

## **Concept note - Amsterdam Declaration Partnership**

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My name is Eefke van de Wouw, I am 24 years old. I am here not as a scientist, a politician or a representative of a company. I am here as a young woman with no hidden agenda that would like to share with you what it is like to grow up in a time of climate emergency.

That we as humans have such a big impact on our planet sometimes scares me.

I do not enjoy a hot summer day like I used to when I was little, because I fear that this summer will be as dry as the last one. That the forests that I walk through won't have a chance to recover as I slowly see their leaves turn yellow.

I don't know how to explain to my friends why I watched a climate scientist cry at the last climate negotiations in Poland as he told us about the impacts we will experience.

And I have a hard time telling my mother why I might choose not to have children, because I don't know if I want to raise them in a world that fails at granting them a future on a livable planet.

The younger generation, including myself, have often been mocked for being too sensitive about this. We have been called 'snowflakes' and told we could not handle the reality of the 'real world'. To me, sensitivity and compassion are our biggest strengths. It takes more courage to be vulnerable than to hide behind a wall.

When we express grief and sadness over losing life and biodiversity on this planet it only shows that we deeply care. We do not care too much, in history we cared too little, and that is what got us into this mess in the first place.

Creativity, imagination, compassion. These are words I never hear when I'm at a UN conference. I believe creativity and imagination are the treasures of the modern world because we will not find new solutions if we keep looking in the same places, and we will not protect something we do not care about.

Climate change, the climate emergency that we are in, reminds us that everything is interconnected. It does not stop at the border, and the actions of one country directly impact others. When I discovered at the age of 10 that we all have a tiny amount of gold and titanium in our bodies I understood this interconnectedness. When I recently found out we can now also add microplastics to this list I understood it even more. When did we forget that to harm nature is to harm ourselves?

Deforestation for me feels like an example of our lost connection to nature. If you were never taught about our crucial connection to it or to appreciate the natural environment than you will always choose building a highway through a forest rather than preserving it.

Lucky for us it does not matter how big or small the problem we face is, because it is not the size of the problem that decides whether there is a solution for it or not. It is our attitude towards the problem.

Sometimes we are told we are too young to make a difference. Young people marching and schoolstriking from all over the world have proven this to be untrue. We understand that the

challenge is up to us. We understand that we have to get rid of the pointing fingers and lend each other a helping hand.

Often people ask me if i believe if there is one big solution to the climate emergency we are in. I do not believe there is. I believe that everyone has something within them that the world needs. I hope you all have the courage today to find yours, use it and make it your part of the solution.

That we as humans have such a big impact on our planet sometimes scares me. But it is always better to light candles than to curse the darkness. Having an impact on the world also gives me hope. It means that we, like all of you here today, can choose to protect our natural environment. And there is still a lot left worth fighting for.

Thank you.