

A Call for Intergenerational Collaboration – Make Change Happen

26 May 2007

As young people from across the world who have gathered as delegates to the 2007 CIVICUS World Assembly, we call all people of this assembly and the world to adopt this document as a personal resolution to action. We view this as the first step of an extended intergenerational dialogue and collaboration to tackle the key challenges we presently face. These challenges will continue to affect us, and future generations, everyday for the rest of our lives.

A key strength of CIVICUS as a world alliance lies in its firm roots in the global South, and its ability to gather and mobilise organisations and individuals from across the world. This unique capacity will be further strengthened by increased inclusion of and collaboration with young people.

The issues below are *all* interrelated and their solutions must be innovative, integrated and holistic, taking into account the interconnectedness of human and environmental concerns. The lived experience of and impact upon marginalised groups, including but not limited to gender, disability and socio-economic status, must be vital considerations in all action to address these issues.

This is a call for every individual to mobilise their power to effect change in their own sphere of influence, and to act together to contest the continued existence of inequality and injustice.

● Intolerance and discrimination

Young people have inherited a world where they are subjected to bullying, intolerance, discrimination, social conflict and genocide on the basis of age, sex and gender, race, class, sexual orientation, religion, disability and other social factors. We have had enough.

Therefore, we call on all human beings to interact and engage with compassion and respect; celebrating our differences and diversity, and serving as examples for our communities as we act to eliminate intolerance and discrimination in all its forms.

● Poverty

The systematic inequalities and double standards of the current global social, economic, and political systems continue to condemn many young people to a poverty-stricken existence. Factors such as unfair production, trade practices, and policies; corruption; transnational corporate hegemony; and the rich-world domination of key international institutions have a profound effect on the lives of young people across the world.

Therefore, we call for a zero-tolerance policy on poverty. We commit – in our spheres of influence – to seek out innovative solutions, promote fair trade and redistribution of wealth, and act to end poverty in all its forms.

● HIV and AIDS

HIV and AIDS are leading to the death of millions of young people, leaving others as orphan heads of their households, and affecting every aspect of socio-economic life. Actions to reverse the spread of HIV and AIDS are hampered by economic interests, lack of access to treatment, lack of political and corporate will, and individual social irresponsibility.

Therefore, we commit to protect ourselves by acting in a responsible manner, and being tested for HIV/AIDS; and call on all other individuals to do the same. We commit to act – in our spheres of influence – against the spread of HIV and AIDS, and to extend the treatment for those infected; to hold civil society, governments and pharmaceutical companies accountable for their action or inaction; and to ensure the social inclusion of those infected and affected by HIV and AIDS.

● Limited Access to and Quality of Healthcare

Many young people are sick and dying from preventable causes, often because they have no access to healthcare services. In other cases, poor quality healthcare undermines young people's wellness, growth and development. Quality healthcare uses a holistic and loving approach to physical, mental and emotional well-being.

Therefore, we commit to work – in our spheres of influence - towards accessible, comprehensive, and holistic healthcare.

- **Limited Access to and Poor Quality of Education**

A large number of young people across the world do not have access to education. Those with access, are mostly subjected to poor quality education, undermining their opportunities for future growth and development.

Although we appreciate the Millennium Development Goal aiming to have Universal Primary Education by 2015, we are highly disappointed at the lack of reference to the quality of that education, and lack of real commitment to seeing it achieved in a meaningful way.

Therefore, we commit to act – in our spheres of influence – and call on all others to join us, to ensure the provision of high quality education for young people.

- **Adverse Effects of Technological Development**

Many young people are disadvantaged by lack of access to relevant technology and/or skills to participate in a rapidly changing technological environment. Furthermore, some technological developments have harmful effects (whether intended or otherwise), such as the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Therefore, we commit to act – in our spheres of influence – to promote access for all young people to appropriate technologies; and to promote the responsible development and use of technology.

- **Lack of Economic Opportunities for Young People**

Young people are the most affected by a lack of economic opportunities, which perpetuates the cycle of poverty and social injustice. In many cases, young people are excluded by poor education and lack of skills, and are further marginalised by perceptions concerning their lack of ability, exploitative labour practices and lack of opportunity for upward mobility.

Therefore, we commit to act – in our sphere of influence – and call on business, government, and civil society, to halt exploitative labour practices. We call for enabling environments for young people to gain access to economic opportunities, and for young people to be valued for their skills and competencies rather than their level of experience. We call on every young person to take up all opportunities open to them for the development of their livelihood.

- **Unfulfilled Human Rights**

Despite written and verbal commitments to fulfilling human rights, in practice the rights of young people are hardly ever realised. Furthermore, obscene injustices such as the use of child soldiers, human trafficking, and slavery, have not yet been adequately addressed.

Therefore we commit to act – in our spheres of influence – to uphold the rights, which are often invoked in pledges, promises, speeches, and declarations, yet seldom fulfilled. We further call on all individuals to meet their corresponding responsibilities to these rights.

- **Ecological Crisis**

Young people are those who are currently feeling, and will continue to feel, the brunt of the depletion of natural resources, climate change and the loss of biodiversity. Although some steps have been taken, the current economic and political system has shown almost no commitment to finding meaningful solutions to the ecological crisis. If trends continue at current rates, ecological disaster will devastate life on Earth, rendering all development efforts futile.

Therefore, we commit to act – within our spheres of influence – to take immediate and firm steps to reduce our own ecological footprints, and further call on all others to do the same, in order to secure our lives and livelihoods.

*This call to action is more than a request by young people, the most vulnerable and affected in society, that their voice be heard. This is a call for **all** people to engage in a creative, empowering and inclusive conversation and to make change happen.*