

**Speech by Zamzam Ibrahim (25) at our parliamentary reception on 26 February 2020**

Hi everyone,

My name is Zamzam Ibrahim and I am the president of Students Organising for Sustainability – SOS-UK.

Thank you to Nadia Whittome for hosting this event and to our incredible 552 crowdfunder donors, some of whom are here today, who made this event possible. Thank you to *We Have the Power* and *The Ashden Trust* for their generous support and *Energise* for the research support. And thank you so much to all of you for being here.

**We are here today to call for urgent reforms of our education system in response to the climate crisis and ecological emergency.** Over recent months we have done the research behind what needs to change and packaged this up into our **six clear asks**.

We have developed pragmatic recommendations and gained the support of many of our national **environmental and education charities** and, critically, the support of **both major teaching unions, NEU and UCU**.

Let me share with you what we have in mind:

**One:** we are asking for a **government-commissioned review** into how the whole English formal education system, from primary through adult education, is preparing students to mitigate, abate, and end the climate emergency and ecological crisis.

**Two:** we want to see the climate emergency and ecological crisis **included in teacher training and a new professional teaching qualification introduced**. Currently 75% of teachers say that they feel ill-equipped to teach about climate change.

**Three:** we propose an **English Climate Emergency Education Act** which would sit *above* existing legislation on education. This will state an **expectation** on all education providers to deliver teaching and learning on climate justice and the ecological crisis **and provide targeted funding to do so.**

**Four:** like in the Netherlands, we want to see a UK-wide fund established to **create youth voice forums** who will advise on repurposing education through work with local authorities, multi-academy trusts, colleges, universities, and NHS trusts.

**Five:** we call for a **national endowment fund** to be established to **fund youth-led climate and environmental social action**. This would demonstrate the government’s commitment to catalyse immediate action in communities across the UK, led by young people.

**Six:** finally, our educational buildings must themselves be considered a learning resource. Our nurseries, schools, colleges, and universities ought to be living laboratories; powered by renewable energy, well insulated with modern and efficient lighting and heating, and surrounded by native vegetation and biodiversity. We call on government to commit to **all new state-funded educational buildings to be built net-zero from 2022 and all existing buildings retrofitted to be net-zero by 2030.**

The climate crisis and ecological emergency are the greatest threats we face today and yet just 4% of pupils say they know ‘a lot’ about climate change. To avoid us repeating the failures of the past, our education system must do better to equip young people with the knowledge, skills, and agency to tackle these crises.

This November, the UK has an enormous responsibility as the host of COP26. This government can demonstrate real Great British leadership in the face of the climate crisis and ecological emergency, and bring the rest of the world with us.

Ahead of COP, we call on the Government to work with us to make education a central pillar of this country’s net-zero plans.

To help to do this, **we have drafted a bill** to bring our six asks to reality. The bill includes all our asks apart from the review of the education system and the amendments to teacher standards, as these are in the gift of the Secretary of State for Education. We believe this is the **first-time** **education legislation has been written by pupils and students.**

We have done our homework, and now need your help.

We ask you, as parliamentarians, to work together and help make Teach the Future happen through all of the channels available to you.

**We need your leadership and good will to deliver this vision. And urgently. We are living in a climate emergency and ecological crisis and have no time to waste.**

Please. Work together across party lines, with partners in civil society and trade unions, and with us, as young people, to make our draft bill into law, implement the ideas we have suggested, and ensure that in November the UK can proudly host COP26 as a leader in climate action.

Thank you