

## **Commission on Sustainable Development - Twelfth Session**

April 29, 2004

### **High Level Segment: Statements and interactive discussion – Ministers and Major Group Representatives: The Role and Contribution of Major Groups**

#### Statement by Youth and Children Major Group

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

Honorable ministers, distinguished delegates and members of major groups.

Imagine a child born in a slum, living in a shanty. Children need love, food, water, hygiene, a secure environment and knowledge to live and grow. Unfortunately this child is being deprived of almost all of her necessities. Her house and neighborhood have no sanitary facilities and she knows that within the walls of her home she and her family are not secure. In order to collect clean water, the girl and her mother walk 5 miles per day under the hot sun to a standpump. The water costs nearly half her family's daily income and she is at risk of harassment along the way. The trip takes one hour each way and filling the bottles can take as long, meaning that most days she does not have time to go to school. When she returns home she is ashamed to go to the bathroom because her neighbourhood has no latrine and she must urinate in the public field.

It is disappointing that this young person is not here to tell first hand the obstacles that she faces daily. We, the Youth Caucus, are here to provide a voice to this girl, and act as an intermediary between the youth living and acting at the grassroots level and the world's decision makers. More importantly we are here to engage in an intergenerational exchange of knowledge and information.

Here at the CSD we want to see the faces and hear the voices of those youth that are living the same reality as this child. Therefore, youth must be included in official delegations, particularly those from developing countries. We would like to congratulate the following delegations who supported youth as official delegates: Australia, Canada, Germany, Mexico, The Netherlands and Sweden. Further thanks is extended to Sweden for not only supporting a national official delegate but for sponsoring a youth representative from a developing country, initiating a north-south partnership. We encourage all delegations to follow these examples. To show our own commitment, the Youth Caucus has collected minimal funds from its members and is working with the Secretariat to ensure these resources assist in financing youth delegates from developing countries at the CSD-13. We welcome support from any delegations.

As youth, we feel it is a human right to have adequate sanitation and access to potable water. We are glad to see that although human rights is not a cross cutting issue many delegations mentioned this point.

Youth and children are important actors in the implementation of sustainable development, specifically within formal and informal education. For education to be effective, all countries should have a national strategy on Education for Sustainable Development. The United Nations Decade on Education for Sustainable Development is an opportunity to design, implement and monitor such strategies.

Children and youth of the world need secure and adequate places to live. To improve the lives of those living in squalor we call on all countries to adopt and strengthen national strategies on shelter as recommended by the Global Strategy for Shelter in the Year 2000. Included in implementation must be the adoption or adaptation of provisions for secure tenure, access to land, low-cost building materials and sufficient social and physical infrastructure for the urban and rural poor.

There are many youth led initiatives that are improving the reality of communities around the world, enabling them to live with dignity. But to have a greater impact we need your support, recognizing our efforts as partners and as a resource in developing a sustainable future. Already at this CSD-12 the Youth Caucus has begun discussing with WASH about developing a partnership for youth led progress in increasing the provision of safe water, sanitation and hygiene.

The leaders of today were the youth from yesterday. The youth of today are working in the present to sustain our future and the future of our own children. In our work we need to be aware that we are not only dealing with numbers and deadlines but with the lives of children and youth who are being deprived of dignity and opportunity.