



**YOUTH FORUM 2026**

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# YOUTH CALL TO ACTION

## CENTRAL ASIA

(BY KYRGYZSTAN)

*Transformative, equitable, innovative and coordinated actions for the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs for a sustainable future for young people in all their diversity.*

### Situational Analysis

We, the youth of Central Asia, live in a region of contrasts. Our daily lives are shaped by the legacy of landlocked geography, where the cost of trade is 50% higher than in coastal regions. Our economies remain fragile, with personal remittances contributing between 10% to nearly 50% of GDP in countries like Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic, meaning our stability is often determined by political relationships, stability, and labor markets beyond our borders. We feel the persistent brain drain as more than 100,000 Central Asian students' study abroad, upto 60% since 2000, and only one third intend to return, a talent loss so severe that it costs our regional economies billions of dollars in lost potential annually.

This digital world is our generation's defining challenge and greatest opportunity. But the playing field is not level. While mobile connectivity has improved, the digital divide remains the new face of inequality. High-speed fixed broadband reaches fewer

than 20 per 100 inhabitants in many of our nations, and the gap between urban centers and rural villages is widening. As the world races towards Artificial Intelligence, we face a stark reality: Central Asian languages represent less than 0.1% of the datasets used to train major global AI models. Without a seat at the table, we risk becoming passive consumers of a technology that neither speaks Central Asian languages nor understands our cultures, a new kind of digital colonialism.

This is happening against the backdrop of an accelerating climate crisis. Central Asia is warming twice as fast as the global average. We see this not on charts, but in the receding glaciers of the Pamir and Tian Shan mountains, which have already lost 30% of their mass since the 20th century. These glaciers feed the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers, sustaining a population of more than 60 million people who now face high water stress and crisis in the future. We

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know the story of the Aral Sea, a stark warning of ecological collapse that echoes across our region.

While Central Asia is one of the sunniest regions on Earth, receiving over 3,000 hours of sunshine annually, the immense solar potential remains largely untapped while our energy infrastructure relies heavily on carbon-intensive fossil fuels or vulnerable hydropower. Smog in cities such as Bishkek in the Kyrgyz Republic and Almaty in Kazakhstan has become a public health emergency. During winter, these capitals frequently rank among the three most polluted major cities in the world. Geographic conditions, industrial emissions, and coal-based heating contribute to persistently hazardous Air Quality Index levels.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### SDG 3 & 11: HEALTH, WELL-BEING, AND SUSTAINABLE CITIES

- » Invest in national telemedicine platforms and mobile health units to bridge the vast urban-rural healthcare gap, ensuring medical consultation availability for patients in remote villages despite geographic barriers.
- » Mandate the installation of comprehensive air quality monitoring sensor networks in major cities, such as Bishkek and Almaty, to address the public health emergency caused by hazardous winter smog.
- » Systematise the use of air quality data to implement evidence-based policies, including the electrification of public transport, targeted subsidies to expand access to gas heating infrastructure, and the phased elimination of raw coal burning.

### SDG 5: GENDER EQUALITY

- » Designate the immediate and unconditional restoration of women's and girls' rights to education and public life in Afghanistan as a non-negotiable condition for any regional diplomatic engagement.
- » Criminalise domestic violence as a specific

penal offense across Central Asia to address the systemic legal failure regarding femicide.

Most urgently, gender justice remains an unfulfilled promise. Across the region, high rates of gender-based violence and femicide persist, revealing deep gaps in our legal protections. In Afghanistan, women and girls face the most acute crisis of all. The systematic ban on education and employment has left over 2.5 million girls out of school and erased women from public life, a loss of human potential that costs the Afghan economy but costs our region's collective progress immeasurably more.

Therefore, our generation stands at a strategic inflection point. The question for Central Asia's future is whether technology will serve as an instrument to address socio economic and climate challenges, or whether it will create new inequalities.

- » Eliminate legal "reconciliation" loopholes that allow abusers to escape justice and establish fully funded support systems for survivors.
- » Implement targeted programs providing digital literacy and financial inclusion training for female entrepreneurs, alongside the enforcement of laws to combat the rising tide of online gender-based violence.

### SDG 6: CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

- » Prioritise funding for community-managed projects that build and maintain local water purification systems, sanitation facilities, and sustainable irrigation, ensuring technological visions are grounded in meeting basic human needs.

### SDG 7: AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

- » Implement policies that promote decentralised solar projects to empower remote villages and farms to achieve energy independence, while simultaneously training a new generation of local technicians in green jobs.

## SDG 9: INDUSTRY, INNOVATION, AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- » Establish national strategies that recognise internet access as a fundamental right, backed by sustained public investment in digital infrastructure and support for community-owned network initiatives.
- » Develop national AI strategies that prioritise the creation of localised language models (Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Tajik, etc.) with free tier plans for accessibility and fund AI research centered on regional challenges, guided by principles of green computing to minimise environmental impact.

## SDG 13: CLIMATE ACTION

- » Integrate comprehensive climate justice education into national curricula at all levels to foster a deep understanding of the social, economic, and ecological dimensions of the crisis.
- » Establish dedicated, accessible financial mechanisms for youth-led climate initiatives, ranging from sustainable agriculture to circular economy startups to support locally-driven environmental solutions.

## SDG 17: PARTNERSHIP FOR THE GOALS

- » Institutionalise formal, empowered Youth Advisory Councils within national Ministries of Digital Development, Environment, and Economy to ensure youth perspectives are integrated into policy formulation.
- » Launch a Central Asian Youth Tech Incubator to provide cross-border funding, mentorship, and resources for young entrepreneurs developing technological solutions to the region's most pressing challenges.

*The APFSD country and sub-regional briefs were developed through collective discussions and engagements between youth advocates at the APFSD Youth Forum in Bangkok on 18-20 February, 2026. The Central Asia Call to Action was drafted by Bekaiym Egemkulova- Country Facilitator for Central Asia. Overall supervision was provided by the ARROW Call To Action team.*