

Children and Youth Major Group  
Major Group Dialog on Partnerships  
Friday 9 May 2008 at 4:30-6 pm Session

### **Youth Statement**

Thank you Mr. Chair. The Children and Youth Caucus understands partnerships as the mutual cooperation and responsibility of multiple entities working towards a common goal. That goal, as we all know, is sustainable development in the thematic areas. As the distinguished delegate from Indigenous Peoples noted, these thematic areas are interconnected. We as people are also all interconnected. Children and youth have a tremendous amount of knowledge and experiences to contribute to organizations, governments, and the international process. We also hold vital and fresh perspectives to incorporate into the decisions and application of policies.

But the children and youth are concerned that the valuable contributions we can make to organizations, governments, and the international process, is underutilized. As the partnerships statistics on the CSD website reveal, there is an extremely small amount of partnerships with Youth and Children relative to partnerships from other major groups. When we are excluded from policy development and project implementation because of an assumed lack of expertise in management details, we are also excluded from the opportunity to provide a holistic perspective on issues.

In particular, we would like to highlight the advantages that youth have to offer in partnerships. As we are not yet restricted to a particular sectoral interest, young people have greater opportunity to understand problems and come up with solutions from a holistic lens. We are able to move across many institutional platforms at the local, provincial and international level simultaneously. Youth can enhance partnerships because of our ability to comprehend and understand multiple perspectives and contribute to partnerships. Unlike some other contributors, youth come into the decision making and implementation process with no agenda other than a safe, just, and sustainable future.

The SARD Initiative provides us with a good example of a missed opportunity to establish a partnership between civil society and government. In its creation, the youth were represented by the CSD youth delegate, Calvin James, from Trinidad and Tobago. Following development of the SARD Initiative, he called for a global youth summit for sustainable food and agriculture. This summit has not yet been realized and illustrates how youth lacked the necessary support and resources in developing such initiatives. This lesson can teach us how youth can be brought to the table throughout all aspects of partnerships. In addition, partnerships can foster leadership development through investment in young people.

As part of a review year, delegates and observers are asked to listen to the stories and the lessons learned by others with an open mind and an open heart. As such, the youth caucus would like to acknowledge an internal weakness of our own that we have identified during this review session. Through the partnership case studies and stories of best practice, we have come to realize that the youth and children can better improve in the partnerships we develop with other governments and organizations. We must also be more active in soliciting and lobbying for the partnerships we desire. Sustainable Development requires joint collaboration of all countries and major groups. Although we are enthusiastic to further develop more partnerships, we also call upon you for help establishing more opportunities for us to be engaged. We invite governments and organizations to consider the critical role of youth partners and engage us in both the development of policy and the implementation of projects. Young people have fresh ideas and innovative solutions to the challenges we are discussing now. And as the constituency of the future, we are an integral element to any truly sustainable initiative. And, to remind you again, young people are not useless, we are simply used ... less.