

## **UNEP TUNZA Youth Advisory Council**

### **Youth Statement for the 8<sup>th</sup> Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, Jeju Island South Korea**

Our purpose, as youth representatives from the TUNZA Youth Advisory Council is to present the youth view. This paper was written based on the contribution of different youth-led environmental groups from around the world on the urgent and problematic topics of Water, Sanitation and Human Settlements.

#### **Water & Sanitation**

‘There is no dignity in living in a place without water and sanitation. People are ashamed of the conditions they live in and often do not know what to do to change this reality’ (4<sup>th</sup> Tunza Youth Advisory Council)

We call on the civil society and ministers from around the world to focus on the root cause of the problem; **water and sanitation are major issues that must be treated as a priority.**

These social, cultural, economical and political issues mainly affect the poor people in developing countries although it is the human right to have a sanitation system and to have access to potable water. Water can never be treated as a commodity and cannot be subjected to market-driven rules. With this focus, people will know their need to preserve their resources.

- **Educate** children and youth on the preciousness of water and ways to preserve this resource through youth access to all types of education; alternative-learning structures reflecting economic and social needs and incorporation of concepts of environmental awareness and sustainable development included throughout the curricula. (Agenda 21, chapter 25)
- **Capacity building** can take our societies to greater heights. How can people improve their situation if they don't know how? Develop educational and awareness programs specifically targeted to the youth population. (Agenda 21, chapter 25)
- **Youth empowerment** -Give support to programmes, projects, networks, national organizations and youth non-governmental organizations to examine the integration of programmes in relation to their project requirements, encouraging the involvement of youth in project identification, design, implementation and follow-up. (Agenda 21, chapter 25)
- Competing uses of water resources should be balanced between **preserving or restoring** ecosystems and human needs. (Johannesburg Plan of implementation chapter 25, WSSD, 2002) Two large dams (those at least 15 meters high) are built each day for the last 50 years that damage ecosystems and disturb freshwater management. Building large-scale hydro dams that are environmentally harmful must be curbed whilst smaller scale, local hydro can be beneficial and could be encouraged if surrounding areas and populations are taken into account.

**Note:** The UN General Assembly adopted a draft resolution (58<sup>th</sup> session) proclaiming the period from 2005 to 2015 as the International Decade for Action, 'Water for Life', starting on World Water Day, 22 March 2005. The main aim is to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of reducing, by half, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water.

### **Recommendations**

- The international community, through ODA and other means, must invest USD 350 billion in the next 10 years in order to meet MDG on water (according to the data by the World Bank, this would increase the current spending on water by 35 times).
- There has to be national legislation and international legislative frameworks that will monitor activities of multinational companies and other actors of the private sector and ban privatisation and monopolisation of freshwater resources.
- The water sector has to be a public sector supported by a strong legislative framework that is accountable and transparent.
- There should be about 5 litres of free water per person per day and then it should be a progressive scale: the more you use the more you have to pay.

### **Human Settlement**

'It is the human right to have safe and healthy shelter and to co-exist in a psychologically healthy environment' (4<sup>th</sup> Tunza Youth Advisory Council)

We call on the civil society and ministers from around the world to **further acknowledge the cross-cutting problem of unsustainable human settlement** caused as a result of: inappropriate urban planning, displacement of people in war-zones, refugee crisis, privatization of housing and not recognising the intrinsic value of biodiversity and natural ecosystems. It also further increases the grave threat to the health of humanity by exacerbating the crises caused by deforestation, biodiversity loss, land degradation, adverse climate change and global warming.

It is the responsibility, the obligation and in the vested interests of governments to make it economically feasible for people to live in rural areas and to encourage the sustainable development of urban cities.

### **Recommendations**

- Development of **secondary cities** to assimilate adequate share of population growth. (UNEP-ROWA contribution on Human Settlement) This transformation to cities of sustainability will require cooperation between various levels of government, resource managers, the business sector, community groups and all citizens. (Article 170 of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation)
- **Resettlement programs** should be developed where appropriate to address the specific problems of displaced populations in their respective countries. (Agenda 21, Chap. 7)
- **National shelter strategies** should be adopted or strengthened by all countries, with targets based on the principles and recommendations contained

in the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000. People should be protected by law against unfair eviction from their homes or land. (Agenda 21, Chap. 7)

- **Support** the shelter efforts of the urban and rural poor, the unemployed and the no-income group by adopting or adapting existing codes and regulations, facilitating their access to land, finance and low-cost building materials. Special attention must be given to marginalized groups as well; authorities should work to empower those whose voices are not always heard.
- **Promote** the regularization and upgrading of informal settlements and urban slums as an expedient measure and pragmatic solution to the urban shelter deficit. (Agenda 21, Chap. 7)

### **Conclusion**

Human settlement, water and sanitation are not only environmental issues but are also social, cultural, economical and political. Hence, all governments, young people and civil society must work together to overcome these issues. What we must also know is that we are not only dealing with numbers and deadlines but with human lives that are being deprived of dignity and the right to life as human beings.

### **Members of the 4<sup>th</sup> UNEP Tunza Youth Advisory Council**

With inputs from environmental youth organizations from all around the globe