

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES:

CONFERENCE ROOM 2

5/9/08

10:00 – 1:00 PM

Thank you, Madam Chair. As with all the issues that have been highlighted by preceding speakers, young people are also a constant denominator in issues pertaining to sustainable development. It is young people who are subject to the future that is being created, and it is young people who will continue creating the future.

As such, the young people must be equipped with the tools necessary to forge a future that is worth having.

As an illustration, it is known that current consumption patterns are unsustainable and have high economic, social, and environmental costs. These costs contribute to intensified climate change which, as the speaker from the Pacific SIDS has elaborated, has particularly negative influences on poor farmers in developing countries.

Each and every citizen of the world must know this, in particular the young people, who are uniquely positioned to adopt ethical consumption patterns they will maintain for the rest of their lives.

Young people must realise the impact contemporary lifestyles have. In particular, young people in developed nations must consider that the costs of their choices are disproportionately shared by the rest of the world. For example, Sub Saharan Africa holds 10% of the world's population, but accounts for only 2% of greenhouse gas emissions. Contrast this with the United States which holds 5% of the world's population, but is responsible for about a quarter of all greenhouse gas emissions.

In addition to education, individuals need information to make choices supporting ethical and sustainable consumption. There should be more information on the true environmental and social costs of products and services, beyond simply their economic value.

One example of informing consumers is through carbon footprint labels. Tesco, a supermarket chain and the UK's biggest retailer, has recently committed to providing information on all of their products that synthesizes the carbon dioxide emissions generated from the production and transportation of their commodities. The Children and Youth Caucus applauds this initiative, and urges members of Business and Industry to

further encourage such information provisions and awareness campaigns to promote corporate social responsibility.

A significant change in consumption behaviour requires both institutional and cultural influences. Government empower via school curriculum; Non-Governmental organisations can affect massive informal education, as can the media; regulations can be enacted on product labelling, while businesses can voluntarily inform and equally empower individuals.

Such remarkable transcendence to sustainable practices is possible with a multi-stakeholder presence – such as the one evidenced in this very session. We are on fertile ground to set in place change that will last.

Thank you.