

# Major Group Position Paper

## The Children and Youth Major Group's vision and priorities for the Sustainable Development Goals

**March 2014**

### **Introduction**

This short position paper details the Children and Youth Major Group's vision and priorities - including themes, goals, targets and indicators – for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the wider post-2015 development agenda and the High Level Political Forum (HLPF). It forms part of the European Commission-funded multi-stakeholder engagement programme "[Sustainable Development 2015" \(SD2015\)](#)". This paper provides an opportunity for the Major Group to communicate and consult on its position as a basis for ongoing stakeholder engagement, capacity building and advocacy.

The paper sits alongside similar position papers authored by the other Major Groups. A synthesis report of these position papers is provided by Stakeholder Forum in order to identify common priorities and important differences across the Major Groups' positions and compare them with the [Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals' \(OWG\) 'focus areas'](#), published in February 2014. The review will be used as a basis for engagement between the Major Groups and the OWG, and to establish priority clusters for further coordination and advocacy work on those themes. The individual papers will be updated by the respective Major Groups in September 2014 following a series of global and regional capacity building, outreach and advocacy exercises under the SD2015 programme.

Agenda 21 recognized children and youth as one of the nine major groups of civil society whose participation in decision-making is essential for achieving sustainable development. The UN Major Group of Children and Youth (MGCY) acts as the mechanism for child or youth led organisations or individuals under the age of 30 who wants to get involved in UN Sustainable Development processes.

This position paper is a condensed version the MGCY's thematic lobby points, talking points, interventions and statements since 2013 which have been developed by thousands of young people from over 143 countries through both offline and online consultations. You can find all the original materials and a complete list of our position on a range of areas can be found on our website: [www.childrenyouth.org](http://www.childrenyouth.org)

All online positions are drafting in a transparent and accessible manner using open documents and having a vigorous consensus building process. We also run offline drafting meetings to ensure that all voices are incorporated.

### **Our position**

The post2015 process must have ambitious, pragmatic and concrete outcomes that take into account planetary boundaries. New paradigms of wealth and prosperity are necessary to enable the transformative shift necessary to ensure the long term well-being of children and youth. That is, wealth and prosperity should no more be measured by GDP alone. It further includes that equality is a prerequisite to conserve the planet's limited resources. There already are

a lot of positive agreements that have not been implemented or achieved. As such, the MGCY calls for incorporating existing international agreements as part of the post2015 agenda to foster action and accountability. It is important to avoid a silo approach due to the interlinked nature of our planetary systems.

The MGCY calls for Sustainable Development Goals that:

- Guarantee transparency and accountability at national and international levels
- Ensure principles of equality, equity, human rights, non-discrimination, and non-violence are incorporated into the post2015 agenda.
- Protect human and environmental health through command and control regulatory systems based on monitoring and enforcement actions.
- Strengthen regional initiatives through cooperation with regional governments and organisations.
- Promote sustainable behavioural patterns and lifestyles to enable increased translation of the concept of sustainable development into action.
- Protect and manage the natural resource base as part of economic and social development activities.
- Implement a cradle to cradle approach to production and the reduction of use of virgin materials and natural resources;
- Lead to universal compliance with international conventions and agreed standards for recording natural resources and periodic assessment by independent authorities.

## **The Major Group of Children and Youth make the following recommendations:**

### **Biodiversity**

- Increase poverty reduction strategies and national development plans or reporting mechanisms which incorporate biodiversity and ecosystem services;

### **Chemicals**

- Extend responsibility of governments and corporations for health and environmental damage in the chemical industry.
- Internalise the costs of chemical management by inter alia strengthening the work of UNEP on financing the chemicals agenda.

### **Cities / Human Settlements / Urbanisation:**

- Promote long-term urban planning that takes in account population growth, natural resource utilization, ecosystem preservation, public space accessibility, building design, efficient transport and waste management and prioritizes the rights and needs of slum dwellers and informal settlers.

### **Climate Change**

- Universal adoption of future frameworks and a corresponding “failed state” status for any state which does not fully adopt UNFCCC agreements;
- Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) contribute to adaptation funds, Global Climate Fund (GCF) channelling funding to climate related disaster / risk reduction work.

### **Conflict Prevention, Post-Conflict Peace building and Durable Peace**

- Elimination of all stockpiles and ongoing production of anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions; Reduce by at least three-quarters the number of nuclear weapons in arsenals by 2020; achieve by 2020 universal anti-

personnel landmine and cluster munitions clearance and, by 2025, have destroyed all stockpiles and ended all production of anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions;

### **Disaster Risk Reduction**

- Improve disaster risk preparedness strategies for young people. This should include development and monitoring of Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction plans and resiliency guidelines that include meaningful public participation, that are responsive to the risks faced by the most affected human settlements
- Development and enforcement of robust building codes, adapted for local risks that include resiliency planning in all buildings such as power back-ups or escape routes.

