



Statement by the

German UN Youth Delegates

to the UN General Assembly

Distinguished Mr. Chairman, Honorable Delegates, Dear Youth Delegates,

In the past year one word has been dominating public discussions: 'The Crisis' – not only in reference to the financial crisis, but also to climate change. At the same time, we cannot ignore that there is still a food crisis in many parts of the world and that we have an ever-growing gap between rich and poor. This domination of injustice needs to be changed immediately.

While a crisis by definition is an unstable and dangerous situation, we must keep in mind, a crisis is also always a chance – right now we are facing the short window of opportunity to reshape this world. Parts of the way have been set by the Millennium Development Goals. Nevertheless, many states still fail to fulfill their promises. This is unacceptable!

Based on numerous discussions with many young people in Germany we want to express our concerns as German Youth Delegates. Even though the groups were very diverse the discussions led to four common issues essential to the life of young people and the future for our one world: climate change, education, genuine participation and global youth rights. Those we will present to you, honorable delegates, now.

Our planet provides us with everything we need in life. In today's global society we often ignore the limits set by nature. The growing number of devastating natural disasters proves our irresponsibility. Climate change as its most important factor is spreading like a vicious virus across our planet. It has the most severe effects on vulnerable members of society such as youth. Our and future generations are the ones on whom the burden falls.

Hence, young people and youth-led organizations all over the world have united in the past years to fight for one goal: to put an end to the dramatic speed in which "the virus of climate change" is spreading.

However, we cannot be successful without all states finally accepting their responsibility in this battle. Will they grasp the chance in Copenhagen and seal the deal? Young people and youth organizations will be present to remind your states' representatives of their responsibility for a fair deal! Youth has to be recognized as a key stakeholder in the battle against climate change. Sustainable environmental education needs to be part of the curriculum in formal and non-formal education.

Since our world is changing faster and faster, the expectations for youth are increasing rapidly. We risk losing young people and their potentials.

Education should not be reduced to an economic value disregarding the importance of a holistic approach to and non-formal education. Both are necessary for young people to shape their personal identity and become responsible members of society. It is a dangerous and disconcerting development that there is hardly any leisure time left.

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Independent youth and youth-led organizations, parties as well as charity are providers of non-formal education. They have to be valued and supported by governments, schools and other stakeholders. The decrease in voluntary work of young people in those organizations poses a threat to democracy and human self-determination.

Only if young people grasp the idea of democracy, they can fill it with life. They are the ones who really know which changes are needed to improve their situation. Therefore, full and effective participation is needed. Youth has to be empowered to take responsibility starting on a local level in order to transfer these experiences onto a national and international level.

Youth delegates at the United Nations' General Assembly are evidence for effective and direct participation. Honorable delegates, we demand all member states to include youth representatives into their national delegation and extend the program to other international conferences such as the UNFCCC's.

In addition, all young people have to be able to take part in elections as an essential instrument of democracy. Thus the age limit has to be decreased to fifteen, when by UN definition the period of youth begins. In order to integrate all young people into society we need a new definition of citizenship: the right to vote and to be elected must be a question of residence not of nationality.

To enable youth to participate it is inevitable that free and independent media provide a full range of age-based information.

Youth is a period in life of transition – after childhood a young person is on the way to adulthood. It is the most important period of becoming a responsible member of society.

Consequently, to meet the requirements of young people that make up half of the world's population, their rights have to be recognized. So far only in some parts of the world Youth Charters have already been ratified. We ask for a global convention on the rights of youth that allows young people to reach their full potential. It must include the protection against discrimination of any kind. It must ensure youth autonomy, the highest health standard, the right to decent work, to education and the right of domicile all over the globe.

Many young people we met in Germany have raised one further issue: the demand for an ambitious follow-up program for the Millennium Development Goals that will be fulfilled without exceptions and excuses. One important step in this process, which will include youth as an essential partner is the World Youth Conference in Mexico City in 2010.

Responsible behaviour of all stakeholders guided by the principles of good governance and sustainability is necessary. We ask you, honourable delegates, to respect this in all your decisions.

This leads to one simple question:

Will the states of our common world, take over responsibility for the future?

And keep one thing in mind: The future starts now!

„It's up to YOU! – shape this world“

