa Civil de Salvador
Karina Miranda Da Gama	Ministério da Cultura
Kessia Oliveira Da Silva	MDS
Kinda Silva Van Gastel	ALANA
Leda Mara Nascimento Albuquerque	Ministério Público do Estado do Amazonas
Leticia Neves Carvalho	The Nature Conservancy
Lionice Mendes Sales	Escola Tia Angela Maria Abdon
Lis De Oliveira	Mandato da Deputada Sâmia Bomfim
Lucas Almeida	UK Government
Lucas Silvestre Schankula	Embaixada Alemanha/ German Embassy
Luciana Abade Silveira	COP30
Luciana Lopes De Vasconcelos Lima	Prefeitura do Recife
Luciene Maria Rezende Lopes	CMEI Vovó Joaquina Pontes
Luiz Alberto Cunha	Autonomo
Luiza Borges Soutto Mayor	Ministério da Saúde
Marcelo De Medeiros	WRI Brasil
Marcos B Nisti	ALANA
Maria Abadia Coelho De Oliveira	Menino Deus
Maria Carolina Alves	MDS
Maria Cristina De Souza	Educação Infantil
Maria Eduarda Martins Barbosa	Conselho Regional de Psicologia / Universidade Católica de Brasília

Maria Gabriella De Souza	LACLIMA
Maria Tânia Tafarelo	Prefeitura Municipal de Jarinu
Maria Teresa Amaral Fontes	PNUD
Mariana Couto	CONSEC
Mariana Pessoa De Mello	
Cartaxo Manzan	Fundo Nacional de Desenvolvimento da Educação-FNDE
Marina Formis De Oliveira	Secretaria Municipal de Educação de Jundiaí
Miguel Gustavo Xavier	Ministério dos Povos Indígenas
Milvo Juliano Rossarola Junior	Bike Anjo
Miriam Cordeiro Pragita	ANDI e AGENDA227
Mona Lisa Do Nascimento Vieira	Conselho Tutelar
Myrian Valone	ALANA
Nanayra Lima Rodrigues Horta	ALANA
Nathalia De Moura Alves	ALANA
Neusa Maria Batista	www.eumeprotejo.com
Paula Ferreira	Estadão
Paulo Henrique Oliveira Soares	Marista Brasil
Paulo Lorrán Do Nascimento Galvão	ALANA
Rafael Da Conceição Vicente	Acompanhante
Rafael Rioja Arantes	OPSAN/UNB
	Centro de Defesa dos Direitos das Crianças e Adolescentes do Distrito Federal (CEDECA-DF)
Raissa Menezes De Oliveira	
Ramneek Grewal	Embassy of Canada to Brazil
Raquel Martins Da Silva	Confederação Nacional de Municípios
Raquel Ribeiro Martins	PERIFALAB
Rayandra Araújo	Instituto Talanoa

Renato De Azevedo Lyra	Secretaria de Sustentabilidade e Bem-Estar Animal
Renato Godoy De Toledo	ALANA
Ricardo José Soavinski	ALANA
Rita De Cássia Guimarães Mesquita	Ministério do Meio Ambiente e Mudança do Clima
Ruth Jurberg	Governo do Estado do Rio
Sarah Darcie	PNUMA
Sofia Antonelli Amaral	ALANA
Sofia Guimarães	Instituto Crescer
Sonia Da Costa	MCTI
Sonia Yeo	UNICEF
Susiane Santos	Prefeitura de Caruaru
Tayanne Galeno	ALANA
Thais De Souza Ferreira	Comissão Permanente dos Direitos da Criança e do Adolescente
Thais Gordon	ALANA
Thais Saron	Acompanhante
Thallita De Oliveira Silva	Instituto de Estudos Socioeconômicos - INESC
Thamara Costa Resende	Epic Journey
Thiago Max Diego Xavier Silva	Ministério dos Povos Indígenas
Vanessa De Souza Hacon	Ministério da Saúde
Vanessa Goulart Barbosa	Ministério Público do Estado de Goiás e Copeduc
Vanessa Santini Gomes	Duke University
Vinicius Mafra	Fundação Amazônia Sustentável
Vital Didonet Vitinho	Rede Nacional Primeira Infância - RNPI
Vitor Leal Pinheiro	PNUMA
Vivian Alessandra Vieira De Carvalho Sousa	Acompanhante
Vivian Maurer Bortolotto	FNDE
Walisson Lopes De Souza	Ministério do Meio Ambiente e Mudança do Clima

