

THE YOUTH DECLARATION TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY, THE HAGUE, NETHERLANDS

We, the Youth of the World, want our voices be heard in all the decision-making that is taking place at the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. On the occasion of the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties we met in The Hague, The Netherlands on 13-18 April 2002 and agreed on the following.

We know the importance of biological diversity in sustaining our lives and making this world a better place for people and nature to live in harmony.

We understand that there are threats to biodiversity and its disastrous consequences are now being felt.

We do not have enough scientific knowledge on the issue of biological diversity and we are aware that we do not have political power to make major differences in the world, but we do have sufficient knowledge to know what is happening to our world.

We recognise that problems associated with biological diversity concern everyone and that we need to act urgently as decisions made will greatly influence our future.

We need to speak out and ensure that our voices are heard and considered in all the decision-making that will take place here in this Convention on Biological Diversity and succeeding meetings or conferences on the said issue.

Forests

We understand the effects of rapid deforestation and loss of biodiversity of our forest areas. Forests are greatly needed; they are sites of immense biological diversity.

We, the youth would want to emphasise that:

- *Primary or ancient forest must be saved;*
- *Corruption in the trade of forest products and illegal logging must be stopped;*
- *Conventions and international regulations must be established on the trade of forest products;*
- *Poverty, amongst other factors lead to the degradation of our forests and must be fought in many fronts as it is equally related to the loss of forest biodiversity;*
- *Indigenous peoples and other stakeholders of the forests must be protected;*
- *Education at all levels and public awareness is necessary;*
- *Governments must realise that the benefits of proper forest management and the maintenance of biological diversity shall in the long run, bring economical as well as environmental advantages to everyone.*

Genetic resources

We also understand the importance of genetic resources and we need to let you know that:

- *Genetic resources are a precious asset of the entire humanity and cannot be used only for the benefit of a certain country or corporation and should be open for everyone to benefit from;*

- *We believe that all patenting on the benefits of genetic resources must not be allowed;*
- *Legal measures must be provided to secure the benefit sharing between developed and developing countries in the use of genetic resources;*
- *We are concerned of the potential threat of inhumane uses of genetic resources, such as genetic manipulation and production of biological weapons; and that we demand that the governments provide regulations to prevent this unethical and improper activity;*
- *Genetic resources must be preserved from genetic erosion and we insist that all nations cooperate in the protection of genetic resources.*

Participation in decision-making

Finally, we would like you to know that on the issue of participation in decision-making:

- *Participation and cooperation of the entire world, including the youth, is vital for the preservation of the world's biodiversity;*
- *The involvement of indigenous peoples is especially important as their valuable knowledge from living close to nature can be put to great use in the conservation of biological diversity;*
- *The role of women, children and the youth cannot be ignored;*
- *Workable and sound policies are necessary for the preservation of the world's biological diversity.*

To guarantee the future of the youth, we resolve to:

- *Organise an international network, starting with the participants in this youth meeting in the Hague, for continuous exchange of information and discussions;*
- *Assist each other in the establishment, management and implementation of activities of youth organisations in our respective countries for various environmental concerns in each particular state through the exchange of experience and advice;*
- *Come-up with specific, workable action plans that can be undertaken by the youth;*
- *Participate in all meetings of the Convention on Biological Diversity in the future to convey the concerns of the youth;*
- *Deliver the discussions held and the results achieved in this meeting to the youth of our respective countries;*
- *Continue to speak our ideas to the world through contribution of articles to the media;*
- *Utilise various media communication such as television, radio or internet to promote public awareness, especially of the youth.*

We, the Youth, gathered in this meeting, hereby urge that this document be adopted by the sixth Meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity here at the Hague, on 18 April 2002.