

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 64th Session

STATEMENT BY NORWAY

YOUTH DELEGATE – JULIE LØDRUP AND JENS KIHLE

New York, 5 October 2009

Human rights- in an environmental perspective

Mr Chair, distinguished delegates,

It is an honour and pleasure to be taking part in the General Assembly of the UN and to be able to speak to you on behalf of the children and youth of Norway.

In 2008 we celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human rights, and this fall we will mark the 20th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. These conventions are as highly relevant today as when they were written, and perhaps even more so as we day by day can see what a comprehensive challenge our way of life is to the environment.

It is a strong belief amongst children and youth in Norway that the single biggest threat to humanity today is the condition of our planet and the condition of our environment. Environmental instability and climate change affect everything and everyone. However, the changes to our climate are not just. They affect disproportionately those who struggle the most already, and they are caused disproportionately by those who already have the most. Those who already have the most are also those who have the economic capacity needed to solve the climate crisis.

Those who have the most take certain rights for granted. The right to life, liberty and security, the realizations of economic, social and cultural rights, and the right to an adequate standard of living. These are basic universal human rights, yet not everybody enjoys them. The poorest have limited possibilities and reduced ability to shape their own lives and pursue their well-being due to harsh living conditions brought about by climate changes caused mainly by the industrialized countries.

The climate changes make clean water less accessible, the crops poorer and threaten the very soil on which they live, ultimately forcing them from their land. The subsequent shortage of resources heightens the possibility of armed conflicts, which in turn make the ones who are already most at risk, namely women and children, even more vulnerable.

Mr Chair,

It cannot be the ones who suffer the most that must use their limited resources to resolve problems others have caused. The countries that have the responsibility and the economic resources must take action. Climate change is not just. It affects disproportionately the generation that will face the burdens of the changes to our planet. And it is caused disproportionately by the generations that have held power during the last decades. These generations have closed their eyes to the challenge we are facing, leaving children and youth with the responsibility for the future.

By the year 2030, about 60 per cent of the world's population will be children and youth. But we, the young people are, not only the future we are also the present. And to influence the future, we need to influence the present. It is now that the decisions are being made. It is now that our society is being changed for decades to come. Therefore, our voices must not only be heard, but also listened to.

The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change tells us that climate change will make the living conditions for millions of people impossible, forcing them from their homes, to become climate refugees. They are the ones who will suffer. They are the ones being denied their human rights.

But this bleak future can be changed. We live in a time where we have the knowledge, the resources, the technology and human capacity to eradicate hunger, poverty and to bridge the abyss between those who have the most and those who have the least. The Millennium Development Goals were adopted to achieve this. Combating climate change and its consequences is a crucial part of succeeding in making the world a more just and peaceful place. We need to transform good intention into action, and we need to do it now. We have the tools of success in our hands. Now we need to show willingness to use them.

Mr Chair,

We urge all member states to fulfill their commitments as set out in the UN Millennium Development Goals.

We urge all member states to include young people as participants in the decision-making processes shaping our society.

We urge all member states to prioritise the poor and those most vulnerable to the consequences of climate change.

We urge all member states to join those, like Norway, who call for a firm commitment in Copenhagen to the long-term goal of restricting global warming to below two degrees Celsius.

Those shaping the politics regarding climate change in the United Nations, in Copenhagen in December, and in our home countries carry a great responsibility on their shoulders. Millions of young people across the world are waiting for political leaders to make sound decisions about our planet's future - about our future. We ask you, please do not disappoint us.

Thank you, Mr Chair.