



9 april 2025

## **Questions and answers with Juan Pierre – winner of the WIN WIN Gothenburg Sustainability Youth Award 2025**

### **At what age did you first become involved in climate policy and sustainable development?**

My journey into climate action didn't wait politely for adulthood—it crashed the party early. At just 16, I found myself appointed Chief of Staff for a joint UNICEF Madagascar and NAFCO project, the AYSP. Picture this: most teenagers worrying about homework, while I was coordinating international sustainability initiatives that made actual adults nervous.

When devastating cyclones struck both Mauritius and Madagascar, we didn't just send thoughts and prayers—we mobilized and raised half a million MUR for relief aid. That's when I learned that climate action isn't about PowerPoint presentations and theoretical frameworks; it's about showing up when nature delivers its harshest lessons and building something meaningful from the debris.

### **Does anyone in your family have a background in politics or climate research?**

Family political dynasty? Not exactly—unless you count my 70-year-old grandmother's ongoing negotiations with stubborn soil in the fields where she still works to make ends meet.

I come from a lineage of remarkable resilience but limited formal education. My grandparents never had the luxury of classroom learning, and my mother's educational journey ended before high school graduation. The irony isn't lost on me that I'm the first in my family to attend a Top 20 global institution.

My father's evolution from high school teacher to software engineer is perhaps the closest we get to a family tradition of professional reinvention. His journey taught me that transformation doesn't require permission or precedent—just persistence.

My story stands as living proof that your starting line doesn't determine your finish. From greenhouse planter to the youngest UN CTCN Roster Expert member globally, I've learned that ministers' doors open not through family connections but through the unmistakable knock of genuine impact and relentless work.

## **What was the first significant step in your journey towards climate action?**

While planting trees and organizing climate marches built my foundation, 2022 marked my transition from activism to actual influence. Working alongside H.E. Dr. Alyaa Samir Borhan, Egypt's Ambassador to my country, I helped craft a joint position paper between Egypt and Mauritius for COP27.

For the first time, youth voices weren't just decorative additions to policy conversations—they were essential architects. This experience illuminated a critical truth: protestors change headlines, but policymakers change laws. And to truly transform our climate reality, we need to rewrite the rules that govern it.

COP27 became my masterclass in the alchemy of turning passionate advocacy into pragmatic legislation—the moment I understood that placards and policy documents are two sides of the same coin in the currency of change.

## **What has been the biggest challenge you've faced along the way?**

The lack of youth funding creates a paradoxical ecosystem where we value young voices in theory but starve them in practice. This award represents the first time my climate work has translated into personal income (beyond my earlier farmwork days)—a reality that highlights how difficult sustaining momentum becomes when passion must compete with basic survival.

We live in a world that applauds youth activism with token appreciations and ceremonial roles while withholding the financial resources necessary for sustained impact. Research and evidence-based policymaking—the foundations of effective climate solutions—require investment beyond symbolic gestures.

As I like to say, accuracy in our policies should be the policy (catch the wordplay?). But achieving this requires breaking down the entrenched belief that academia and advocacy are somehow meant to be volunteer positions rather than valued professional pathways deserving proper compensation.

## What change do you hope to see in the world?

I'm campaigning for a world that graduates from the endless cycle of complaint to the university of action. Have you noticed how our media ecosystem has developed a bizarre romance with catastrophe? Headlines scream impending doom while solutions whisper from the back pages.

This is precisely why I maintain minimal social media presence—I refuse to contribute to the chorus of "we're doomed" without offering a corresponding "here's what we do about it." The constant refrain that climate change is irreversible and the SDGs have failed doesn't move us forward—it just paralyzes us in collective anxiety.

Yes, the challenges are monumental. But so what? The diagnosis without treatment isn't healthcare—it's merely observation.

I'm determined to nurture a generation of solution architects rather than problem describers—people who hear "impossible" as simply the first draft of "accomplished." My vision isn't for a world without problems, but for one where problems automatically trigger innovation rather than resignation.

## Looking ahead, where do you see yourself in 5, 10, or even 20 years?

Currently, I'm learning on weekly basis to Maaya Prasad, an MIT PhD candidate whose research on low-cost ocean plastic detection sensors represents the environmental monitoring revolution we desperately need. Each meeting with her feels like downloading decades of expertise directly into my developing brain.

My immediate goal is securing a spot at a Boston-area university to continue this mentorship throughout my undergraduate years.

Five years from now, you'll find me at Oxford University pursuing a Masters in Global Governance and Diplomacy, hopefully collaborating with the Win Win team that has been so instrumental in my journey.

By 30, I aim to complete the exclusive Harvard-Cambridge JD/LLM program—a 3.5-year academic Olympic event granted to just six individuals annually. This educational marathon isn't about collecting degrees like trophies; it's about arming myself with the knowledge necessary to transform my country's future.

A decade from now, I'll be fully immersed in active politics, hopefully juggling the dual portfolios of Minister of Environment and Attorney General. Beyond policy implementation, I dream of establishing an Ivy Trust Fund providing international education opportunities for 10 young changemakers annually—selected not by test scores but by their demonstrated community impact.

Twenty years forward, I intend to make history as my country's youngest president, using this platform to scale our sustainability models across the African continent as Chair of the African Union. Because the greatest achievements start as "unrealistic" dreams before becoming inevitable milestones.

