

EU Presidency Statement

BY

Ms. Linda Wallberg

Sweden's Youth Representative

64th Session of the General Assembly

United Nations
New York

Agenda Item 63

United Nations
New York
October 6th, 2009

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Young people don't want your promises, we want you to make a difference. We want you to assure us full participation, good health and a sustainable development of our societies. Whether we wish to or not we have to live with the consequences of your decisions today.

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to address you here today in the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly in relation to youth and wellbeing as a youth representative of Sweden currently the Presidency of the European Union.

"Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home - so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighbourhood he lives in, the school or college he attends, the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere."

These words are Eleanor Roosevelt's. She was an advocate for human rights, civil society and youth. Her words can still guide us when building our future.

Mr. Chairman,
Almost forty years ago Martin Luther King Jr. declared his dream built upon the equal worth of all individuals.

Just like Reverend King I have a dream, a vision of a society in which individuals have equal worth, equal opportunities of taking part and influence regardless of age, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and geographical origin. Where human rights are for everyone.

Another dream I want to tell you about is from Congo-Brazzaville, where I lived five years ago. A young person and his friends had a dream, they wanted to change their nightmares of war into dreams of hope and football. They dreamt about a place where they could perform their passion, football for their health and wellbeing.

Their dream came true, today there is a football school, gathering 300 children and youth every week, where young people are included and seen as a resource.

Mr. Chairman,
One important aspect for accessing one's human rights is participation. I say, with the words of Eleanor Roosevelt, that a decision making process where everyone contributes equally is one place of many where human rights begin.

Mr. Chairman,
Sustainable development is an issue of social justice, and must be met in solidarity beyond the limitations of short-term interests, to protection and promotion for the common good of all.

Furthermore, sustainable development is a basis for good health and wellbeing and therefore all political work. I say that a truly sustainable development is also one place where human rights begin.

Mr. Chairman,
Every individual's right to their own body and sexuality is fundamental to their health and wellbeing. Gender equality is crucial for making this possible. We need a focus on the positive aspects

of sexuality without at the same time neglecting the potential health risks.

Good health is a precondition to participate fully in society. At the same time participation in society and the possibility to influence one's own life has positive effects on health and wellbeing. Therefore it is important to have independent youth-led organisations recognised and supported to increase young people's participation and wellbeing in society.

I say that a good health and wellbeing, also for young people, is another place where human rights begin.

Mr. Chairman,

Half of the people in the world are children and youth. Progress has indeed been made, but the work in shaping our common future has to be done with, by and for young people.

It has to be with young people – because cooperation enables more perspectives. Including everyone as part of the solution.

It has to be by young people – because it is more effective. Many solutions, impressive entrepreneurship and innovation skills are embodied in young people. In addition, we also bring unique perspectives and available solutions that need to be taken into account.

It has to be for young people – because it is our right.

Every child and young person today inherits a world they did not contribute to shape. While children and youth participate actively in all levels of decision-making processes a sustainable development will be possible, while recognizing and strengthening human rights.

I stand here to say that a rights based approach to participation is yet another place where human rights begin.

Mr Chairman,

I have shared my dream of today, the dream of human rights that can be achieved, through participation, influence and power for all. This requires everyone's good health and wellbeing, as well as a truly sustainable development. – All places where I say human rights begin.

Young people don't want promises and resolutions. We want solutions. I call on you to take young people and a youth perspective seriously. Let us contribute to achieving sustainable development, recognize us as equal partners at all levels of decision-making regarding the well-being of society as a whole, and regarding youth in particular.

We are ready to act, let us act and interact. Thank you!