



**Drought & Desertification-
Conference Room 2**

5/8/08

3:00- 6:00 pm

Thank you Madame Chair for the opportunity to speak. We, the Children and Youth Major Group, are the generation that will bear the burden of drought and desertification if the issues are neglected today. Because of this, we feel passionately about the issue of drought and desertification. Drought and desertification are not only scientific and political concerns—they have social and ethical dimensions as well. We hope that our discussions at this conference will help mitigate inequalities and work for a sustainable future.

We believe that sustainable development can be achieved by strengthening intergenerational partnerships. One way of doing this is by engaging youth in the development of strategies and action plans at both regional and national levels. Youth and children may also inherit knowledge of traditional sustainable agriculture practices and natural resource management. Learning about these practices is empowering to youth, as the knowledge will ultimately mitigate climate change.

Agricultural education can increase crop yields. The Kenyan Ministry of Agriculture established the Farmer Field School approach to learning about, and promoting, conservation of agriculture. The Field School project trained village-based facilitators on Conservation Agriculture principles such as *in situ* water harvesting methods and technologies. The project, which was carried out in arid and semi-arid regions, increased the small farmers' yields by 30 to 40%. The courses also encouraged a sense of community between the farmers.

Education, social action, and community development must integrate the sustainable management of resources. Simply put, agricultural education will achieve little in places where soil has been degraded to the point where it cannot sustain crops.



We firmly believe that sustainable development can be achieved through greater participatory involvement of children and youth in these projects.

In the morning panel, a delegate from Lesothos asked what is the relationship between drought & desertification and conflict. Drought and desertification have had increasingly negative effects on the agricultural sector. Children and youth are often the first to be affected by dwindling food supplies. The increase in children serving in armed conflicts has also been linked to food shortage and inadequate water supplies. Conflicts over scarce resources leave children and youth vulnerable to exploitation.

In conclusion, we strongly urge governments and civil society to strengthen intergenerational dialogue and partnerships—especially with youth—that will lead to concrete results. Drought and desertification are increasingly the root causes of social, political and economic factors, which negatively impact children and youth of the world.