

Sixteenth session of the IRENA Assembly

2026 IRENA Youth Forum: The New Generation of Decision-Makers Youth Innovation and Digital Solutions: From AI to Access in Renewable Energy

8-10 January 2026

Abu Dhabi

Background

The global push toward a just and inclusive energy transition continues to gain unprecedented momentum, particularly in the wake of the UAE Consensus and the COP29 and COP30 outcomes. Achieving international climate objectives including tripling renewable energy capacity and doubling energy efficiency by 2030, requires not only innovation and financial commitment but also the proactive involvement of young people. Youth play a central role in driving system-wide transformations, harnessing digital solutions such as artificial intelligence, and ensuring that renewable energy technologies are accessible and impactful across communities and markets.

IRENA remains committed to empowering youth and amplifying their contributions to the global energy discourse. Through its initiatives, IRENA fosters youth leadership, enhances participation in policymaking processes, and promotes youth-led innovations that leverage digitalization and AI for a renewables-powered future. Central to these efforts is the IRENA Youth Forum, a flagship platform for intergenerational dialogue, capacity building, and youth policy advocacy.

The IRENA Youth Forum 2026 will mark its eighth edition and will once again provide a space for emerging leaders to shape the conversation on renewable energy. This edition will highlight how youth can utilize cutting-edge digital tools from AI applications to energy access solutions to accelerate the global energy transition. The Forum will be guided by a theme and priority topics co-defined with the IRENA Youth Council, reflecting the evolving priorities of the energy landscape in line with IRENA's programmatic work and the global stocktake trajectory.

Taking place from 8 to 10 January 2026 in Abu Dhabi, ahead of the Sixteenth Session of the IRENA Assembly, the Forum will feature high-level opening sessions, interactive workshops, and a Closing Session within the Assembly at the St. Regis Saadiyat Island. Beyond the Forum, youth engagement will continue throughout Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week via the Youth Booth, Youth Lounge, and the IRENA Pavilion, showcasing how digital solutions and innovation can transform renewable energy from vision to accessible reality.

- ❖ 8 - 9 January 2026: IRENA Youth Forum Abu Dhabi (including High-Level Opening) at Mohamed Bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence (MBZUAI)
- ❖ 10 January 2026: Closing Session at St. Regis Saadiyat Island during the IRENA Assembly
- ❖ 11 – 15 January 2026: Youth-led Activities; Youth Booth and Lounge (St. Regis), and IRENA Pavilion (ADSW at ADNEC)

Objectives

Beyond youth gathering, the IRENA Youth Forum embodies a shared vision of empowering young leaders to drive transformative change and ensure a just energy transition for all. Through capacity building, innovation, and advocacy, the Forum aims to equip young participants with the tools and knowledge necessary to shape a more robust, sustainable and inclusive energy future.

The main objectives of this edition of the IRENA Youth Forum are to foster discussion and promote action within this context. The IRENA Youth Forum 2026 aims to:

1. **Amplify Youth Voices in the Global Energy Policy Arena** - Provide a platform for young people to share their perspectives with high-level stakeholders and ensure youth-driven priorities are embedded in energy discussions.
2. **Foster Capacity Building and Skill Development** - Equip youth with tools to influence policy, develop impactful projects, and scale innovations aligned with SDG 7 and the Paris Agreement.
3. **Highlight the Role of Youth in Financing the Energy Transition** - Explore pathways for youth to access and shape financial mechanisms to accelerate deployment of renewables.
4. **Strengthen Partnerships and Collaboration** - Facilitate networking and knowledge-sharing among youth, policymakers, private sector, academia, and international organizations.

Guiding Questions

1. Empowering Youth Leadership in the Energy Transition

- What key skills and knowledge do young people need to lead in the renewable energy transition effectively?
- How can governments, international organizations, and private sector actors better integrate youth perspectives into energy decision-making processes?

2. Fostering Innovation and Collaboration

- What innovative renewable energy technologies and practices are being developed by young people globally, and how can they be scaled?
- How can cross-sectoral and intergenerational collaboration be strengthened to accelerate the renewable energy transition?

3. Amplifying Youth Voices in Global Energy Policy

- What mechanisms are needed to ensure youth voices are systematically included in global energy and climate policy discussions?
- How can young leaders effectively advocate for renewable energy priorities within their communities and on the global stage?

4. Enhancing Youth Capacity for Policy and Project Development

- What are the main barriers faced by youth in designing and implementing renewable energy policies and projects?
- How can training programs and mentorship opportunities better support youth in overcoming these barriers?

5. Strengthening Networks and Partnerships

- What strategies can be employed to foster long-term collaboration between youth, policymakers, and the renewable energy industry?
- How can global and regional networks be leveraged to amplify the impact of youth-led renewable energy actions?

6. Highlighting the Role of Youth in Financing the Energy Transition

- What financing mechanisms are most accessible to youth for renewable energy projects, and how can they be improved?
- How can young entrepreneurs and innovators better navigate the landscape of renewable energy investment and funding opportunities?

Outcomes

The Forum will conclude with an Outcome Statement, jointly developed by participants and read by two youth representatives during the Sixteenth Session of the IRENA Assembly. The statement will reflect youth priorities, insights, and calls to action.

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