

## **10<sup>th</sup> International Dialogue on Population and Sustainable Development**

**Berlin, 24-25 Oct.**

### **Opening Session**

**Reply on speech of Kate Gilmore, UNFPA by youth representatives**

**Nelly Lukale, Kenya (World YWCA) and Ivens Reis Reyner, Brazil, (Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights)**

Firstly, thank you for the invitation to participate in this dialogue. We are grateful for the chance to speak to you and to respond to Ms Gilmore's address. Indeed, it is a special opportunity for us to be here sharing this space with so many different stakeholders, with people from around the globe, all discussing the future of our world and our societies. This year's dialogue is even more special because a third of the participants are young people - something we value as an important demonstration of the commitment of our organisations to include young people in decision making processes and of the commitment of young people to effecting change.

There are 7 billion people in the world right now, we all live in different contexts and face diverse realities and States need not only to continue promoting human rights for all the 7 billion but also to respect and fulfil those rights.

Today, more than half of our 7 billion are young people. As a group we are hugely diverse. We are men, women, intersex and transgender people; gay, lesbian, bisexual and queer and questioning people; we are sex workers; people living with HIV; migrants and refugees and people living with disabilities. Regardless of our backgrounds or which specific populations we might be a part of, young people have rights that need to be respected and upheld. Our sexual rights and reproductive rights are human rights and must be recognised as such. If we want to work towards sustainable development, we cannot afford to continue ignoring the rights of young people. We want every young person to have access to information, education and services that optimise sexual and reproductive health. This includes access to the widest range of contraceptive methods and to safe and legal abortion.

Young people, and particularly young women, must be empowered to participate and contribute equally and, simultaneously, we must also continue to actively involve men

in promoting gender equality. To be successful in this, quality education, including comprehensive sexuality education, and employment opportunities must be guaranteed. A young woman who accesses education and has enough information to decide if and when to have children will have a better chance of entering the workforce and contributing fully in society.

When we talk about people, development and the environment we must remember that although population dynamics do have implications on the environment and food security, they are not the sole factor. Richer countries with stagnant or negative population growth have been significant drivers of climate change. On the other hand, poorer countries with rapid population growth often contribute the least to climate change and suffer the most with their livelihoods and food security affected. It is critical that we question our consumption patterns, and more generally, the development models of not only middle and low-income but also of high-income countries.

We have enough resources to feed our population now and in the future. But in order to maintain ecosystem services and biodiversity we have to make sure that resources are managed in a sustainable way. Therefore, we also have to address issues like land-grabbing, biofuel production, production of cash-crops and so forth which reduce the area available for food production and which will ultimately influence energy and trade policies.

We need to put the money where our mouths are. Addressing these pressing issues requires our governments to take a step forward to ensure that they have enough money to meet our needs and that it will be spent efficiently and in the most useful way. Governments of all countries have to make sure that money is spent on action rather than on bureaucracy, they should be held accountable for the use of funds and young people should be involved in all stages of decision making and control. And finally, corruption and nepotism must not be tolerated.

As you can see there's plenty to do. Governments, civil society and the private sector

have made commitments in the past and will be committing to new goals and documents soon, but we all need to ensure that this does not mean having too many differing agendas. We need an agenda that addresses our needs in a comprehensive way, we need acceptable and achievable goals and, last but not least, we need real commitment to achieve change. We look forward to working with you to make sure that this happens. Thank you.