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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	High-level event dedicated to Youth and Climate Action (COP28) – Information from the Bulgarian delegation

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Delegations will find in the Annex an information note from the Bulgarian delegation on the above subject, to be dealt with under ‘Any other business’ at the Council (Environment) meeting on 18 December 2023.

## High-level event dedicated to Youth and Climate Action (COP28)

### - Information from the Bulgarian delegation -

On 8 December Mr. Julian Popov, the Minister of Environment and Water of Bulgaria and Ms Kitty van der Heijden, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, hosted a high-level event at the Bulgarian pavilion at COP28.

Ms Dubravka Šuica, Vice-President of the European Commission and Commissioner for Democracy and Demography, Ms Anne Skelton, Chair of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, government leaders from Europe and Central Asia and young people from Albania, Bulgaria, Spain, Romania and Turkey participated in the event and shared measures and good practices in a discussion on ‘Children, Youth and Climate Action’.

The event placed an **emphasis on the UNICEF Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action<sup>1</sup>, the role of governments in promoting the fulfilment of children’s inalienable right to a healthy environment and the need to take steps to enshrine those rights in the implementation of the Paris Agreement.** The young people came up with proposals for concrete actions, including the promotion of the document and its commitments at EU level. A year-long climate summit, investments in environmental education and skills and science education as a commitment at EU and national level were some of the examples of best practices that were shared. Other highlights included the first EU Child Rights Strategy and General Comment No 26 on Children’s Rights and the Environment, with a Focus on Climate Change.

During the event, a number of governments from Europe and Central Asia declared their intentions to pursue child- and youth-centred and youth-friendly climate policies and actions. Mr. Yevhen Fedorenko, Ukraine’s Deputy Minister for European Integration, announced that Ukraine would also sign the Declaration.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/environment-and-climate-change/climate-declaration>

Ms Kitty van der Heijden, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, stated that the addition of new countries to the list of signatories to the Declaration is a crucial first step, and called on governments to start putting their commitments into practice. She expressed UNICEF's readiness to support countries in this process, and urged the countries that have not signed the Declaration to do so.

The Declaration constitutes an unprecedented commitment to accelerating inclusive and child- and youth-centred climate policies and action at national and global levels. It emphasises the heightened and specific risks faced by children due to climate change, especially the most disadvantaged and marginalised. It acknowledges the leadership of children and young people in calling for urgent climate action, and recognises their role as agents of change. The commitment to limit global temperature increase and the importance of human rights instruments are highlighted, along with previous resolutions addressing children's rights in the context of environmental harm. The Declaration commits to advocating for the global recognition and fulfilment of children's right to a healthy environment. It calls for efforts to consider children's rights in the implementation of the Paris Agreement, scaling up investments in child- and youth-responsive adaptation measures, and strengthening their capacity through education. It also emphasises the need for the meaningful participation of children and youth in climate processes, exploring the establishment of an international commission for children and future generations, and adopting institutional measures for a cross-cutting focus on children and youth in climate action at national and international levels.

In light of the Bulgarian government's strong commitment to the implementation of the Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action and our conviction that climate education, science and technologies offer diverse opportunities for exciting explorations and collaboration, the event was followed by a panel dedicated to the approaches for climate education for young people. The panel discussed 3D mapping exhibitions, the synthesis and visualisation of open science data, designing climate fresks, and engaging students through electronics, mechatronics, physics, marketing, design and electric karting, but also through storytelling and games as international and multi-age tools that can bring climate change closer to people, stimulate their imagination and provoke engagement on their part.

The high-level event held on 8 December was not the first collaboration of UNICEF and Bulgarian on the matter. In October 2023 UNICEF Bulgaria and the Bulgarian government organised a discussion devoted to General Comment No 26 on Children’s Rights and the Environment, with a Focus on Climate Change.

Bulgaria would like to bring the event and the Declaration to the attention of the Council. With its unprecedented commitment to accelerating inclusive and child- and youth-centred climate policies and action at national and global levels, it is fully in line with EU values and climate and human rights policies. Currently 10 EU Member States have joined the Declaration. Support from all 27 would send a strong mobilising message to the outside world about our unwavering commitment to stopping climate change for our children and with our children, leaving no one behind.

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