Advocating for youth participation in protecting the environment

Climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental pollution. The triple
planetary crises are deeply interconnected and endanger our ecosystems and wellbeing. Meet Yibing Zhao, UN Volunteer Programme Coordination Assistant with the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) in China.

Yibing Zhao just completed his volunteer assignment in September, having served as Programme Coordination Assistant with UNEP in China. During his assignment, he provided coordination and technical support for projects aiming to create a healthier and more resilient environment. Yibing participated in the events to raise the public awareness and advocate the participation in protecting the environment, because, as he says, "Volunteering opportunities on environmental issues for the youth are very important."

I urge fellow youth to join the dialogue and take part in protecting biological diversity. Let us engage all stakeholders because if we do not act, we are the ones who will face the impacts of human disruptions to the earth’s natural systems on human health and all life on earth. --Yibing Zhao, UN Volunteer Programme Coordination Assistance with UNEP, China

In December 2021, Yibing participated in organizing the sixth UN China Youth Environment Forum. He shared his experience of choosing environment studies as his major. He shared how he started to pay close attention to and understand environmental issues when he learned about the UN Conference on Sustainable Development Rio+20.

The junior school students in Yangzhou, Jiangsu Province of China presented their actions towards ecological restoration and improving water quality in their neighborhoods. "I am impressed to know that they started to learn about environmental protection and put it into practice in the daily life at such a young age," Yibing says.

Science is the catalyst for action. Science enhances knowledge and provides solutions to solve environmental problems. Actions need to be taken by all stakeholders. Public awareness and participation are vital to tackling environmental problems. --Yibing Zhao

Yibing obtained his Ph.D. degree in environmental science and engineering, and his dual Master’s degree in public policy and management from Tsinghua University. He was deployed to UNEP through a partnership between the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme, UN Development Programme (UNDP), Beijing Volunteer Service Federation (BVF) and China International Centre for Economic and Technical Exchanges (CICETE). In 2022, UNEP China hosted two UN Volunteers.

Yibing has demonstrated excellent expertise and knowledge of various aspects of climate change and low-carbon development, including climate finance, mitigation and adaptation. --Qian Wang, Programme Management Officer at UNEP China and Yibing’s supervisor
With UNEP, Yibing had the opportunity to apply his knowledge and academic experience in practice, through assisting the publishing of reports on reducing improper disposal of plastic waste, which harms the living habitats of marine animals.

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Asia and the Pacific

- environmental sustainability
- environmental protection

Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 13: Climate change SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals