

Mr Matti Niemi  
Youth Delegate of Finland

Mr Chairperson,

Finland fully aligns itself with the statement made earlier by Sweden on behalf of the European Union. On behalf of my country I would also like to congratulate you on your election as the Chair of the Third Committee.

Mr Chairperson,

It is an honour for me to address this committee as a youth delegate.

The young generation searching its way in today's world has enjoyed a long period of economic growth and peaceful conditions established after the last World War. In comparison with previous generations, young people are more educated and internationally oriented. The world awaits, so to speak.

In many ways, however, today's young people are not that well equipped. The Millennium Development Goals, for instance, aiming at achieving universal primary education and eradicating extreme poverty are still far from reach.

However, the most pressing issue is the sense that future is slipping away from today's youth. Today we are faced with a number of crises, from the world of finance to our common climate. In many ways the means of young people to affect their own destinies are limited.

This is why I am glad to see a growing number of Youth Delegates to attend this General Assembly. Genuine participation of the youth is to be understood as a prerequisite for building a more sustainable future.

I use the word crisis here intentionally, for I believe that every crisis is also an opportunity. A changing climate is providing us a chance to change course.

According to a recent study, around 40 percent of Finns under 30 years of age feel that climate change, caused by humans, creates insecurity. This is an interestingly high percentage compared to the 19 percent concerned about international terrorism.

As this is the case in a country where the impact of climate change is presumably less fundamental than in most parts of the world, not to mention the considerable high resources that we have for mitigating the consequences, one cannot help but wonder how less privileged young people see the situation.

One of the most important measures to raise a newly oriented generation is to increase the number of educators competent to inform young people on ways of sustainable lifestyle. Coupled with the Millennium Development Goal for achieving universal primary education by 2015, this could be a powerful tool.

Despite everything already done, our efforts should be increased, in order to repel the looming environmental crisis. The importance of incorporating Youth organizations and NGOs into the high-level work on reaching agreements on climate change should be acknowledged. Youth councils and NGO's are even more important than before in changing young people's attitudes on climate in the national and regional level.

Emission cuts and other measures must be implemented not just in the factories and plants, but also in playgrounds, schools and our everyday life. This should be done by setting targets and time limits.

In Finland the goal today is that 15 percent of all day care centres, schools and educational institutions should receive a certificate for their activities for sustainable development. The certificate programme is part of an international environment effort, the Eco-Schools program and supported by the United Nations Environment Programme.

Distinguished delegates,

Roughly 1 billion persons have been born after the Kyoto base year 1990. By 2050, when the temperature of the world should not have risen over 2 centigrade above its long term median, world's population is estimated to reach 9 billion - that is some 2.5 billion more than now.

Why should the generations yet unborn have to sacrifice their economic prosperity or wellbeing if we and the previous generations have chosen not to do so? The change must start with us, if there is to be change at all.

Mr Chairperson, fellow delegates,

Even with pressing environmental issues at hand, other matters of urgent nature should not be forgotten. The number of young people affected by violence - be it domestic, ethnic or other - is still alarming.

Youth is hit the hardest should a conflict become violent. In worst cases, an entire generation might be eradicated as a result of decisions made by others. This is why the role of young people should be acknowledged in crises prevention.

For example, building bridges between different groups tend to mitigate the effects of their conflicting interests. In the Balkans, a school developed to unite kids from different ethnic backgrounds has worked as a common platform for a newly oriented generation to flourish.

This kind of efforts should be encouraged and the role of young people in their design and implementation intensified.

The target proposed in the Secretary General's report on the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth on establishing mechanisms of

youth governance, participation and advocacy in all post-conflict regions is most welcome. It should, however, be broadened to include also conflict prevention.

To quote a well-liked Finnish poet, Lassi Nummi: Freedom is a dialog, an interaction, an equal conversation between humans.

Mr Chairperson, dear fellow delegates

The key point encompassing the different fields of youth policy we are here to discuss is, I believe, the possibility to alter one's own future.

Without the possibility to change one's own future, young people lose their *raison d'être*. This in turn leads to frustration and possible conflicts, which further set back the achievement of the goal for a more sustainable and prosperous future.

More emphasis should be put on the implementation of formulated goals and ensuring that set targets are met. Change is a process and we may not be here today to see that change. But we must give young people the means to accomplishing it themselves.

Thank You.