DECLARATION OF CLIMATE AMBASSDORS

His Excellency Mr. Minister, distinguished participants and dear friends,

Today, here, on this stage, you may see only four persons, yet we are more than four persons. Right now, together with you, we are 209 climate ambassadors from the universities of our 81 provinces in this hall. Today, on this stage, we represent not only climate ambassadors, but also 15 million young people who share common concerns about the climate crisis. We, as the youth who has not known each other before, yet has solution offers for the climate crisis, have prepared this declaration containing the most fundamental and urgent calls that will strengthen our country’s fight against climate change in a very short time.

Anatolia is a land that has a history of 12 thousand years and has hosted various civilizations. On these lands, humans and nature have succeeded to exist and live together for thousands of years. Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi whom we commemorate in this city every year said, “You are not a drop in the ocean. You are the entire ocean in a drop.” Here is our, climate ambassadors’ motivation. We believe that we will maintain the ancient tradition of these lands, this lifestyle in which nature and humans coexist in harmony, forever.

This geography is home to 3,391 endemic species including 10 thousand plants, 484 birds, 384 butterflies and more than 3 thousand species in its seas. We can say that Türkiye is one of the most important countries in the Northern Hemisphere in terms of biological diversity and natural assets. This biodiversity also offers many opportunities to protect the climate, to avoid the negative impacts of climate change and to adapt.

While talking about nature, it is necessary to consider that there is always a change. The vast steppes, forests, and wetlands that appear stable and cover wide spaces are constantly changing. You may have heard that in the Battle of Ankara, Timur hid his elephants in the forest in the north, which had prevailed against Bayezid. Unfortunately, these forests no longer exist. We tell this
because, just like cultural heritage, the way to understand and protect natural heritage is possible by knowing the past. As a result, it is of great importance to know the history of our nature in order to understand our nature better and protect it more and to fight against the negative impacts of climate change.

Experts say that “the temperature rise on our planet must not exceed 2ºC, but must be limited to 1.5ºC if possible”. Striving to achieve this goal of the Paris Agreement is now one of our country’s main responsibilities. It is essential to use a supra-political language in order to wage an effective and inclusive fight against the climate crisis. Additionally, we demand that a liable policy that brings together all voices, especially youth, is developed and implemented. We call on all decision makers in our country to conduct required legal arrangements and legislative studies on fighting against climate change, to develop more comprehensive climate change action plans, to prepare a sustainable, equal and green economic development plan that does not depend on fossil fuels as soon as possible.

The most important economic model which will support the final success of each step to be taken at the political level is the Green Economy Model. In this model, it is important to increase financial assistance for eco-friendly companies, to allocate a separate budget for the transition to renewable energy, and to develop sustainable finance practices in our country. In order to achieve these goals, we demand that Ministries and banks support companies about sustainable economy models and that companies publish their sustainability reports regularly and publicly.

In order to achieve the goal of the Paris Agreement and to comply with the Green Deal in the fight against climate change, we demand that all businesses implement cleaner and sustainable models in their production-consumption processes, and that the required infrastructure and financing are provided to them to minimize greenhouse gas emissions in this process. By declaring our country’s roadmap to phase out coal by 2030, we call for more efficient use of our renewable energy resources and to work on creating an energy system that is not dependent on fossil fuels.

Another issue in the fight against climate change is waste management. We attach importance to the nationwide mobilization on waste management, recycling our waste and avoiding waste. Waste, which is also a serious problem in agriculture, must be prevented. In agricultural activities, planned and sales-
guaranteed production models must be adopted, practices in this field must be accelerated with irrigation methods that use water efficiently, and models that increase efficiency and quality in production must be adopted.

Water is the most important element providing input to agricultural production and the main source of life for almost all living creatures. We want to ensure that people have access to clean water, which is their most fundamental right, and that quality controls of waters are performed regularly in order to always access to and benefit from clean water.

We see the impacts of the climate crisis in our air, water and soil. Therefore, we demand that studies on the protection of ecosystems are increased, studies aiming at ecological restoration in areas devastated by natural disasters are encouraged with the support of experts, and natural environment is recovered. Our demands also involve the protection of all green areas and forests in and around the city, the planning of liveable cities where green areas are created, and the development and implementation of urban planning in accordance with microclimate characteristics.

In case of insufficient environmental investments, we experience the negative impacts of this on the health of living creatures in various ways. Therefore, we want investments to endanger our health are not allowed. At this point, we call on that air quality values are regularly measured in order to protect our national health, adaptation and treatment plans are prepared for the diseases brought about by climate change and our people's right to live in a healthy environment is acknowledged.

We attach great importance that the vulnerable groups that will be greatly affected by this process are not ignored in the climate struggle. We are aware that climate change poses a great threat to vulnerable groups. Therefore, we demand that grievances of these groups, which are more exposed to the impacts of the climate crisis are eliminated and that they are supported considering the extent of the difficulties that these groups face as a result of the problems such as hunger and poverty.

The most permanent and relatively short way to both understand the importance of vulnerable groups and reach an awareness of individual responsibility in our climate struggle is through education. With this awareness, we believe that climate change should be included more in social and cultural
studies in order to ensure that climate and environmental awareness is disseminated all over Türkiye, and R&D studies should be supported within the scope of the fight against climate change.

So far, we have made many demands and requests. As we approach the end of our declaration, we would like to emphasize once again that the processes regarding all these matters must be managed in a transparent and participatory manner. We expect decision makers to play a more active role in the fight against climate change and to mobilize the masses through the efforts to be conducted in these fields by benefiting from the power of the media.

We also would like to add that: On behalf of all Climate Ambassadors, we would like to thank our President, H.E. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who announced Türkiye’s 2053 net zero emission target and has initiated the green development revolution of Türkiye.

We, wholeheartedly, would like to thank our Minister of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change Mr. Murat Kurum, who has initiated the Climate Ambassadors Movement and has supported the university youth and Türkiye’s fight against climate change, and to all the Ministry representatives, the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office, UNICEF and the Nature Conservation Centre.

As climate ambassadors, we have used our right to participate to the fullest extent. We have shared all our opinions, observations and demands through this declaration. We know that fulfilling our requests and demands depends on a process. While our suggestions are put into action, we want to take steps side by side with the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change and related institutions and organizations, to involve in decision processes and to have a say about our own future.

We would like to extent you our greetings on behalf of Climate Ambassadors from 209 universities in Türkiye.