



*Brigitta Gunawan, Youth Leadership Council Member, EarthEcho International*

My name is Brigitta Gunawan and as a member of EarthEcho International's Youth Leadership Council, I represent a growing, global movement of young ocean advocates. We come from large ocean states, urban coastal zones, and inland communities, all connected by our ocean. Together WE drive innovative ocean restoration, education, and policy advocacy initiatives to advance ocean protection. Simply put, WE cannot protect and restore our ocean without youth at the forefront of building a durable ocean conservation movement.

We feel the impacts of climate change, ocean destruction, and biodiversity loss. With 42% of the world's population under the age of 25, the time is NOW for "scaling up ocean action" with youth leadership across all sectors to achieve SDG14. We call on all assembled delegates to ensure that youth leadership is meaningfully integrated into conservation decision making, on an ongoing basis beyond this Conference and appreciate the opportunity to address you today.

We need you to fully protect 30% of our ocean by 2030 in order for us to have a future. We are doing our part. We are advocating for national and international policy to advance the 30x30 ocean goal, activating global networks of our peers, and working on the frontlines to plant mangroves and restore coral reefs, among other habitats.

We are steadfast in our idealism yet grounded in the stark reality of the crisis facing our generation. Today, YOU take center stage in policy making, and we are left to live with the consequences of your action, or worse, inaction. To protect our future, world leaders must not just hear the voices of young people but HEED the voices of young people. We must embrace intergenerational collaboration in co-developing impactful ocean solutions.

Young people are already leading the charge for a livable future, the inaction of previous generations leaves us with no other choice. We understand the critical importance of ocean health and the intersection with the climate crisis. Together, we are calling on you to join us in this movement.