

UNEP GLOBAL YOUTH FORUM 2002 YOUTH DECLARATION

We, youth, as the future of the world, have gathered many times to join efforts and identify issues before and after the Rio Summit. We have achieved victories at the local level, demonstrating that sustainable development is an achievable goal. We have written documents such as the Borgholm 'Resolution for Change' and the Dakar Youth Empowerment Strategy that should guide decision makers as they provide fundamental understanding of our priorities. We the participants of the UNEP Global Youth Forum 2002 from all six regions of the world - Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia & Pacific, North America, Europe, Africa, and West Asia - recognize efforts made at the Rio Summit to address sustainable development. However, we are highly frustrated at the continued lack of commitment and political will to implement its outcomes.

As outlined in Chapter 25 of Agenda 21 and Principle 21 of the Rio Declaration, increased meaningful participation of youth and children at all levels of decision-making processes is required. Specifically, governments must recognize their obligations to include democratically elected youth delegates in all international, national, regional, and local meetings. Furthermore, it is necessary to form national and local youth councils in every country and provide adequate funding for their activities.

We are scared about the fate of the Earth. Governments can no longer compromise the imperative need to implement sustainable development. The WSSD offers the world a critical opportunity to reinvigorate action by governments, the United Nations and civil society groups in the quest for sustainable development.

We therefore make the following resolutions:

We affirm that prerequisites exist to achieve sustainable development: achieving peace, democracy, transparency in governments, the eradication of corruption, the elimination of discrimination in all forms, and the stabilization of the human population. We continue to stress that sustainable development is an effective alternative to militarization in ensuring peace.

Poverty! Recognizing the growing gap between rich and poor, we demand the immediate cancellation of the external debt of developing countries. We also demand the acknowledgment of the ecological and social debt of industrial countries. Developing nations and economies in transition must be financially enabled to invest in employment, health, social dialogue and conservation to achieve sustainable development.

We demand the implementation of the UN Millennium Declaration on poverty reduction with the target of 2005 in Africa, Latin America & Caribbean, Asia and Eastern Europe. We commit to network, to contribute to poverty alleviation projects in our communities and to increase public awareness and participation.

We call for empowerment of people through local regulations, which will encourage the development of self-reliant sustainable communities. The unsustainable activities by

corporations damage the environment and violate human rights; hence they cannot lead to sustainable development.

Recognizing that humans and nature are more important than the profits of trans-national corporations, we demand that international trade agreements are re-evaluated based on sustainability and when necessary are cancelled if they do not meet the set criteria.

We insist that governments guarantee all youth and children have the opportunity to pursue education. We are upset with the minimal implementation of Chapter 36 of Agenda 21. We demand access to information and empowerment through capacity building, with an emphasis on formal and informal education to promote an overall awareness on sustainable development. We call for substantial funds to be allocated to support young researchers and scientists.

All countries must consume sustainably. Today, inappropriate and excessive consumption in developed nations occurs at the expense of developing nations who themselves have the potential for excessive consumption in the future. We have a joint responsibility to ensure that this current and future consumption is sustainable. Youth have a powerful influence on the economy and as such are a crucial part in achieving a just and sustainable one. This must include fair trade, life cycle product management, and climate justice through renewable energy. We further encourage governments and industries to adopt cleaner production technologies, minimize production of toxics and greenhouse gases and put limits on corporate advertising pollution in public spaces.

Water is scarce in many parts of the world. The world's fresh water resources are not adequate to meet the increasing water demands resulting from growing population. These demands are further aggravated by climate change and the results of war and conflict. We insist on the prompt enactment and ratification of international treaties and the strengthening of international environmental laws to protect fresh water supplies.

We recognise the right of refugees to safely return to their homeland. We also demand the recognition of the inherent right of indigenous and native people to self-determination and their right to use resources.

We commit ourselves to and demand government action in combating HIV /AIDS by advocating women's empowerment, ethics, safer sex, comprehensive sexual health education, availability of sterile needles and free drug treatment. We further demand integrated practical policies to be financed to stabilize the pandemic by 2005 and reduce the spread by 2010.

We as youth have been and will continue to make sustainable development commitments a reality. We call for an ethical framework for sustainable development in accordance with regional priorities that builds upon past documents and declarations. We commit ourselves to speaking out and we demand the implementation of our solutions for sustainable development.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) must yield real plans for action and cannot follow a long line of empty promises and missed opportunities. Signatures are not enough! We need concrete action!

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