Fellow human beings,

We are sure that you have not forgotten youth as we are half of the world population, but it seems that not everyone has heard our voices.

Basic services by themselves are not sustainable development. We must learn from each other in order to implement sustainable solutions such as composting toilets, rainwater harvesting, rope hand-pumps, or fog harvesting, for example. We must change our unsustainable production and consumption patterns to eradicate poverty and reduce our ecological footprints.

We have the right to live in a world where green jobs are available and there are equitable and fair terms of trade that allow youth access to education, services and freedom from child labor. Trade liberalization without the removal of unfair subsidies and taxes that encourage unsustainable technologies, increases inequalities and impedes sustainable development for all.

Please raise your hand if you used water today. Thank you.

We already agreed that we have the right to life when we ratified the Declaration on the rights of the child. We were right. Don’t we agree that we need water, sanitation and adequate human settlements to survive? A rights based approach must be used and can provide equal access to these needs while first recognizing the ecological right.

Great things can happen without money, but even greater things can happen with money. International financial institutions and governments must provide youth with job creation and housing subsidies programs. They must ensure that youth entrepreneurs and organizations have access to micro-credit programs, loans and grants. Governments must ensure that financial programs are complemented by capacity building programs.

How do we change unsustainable lifestyles? Through investing in youth. How do youth learn best? From other youth and formally in schools. Governments must support peer to peer education and mentorship programs through grassroots youth organizations and practical, sustainable life-skills curricula in schools.

Youth organizations are innovative, resourceful, and are cost efficient means of reaching communities. It is often said that youth are the future but we are also here now.

Governments and other relevant actors must use a transparent and participatory approach involving all youth and other stakeholders. This must be done while ensuring good communication and coordination among
all actors so that the solutions implemented address that real needs of communities.

We would like to present awards to the following countries for coming through on their promise to have youth representatives on every delegation; Germany, Sweden, UK, Netherlands, Canada, and Peru. For the second year running we would like to commend Sweden for sponsoring a youth representative from the developing world. We also thank Germany and the Netherlands for their progressive mentorship program. We challenge all governments to include youth on their official delegations along with following Sweden’s lead in funding youth from the Global South. For example, if everyone on a government delegation donated the cost of their tie or scarf to funding youth from developing countries, 10 additional youth would be here today, greatly enhancing our representation from the Global South.

Last CSD we asked Jeffrey Sachs how youth can help in reaching the MDGs, he replied “you tell us”. Our report, Youth and the Millennium Development Goals is our answer. This report draws on the experience of youth organizations working around the world and provides practical examples and real policy options for engaging youth in making the MDGs a reality. Youth are a force that we challenge you to use.

Thank you