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Thematic Discussions Integrated approach to addressing air pollution and atmospheric problems

It is estimated that three million people die as the result of air pollution each year worldwide. Research shows that fatal respiratory illnesses disproportionately affect youth. In fact, the leading chronic illness among children and youth in the United States is asthma. Globally, almost three billion people rely on biomass and coal as their primary sources of domestic energy, creating indoor air pollution that causes disease and mortality, especially among youth and women.

Young people play an active role in educating the public and especially their peers about cleaner cooking fuels, energy efficiency, alternative energy, and alternative transportation. Youth can also educate their peers on the direct connection between energy use and indoor and ambient air pollution in their communities.

For example, the Nigerian youth organization “Creative Response of Youth for Solutions to HIV/AIDS, Education and Environmental Problems” informs youth in rural areas about alternative sources of fuel that are cleaner, cheaper, and more easily transported to the rural population in a short period of time. The organization’s Future-Hope Community Project is also involved in advocacy to rural areas to raise the awareness of the young and to encourage their active involvement in energy issues.

In the North, European Youth for Action organizes an annual bike tour to raise awareness about the harmful effects of cars on local air pollution. For the past 15 years, the tour has run for two months, covering around 6,000 kilometres.

However, bringing adequate education to youth and children who are often most severely affected by poor indoor and ambient air quality has proven a constraint. Furthermore, the provisions of adequate health care facilities hinder the growth of healthy, active youth in many regions of the world.

To conclude, the youth would like to emphasize the importance of prompt action worldwide to reduce these issues of indoor and ambient air pollution, among other issues. Any delay in action results in a greater accumulation of pollution and further degradation of the environment. Thank you for the opportunity to speak from the floor Mr. Chairman.