



Opening Statement Rio+20

Good morning and thank you Mr Chair,

As representatives of children and youth we are here to articulate and build our vision of a sustainable future. This planet, our common home, has been misused for too long and the time for change is now.

Our vision of the world is one that embraces social equity and environmental justice, where prosperity is evaluated by the principles and values of our collective consciousness. Humankind should be considered as a succession of generations and not only a sum of countries.

We are growing up in a world where global economic activity has overstepped our planetary boundaries. Billions of people around the world struggle to fulfill basic needs, social injustices pervade society and environmental degradation looms. The current challenges are unprecedented and never before have we had to react with such decisiveness and action. It is why we are here.

20 years of negotiating our future now culminate in 50 sheets of paper, and the fundamental vision we have is on the brink of being bracketed and deleted.

While some progress has been made, we have certain 'red lines' that must be included and the Rio+20 outcome agreement must include the following:

We must acknowledge, honestly, the serious challenges posed by humanity's pressure on the planet's boundaries.

We must guarantee that global environmental institutions have the ability and resources to protect the environment.

We must protect the voices of future generations through establishing an ombudsperson.

We must recognize our common but differentiated responsibilities, allow for the transfer of knowledge and technology, and the building of genuine capacity to engage intelligently with it.

We must affirm that even as resources become strained, rights to food, water and health are basic principles of justice are our sexual and reproductive rights.

We must acknowledge that conflict is intrinsically linked to sustainability.

These are our redlines and currently the document has none of these.

Children and youth feel enormously frustrated by this grossly insufficient outcome document. We have heard the same frustrations from member states, other members of civil society, and from those protesting outside these plenary halls. We stand in solidarity with them to urge you, leaders of the world, in the next three days to do what you must for yourself, for us, and for our children - we are a collective. This is not just about the Future We Want, it is the Future We Need.

We need cooperation and collaboration.

We need innovation and creativity.

We need to re-found the values of sustainability, equity, justice and respect for human rights.

We need to recognise that material resources are finite, but human potential is not.

We have the capacity and the will to enact change, but we need a process that truly values our input and includes us fully, to ensure the voice of the inheritors of the future are given a hearing in the present. Short term interests dominate 'business as usual'. To truly defend our futures - your legacies - we need institutional mechanisms that ensure intergenerational justice.

Rio+20 is our chance. It is a critical moment in the history of our lives. Let us decide well and with wisdom and compassion.

Thank you