

PRIORITIES AND INITIATIVES FOR PARTNERSHIPS IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT - YOUTH MAJOR GROUP

1. Introduction

1. Since the Rio UN Conference on Environment and Development, youth from around the world have gathered many times to join efforts in identifying priority issues for the future. Youth recognise efforts made at the Rio Summit to address sustainable development. Yet, as the future generation, we are highly frustrated at continued lack of commitment and political will to implement its outcomes. Youth have closely followed the WSSD preparations, and note the distressing lack of concrete and timely proposals for real sustainable development implementation.

2. 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, particularly in the framework for sustainable development where intergenerational equity is essential. Governments and local authorities must include democratically elected youth delegates in all international, national, regional, and local meetings.

3. The priorities and possible partnerships outlined in the framework below are based on several youth initiatives, including the UNEP Global Youth Forum, the work of youth delegates who attended WSSD PrepCom II and III, the international youth review of Chapter 25 of *Agenda 21*, as well as input through the WSSD-youth caucus listserv.

2. Youth Priorities for Sustainable Development

4. Youth affirm that there are a number of prerequisites for the realisation of sustainable development. These include achieving peace, democracy, transparency in governments, the eradication of corruption, the elimination of discrimination in all forms, the stabilisation of the human population and living within the limits of the earth's carrying capacity. We also demand the right of indigenous people to self-determination, access to land and right to resources. We continue to stress that sustainable development is an effective alternative to militarization in ensuring peace.

5. We continue to demand poverty eradication by recognising the growing gap between rich and poor, we demand the immediate cancellation of the external debt of developing countries. All developed countries must meet the 0.7 % goal of ODA. We also demand the acknowledgement of the ecological and social debt of industrialised countries.

6. We call for empowerment of young people through self-reliant sustainable communities. Recognising that humans and nature are more important than the profits of Trans-National Corporations, we demand corporate accountability, and that international trade agreements are re-evaluated based on sustainability and, when necessary, are cancelled.

7. We demand access to information and empowerment through formal and informal education and information communication technology to promote an overall awareness on sustainable development. Sustainable livelihoods must be ensured through increased job training programs and increased employment opportunities.

8. We are upset with the minimal implementation of Chapter 36 of *Agenda 21* (Education). Basic education for children and youth (boys and girls) must be guaranteed by 2010. Sustainable development awareness must be integrated into all educational programs at all levels.

9. Excessive consumption in developed nations occurs at the expense of developing nations who themselves have the potential for excessive consumption in the future. This must include fair trade, life cycle product management, and climate justice through renewable energy. We further encourage governments and industries to remove unsustainable subsidies, adopt cleaner production technologies,

green taxes, minimise production of toxic chemicals and greenhouse gases and put limits on corporate advertising pollution in public spaces.

10. Without water there is no life for people or planet, yet we continue to use this resource in an unsustainable manner. Without forests, water resources cannot survive. We urge for immediate action to stop the destruction of forests. We encourage national governments, the UN system and stakeholders to educate citizens on sustainable water management. We insist on the implementation of international laws and treaties to protect freshwater supplies.

11. We demand governmental action in combating HIV/AIDS by advocating women's empowerment, safer sex, comprehensive sexual health education, availability of sterile needles and access to treatment. We further demand integrated practical policies to be financed to stabilise the pandemic by 2005 and reduce the spread by 2010.

3. Youth initiatives for possible partnerships

12. The youth make a strong call and appeal to all member states, UN agencies, civil society structures and business to reach out and invest in the skills and abilities of young people in a much more meaningful and effective manner. As youth we have shown willingness and commitment to play an active role in our development and that of our communities.

13. As part of the Johannesburg outcomes, partnerships must also be embedded in the values and principles of transparency, equality, equity, redress of past imbalances, and integrated participation.

Education

14. Engage in programmes to educate and train communities, including work-based education on sustainable development issues in partnerships with institutions of learning, trade unions, business, local authorities and other interested partners.

15. Utilise university campuses as sustainable models for other offices and institutions in society. Local student groups work together with the administration to use only renewable and sustainable resources on campuses.

16. Integrate sustainability knowledge in business, engineering and law educational programs (as well as all other higher education). Local partnerships setting up working groups at the local level for integration of sustainability awareness in their educational programmes.

17. Establish sustainable IT centers with virtual classrooms in rural communities, networked with universities. Using multi-media conferencing methodologies, young people can be trained in areas of their interest and learn new skills and techniques, such as organic sustainable agriculture techniques.

Youth participation in decision making

18. Form local youth arenas for participation in decision-making such as local youth councils with real power and adequate funding for their activities. This shall guarantee youth participation in decision-making on the local level.

Employment and poverty reduction

19. Seek partnerships aimed at increasing employment opportunities and sustainable livelihoods. Youth must participate in the development of national action plans on youth employment, including promotion of entrepreneurship amongst youth through provision of better information, training, and access to resources and professional mentoring programmes.

20. Engage in capacity-building programmes leading to employment; such as vocational training and micro-credit loans in order to create small-scale businesses. This could be done in partnership with local authorities and NGOs due to their direct interaction with communities at grassroots level.

Sustainable production and consumption

21. Set up guidelines to ensure advertisements that promote sustainable lifestyles amongst children and youth. Implement national consumer awareness campaigns in over-developed countries aimed at reducing excessive consumption.

22. Partner with local authorities to establish and maintain advertisement free zones in public parks, in schools and universities replacing advertisements with artwork created by youth and children or messages promoting individual lifestyle choices.

23. In addition to legally binding accountability rules, youth seek partnerships to hold corporations accountable for unsustainable production patterns. The overall aim is to avoid environmental degradation, violations of laws and human rights.

Freshwater

24. Work together towards, during and after the International Year of Freshwater in 2003 to educate younger generations on protecting, managing and respecting the world's water resources.

Health

25. Youth seek partnerships that support initiatives to engage in effective peer to peer sexual health education, implementing programmes aimed at promoting the concept and practice of positive living as well as put in place mechanisms to ensure behavioural change amongst youth in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

4. Conclusion

26. As youth, we will continue to make sustainable development a reality. We call for an ethical framework for sustainable development in accordance with national, regional and local priorities. We commit ourselves to the aforementioned priorities and commitments, and demand the implementation of concrete and timely actions for sustainable development. These must be effected within an acceptable global governance and financing framework which recognises the need for strengthening the economies of developing countries.

27. The 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 actions to ensure a better future!**

28. Youth must be part of that process!