



Statement by the

## German UN Youth Delegates

at the General Assembly 2011, New York

Thank you for giving me the floor.

Dear chair, honorable delegates, honorable youth delegates,

I have the honor to speak to you as one of the two official youth delegates from Germany. We represent the youth living in Germany at the UN and have the ability to look back on an enriching and eye-opening year. Over the last couple of months, we traveled throughout Germany to meet young people and encourage them to tell us about their visions, their challenges and how they see themselves contributing to society. Through this, we encountered three priorities that we would like the UN to focus on:

First of all, the **strengthening of youth participation**, second, the topic of **international migration** on the agenda of the UN and third, the **importance of sustainable development**.

Allow me to begin with a call for YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING. Far too often, participation is misused as an instrument of symbolic politics. But youth participation must mean going beyond having nice dialogue, engaging in half-hearted consultation and taking appeasing photos. It must rather involve youth in the entire decision-making process, beginning with the task of defining relevant issues and ending with the implementation and evaluation of real policies. The world program of action for youth, for example, formulates how youth participation can be integrated into national youth policies. This is a start, yet it lacks clearly developed indicators that measure the success or failure of member states. Furthermore, young people are still looking for a legal framework that defines this co-decision-process. Municipal regulations, national laws and policies as well as the rules of procedures of international organizations like the UN do not fully provide this yet.

Integrating youth in the actual decision-making processes will make sure that the right questions are asked. Youth delegate programs at the UN provide an important tool that ensures the consultation and participation of youth in this committee. But look around you, honorable delegates, and you will see that there are still seats available for your national delegation to include youth representatives!

As a bridge between young people on one side, and governmental policies and international negotiations on the other, youth-led organizations with democratic structures fulfill a crucial role. In Germany, public funding under the "child and youth plan" of the federal government is available to self-governing youth organizations, without interfering with their program and focus of work. Without sufficient funding, many relevant projects designed by young people and meant for young people would not be possible. When young people organize themselves and put their own visions into practice, they learn how to contribute directly to democracy and for a lifetime.

The second priority mandated to us is that of MIGRATION AND YOUTH. The long-term effects of migration are still not particularly well addressed on the political agenda and are not yet connected to the WPAY. We must emphasize the importance of this transnational, cross-border issue which has the potential to induce major political conflicts that will especially affect the younger generations. Already today, employment related migration is significantly increasing within overall migration activities. Highly industrialized countries need this immigration to



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tackle the acute challenges resulting from demographic change. Unfortunately they regulate migration only in terms of their economic interests. The one sided approach of allowing access to skilled and specialized work forces, but limiting that of less qualified workers, neglects an important source of human capital. Migration needs to be understood as an immense opportunity and not a threat to a society.

Linked to the topic of migration is also the displacement of refugees, as currently seen in the Horn of Africa. The insecurity related to the legal status of refugees, especially that of internally displaced persons, demands an international approach. We must strive to ensure security and human dignity for all people regardless of their country of origin.

We are all aware of the alarming UN-studies regarding the reasons for migration. Natural disasters, fueled by Climate Change, dramatically increase the movement of people across and within national borders. Furthermore, the state of unequal economic development and the continuing financial crisis have worsened the already significant unequal chances for a decent living. These inequalities, faced especially by children and youth, must be elevated to the top of the international youth agenda.

The third priority area is SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. Since the Earth Summit 1992 in Rio, civil society has gained much greater influence. An appropriate way to strengthen this involvement is through volunteer programs, like those offered by UNV. Through such volunteer programs people take responsibility for their own life and for the lives of others. Moreover, we ask the private sector to take up their role. Enterprises should be obliged to implement the standards of sustainable development at all levels, for example fair labor standards. They should also invest financially in the transformations needed.

But all of these efforts can only be successful if politicians set the right course: Young people demand a more comprehensive view of policies, not limited to the next round of elections. Every state should develop strategies for sustainable development, which should also take into account environmental, social and economic questions.

Education for sustainable development is key as we take steps towards a sustainable society. It must therefore be implemented in both formal and non-formal trainings. That's the only way we can really generate awareness and change attitudes!

Political decisions taken or not taken today, whether on sustainable development or on the root causes of migration and displacement – will shape the world in which we, the youth of today, will become the adults of tomorrow. That is why heightened youth participation is needed. I hope that my statement has helped to make clear the wishes and aspirations of young people in Germany. I also hope that they will find their voices amplified and reverberated by my words here today at the United Nations

*Thank you.*

German UN Youth Delegates:

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