

Speech of International Youth at the Opening Ceremony of CBD COP10

Nagoya, October 18 2010

We, young people from around the world, your sons and your daughters, are the future at stake. We have been born into a world under threat, but we are coming of age in an unprecedented moment of international collaboration and our hearts lift to see those who have come together for change. We look up to you, our leaders and representatives, we turn to you for guidance and inspiration, and yet we watch with growing horror as biodiversity continues to be allowed to disappear. You grew up in a world whose richness and diversity awed the imagination. Your children deserve the same. We are here to work with you, and we will fight fiercely to hold our governments accountable, to protect our planet's diversity for our children and for generations to come. We are certain this is as possible as it is necessary, and we are trusting you to take immediate and sustained action. Esteemed women and men of the Convention, we offer to you the undaunted energies and idealisms of youth. We have strong ideas for what needs to happen and how to make it real. Let us join you.

The loss of biodiversity currently being debated is not something that indirectly affects us in the future. It is an urgent threat that affects every one of us, especially future generations. As the loss of biodiversity continues, the more extensive use of restoration will be required, creating a financial demand far greater than the cost of preventative means. Moreover, once biodiversity is lost it is almost impossible to completely restore. All the more, it is essential that biodiversity loss be halted as soon as possible. In order to do so, the post 2010 target must be adopted here at COP10. It is of crucial importance that this target be time-bound and an agreement that is realized "by 2020," as written in option 2 of the mission statement. We would like to urge Parties to adopt a comprehensive legally binding Protocol on Access and Benefit-Sharing. The Protocol must ensure the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge of local communities and indigenous peoples. Priority should also be given to a sufficient compliance mechanism which ensures that effective checkpoints are included.

You are the leaders of today. You must ensure that we have a world to lead tomorrow.

