

German UN Youth Delegates



Commission on Social Development, New York

Statement delivered by Celina Sharon Grepler and Ozan Solmus

09th February 2015

Distinguished chair, honorable delegates, dear fellow youth delegates,

Today, we are addressing you, the Commission for Social Development, as two German Youth Delegates. Being the tenth generation of youth delegates from Germany we can say we are not only representing 20 million young people in Germany but that we have also met thousands of them personally on our tour in and beyond Germany - in schools, in sport clubs, in political parties, in prisons, on protest marches, at scout meetings.

We are addressing a commission that has been working on the Implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration since 1996. A declaration that demands - among other things – the eradication of poverty, full employment, social integration and an end to discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, religion or gender. These are agreed upon goals, common terms. Hence, today we will not urge for any other goals other than the Copenhagen ones. But we are urging for the **need of action, implementation and evaluation**. We need to be aware about why we are actually gathering here and why social development should be at the centre of all endeavors for peace – and thus at the centre of all our work.

Peace, honorable delegates, in its very heart requires social justice and equality of opportunity. We should understand peace not as the absence of war but as an attitude towards life, a state of mind. Institutions in this context may prevent war, but they may not build peace as long as they do not set a social framework that enables everyone to reflect his or herself within a commonly shared environment. Ending discrimination requires the **recognition of diversity**. The ability to assess and question one's own norms and standards is essential for every individual and society in order to persistently guarantee non-discrimination. In this manner, young people in Germany think that it should be every peace-desiring government's and society's duty to preach social and cultural pluralism and to reach inclusiveness in the sense that everyone is needed and that there is space for every person willing or wanting to join in.

Social peace within a society or within a state demands absence of discrimination. Nevertheless these days we, not only as young people but equally as citizens of a European country, find ourselves confronted with the soaring phenomena of Antisemitism and Islamophobia. Thus we want to emphasize: as long as a person feels compelled to justify his or her beliefs – no matter if Jewish, Christian, Muslim, or Atheist, we sustain discrimination and as a consequence prevent social development. So we, on behalf of 20 million young people living in Germany, appeal to everyone to overcome the Fear of the Otherness. Furthermore we call upon member states to **foster a policy of dialogue and mutual understanding**, irrespective of religious views.

All in all, honorable delegates, pluralistic societies are a necessity in order to achieve **social sustainability** and peace as a consequence of it. Societies that refuse to accept their own pluralism neglect their potential. We should not forget: a society, which consists of many different thinkers, has a lot of different solutions to offer. Future challenges can be very diverse, and societies, which are seeking to overcome such challenges, should be equally diverse.

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Honourable Chair,

This year's theme is "rethinking" and "strengthening" Social Development.

"Rethinking": Prior to 2015, young people have been at the forefront of social movements and have led dialogues on global development. They have continually demonstrated their progressive ideas and forward thinking on issues of concern. We were all born **without prejudices**, I am sure, we all agree on that – let us all think back and be without bias in all the important negotiations to come.

We understand "rethinking" not as giving up our core values or questioning Human Rights but as **reconsidering empirical consequences we draw**. To name but two examples: First: Young people in Germany do not question the value of family. We consider family as a place of people, no matter which sex they might have, who care for each other as a valuable family. Secondly: Young people in Germany want to see a fair society in Germany as well as on the world as a whole, but this, as a consequence, can't be reached by exclusion, discrimination and restricted immigration policies (as unfortunately exist in Europe). To foster our core values, to foster human rights, to foster social development, we need to be open for new language and new approaches!

To "strengthen" social development in the long-term, we require a strong **intergenerational exchange**. For intergenerational exchange to be effective we all need to **take responsibility** and establish strong mechanisms as the WPAY, to transfer knowledge from one generation to another. Non-formal and formal education as well as a strong civil society create the basis for exchange across age, knowledge and experience. We therefore demand to put **education for all** and **life-long** education opportunities at the top of the agenda and to include civil society initiatives at all stages of policy-making, implementing, monitoring and evaluating. However, intergenerational exchange also means to **hand over responsibility** and to enable young people to act according to their views. We demand to **involve young people** as partners and right holders in all policy-making processes at the local, regional, national and international level, especially **in the Post-2015 Process**, and to support young people to develop and express their aspirations freely and directly. To think intergenerationally can really make a difference and is a key to sustainable development.

Distinguished chair, honourable delegates,

How can we rethink and strengthen social development before **evaluating the implementation** of agreed international Programmes of Action? We call upon all member states to consider the Secretary General's indicators for the evaluation of the World Program of Action for Youth, to draw the lessons learned and step forward. We have already agreed upon steps to be taken, all we have to do is connect what we have, the World Programme of Action for Youth, to what is in the process now, the Post-2015 policy framework – a symbiosis! If we want to bring positive change in the world we need to trust in but also evaluate our impact. We should pass on what we believe in, but we also need to be open to unconventional approaches, new thoughts and new languages. "Leave no one behind!" is our devise – it is now up to all of us to really put people at the centre of development as agreed upon 20 years ago. Let us get down to basics. Let us "**rethink**" the consequences we

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draw from our core values and the impacts they may have on people in order to “**strengthen**” **social development** in the short and long term

Thank you for your attention.

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