

14th Commission on Sustainable Development
Official statement from youth and children to the thematic discussion on private sector
Delivered by Juan Hoffmaister
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Thank you very much, Mr Chair

I would like to share the perspective of the youth and children major group in reference to the role of private sector in addressing the challenges of energy for development, air pollution, climate change, and industrial development.

Distinguish delegates:

Over the last week the Commission has highlighted the role of business and industry in addressing the challenges that our generation will face. We recognize the importance of involving all stakeholders as we try to transition to a less carbon intensive world and in solving the economic, environmental and health issues for sustainable development. The private sector has an important role in implementing those efforts and in advancing access to renewable energy, but we cannot lose sight of the need for leadership, monitoring, and guidance from governments to guide private investment in areas of sustainable development.

I would like to recall Section III of Agenda 21, paragraph 30.3 where it is stated that "A positive contribution of business and industry, including transnational corporations, to sustainable development can increasingly be achieved by using economic instruments such as free market mechanisms in which the prices of goods and services should increasingly reflect the environmental costs".

Distinguished delegates, are these partnerships reflecting those environmental costs? Is the business and industry sector going to supply services to the poor of the world by virtue of the market? Are National Sustainable Development Strategies providing an enabling framework for business and industry to operate responsibly and efficiently and to implement longer-term sustainable policies?

*Governments which pretend that the private sector is going to take the lead in reducing poverty are deluding themselves at the peril of their people, and their own development. Business can be a partner, but governments must take on the responsibility of providing social services and investment in poor people that the private sector will not.

The discussions we have held over the last week point to mainstreaming partnerships with industry and business as the solution, but there has not being discussion on the possible misapplications of market mechanisms. Chapter 30 of Agenda 21 outlines activities to be implemented by governments to strengthen the role business and industry in sustainable development. We have increased dialogue on partnerships, but it is necessary to review the progress of implementing chapter 30 before prescribing market mechanisms as a solution to the challenges that brings us here today.

Moreover, we would like to kindly remind you that means of implementation and financial mechanisms to address energy for sustainable development, climate change, air pollution and industrial development in the context of Agenda 21 are diverse and collaborative. Chapter 33 of Agenda 21 underscores the role of the international institutions such as the GEF, WBG, and UN agencies to support governments in advancing sustainable development. We cannot point to the private sector alone for implementation, review of other means of implementation is necessary.

We have come to review work, not to anchor profit at the center of our efforts. We believe in environmental justice and encourage to remember that, as embodied in the Rio Declaration, "Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development".

We believe the private sector can play a role in achieving more sustainable development, but only if governments take leadership, and provide them with the policy framework and incentives to make that possible. In addition, we must recognize that the goals of Agenda 21 will never be accomplished entirely by the private sector. Government delegates do not ignore the responsibilities which you signed on to in Rio, and affirmed in Johannesburg.

Fellow human beings - indeed - we are the peoples, not the market.