### **Economic Growth**

- Economic growth in affluent areas should be seen as a problem unless it is de-coupled from environmental harms and benefit areas economically worse-off.
- Integration of sustainability into all tourism policies and management practices through the creation of a 'Green Economy Roadmap' aiming at the active participation of local populations in developing sustainable tourism;
- Ecological tax reform that shifts the collection base to the extractive industries;
- Closing resource cycles / streams and create right incentives/taxes for sustainability practices (pollution, resources, etc.)
- Implementation of measures beyond GDP to determine progress/growth
- Increase in %/amount of stimulating tax rules; increase in reuse of materials, efficient resource use and waste management (implementation of cradle-to-cradle techniques).

### **Education**

- Ensure universal primary education that is of sufficient quality that all those who complete primary school are able to read, write and count.
- Reform education systems to incorporate social, environmental & sustainable issues in curricula and make them more relevant for the changed job market.

### **Employment, Decent Work & Social Protection:**

- Eradicate all forms of child labour in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and ILO Conventions Nos. 138 and 182. Create alternative income generating activities for communities to prevent child labour.
- Achieve universal global access to adequate social protection and decent work for young people in the formal and informal sector including by enacting legal protections to provide security in the workplace, social protections, paid leave, and promoting the rights of young workers.
- Incorporate the eight "fundamental" ILO Conventions into the SDGs.
- Decrease youth unemployment, increase in number of graduates starting decent jobs or quality **paid** internships directly after school.

### **Energy**

- Redirect fossil fuel subsidies to further developing technology for renewable energy sources such as marine or solar energy. Incentivise development of efficient, low carbon, renewable and clean energy infrastructure
- Establish a renewable energy transition program that promotes community-based decentralized renewable energy systems;

### **Equality**

- Eliminate all forms of discrimination, especially against the most marginalized groups of children, adolescent and youth.

- End impunity for discrimination against women and violation of women's human rights, including in conflict settings.
- This includes removal of structural, legal, social and policy barriers that discriminate against or hinder young women's, adolescent girls', and children's human rights.
- Eliminate all forms of gender-based violence, including physical, emotional, and economic violence in public and private spheres.

### **Financing, Means of Implementation and Participation**

- Donor coordination for efficient and appropriate use of funds
- More effective monitoring and evaluation of implementation gaps, assessment of progress and evaluation of emerging challenges, including through integrated regional reporting systems, to determine the effectiveness of policy implementation
- Use existing initiatives to fund implementation of the SDGs (E.g REDD+ could incentivise Forest related targets and indicators).

### **Food Security and Nutrition**

- Eliminate harmful farming practices such as the use of terminator seeds and ban perverse food subsidies that threaten local communities.

### **Health**

- Take a health systems approach by focussing on achieving universal health coverage that incorporates prevention, promotion, treatment, rehabilitation and palliation.
- Monitor both accessibility and coverage to health services by all in particular children and adolescents as well as at risk groups.
- Ensure that health services are established to promote access, through the reduction of out of pocket expenditure and elimination of parental/spousal consent laws.
- Zero based targets on maternal mortality and morbidity and for preventable child deaths.
- Scale up reproductive health services including providing universal access to safe legal abortion and emergency contraception.
- Ensure coverage for mental health and substance misuse disorders ,which predominantly affect this age group.
- Ensure universal access to evidence based treatments including encouraging the use of TRIPs flexibilities and removal of legal barriers to prescribing substances such as methadone.
- Maximise healthy life expectancy, by taking a life course approach and empowering youth to remain healthy:
- Measure exposure to risk factors that adversely affect the life course: specifically violence, tobacco, alcohol and nutrition, that increase the likelihood of developing NCDs.
- Measure the impacts of other sectors such as agriculture, transport and mining on health, specifically utilising health sensitive indicators.

### **Mining**

- Adopt an international legally binding instrument which governs extraction and utilisation of mining resources.
- This needs to commit parties to legislate compulsory disclosure by producers of environmental and population impact to consumers.
- Define appropriate terms on mining sites, designating clear zones that are exempt from mineral extraction, recognising that this is vital for aquatic and other ecosystem preservation. Zones must be created and managed, guided by the precautionary principle where environmental effects are unclear and environmental liability for site remediation and cleanup should be ensured.

## Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP)

- Mainstream and make compulsory labels that take into account ecological footprint and labour standards, disposal or closed loop mechanisms, chemicals and waste, environmental toxic chemicals (included in the UN ID list and beyond) and social protection of the labour involved.

*This can be done by:*

- Restricting products which do not conform to standards through tax or trade barriers
- Integrate the polluter pays principle in all production; decouple economic growth from environmental impacts.
- Economic growth should be de-coupled from harmful environmental impact. The level of absolute de-coupling is the indicator, within one planet earth the target.

## Transportation

- Adopt smart, innovative and efficient means of transportation that internalise the environmental and social costs of transportation.
- % of member states phased out unsustainable transportation systems to eliminate the negative consequences.
- Reduce black carbon emissions from transport by 60%; percentage of zero lead (Pb) in petrol throughout the world (100%) by 2025.

## Waste

- Adopt Zero Waste Plans by 2020 to transition to a zero waste economy.
- Close materials and nutrient cycles.
- Encourage a “cradle-to-cradle” approach in waste management.
- Effectively treat hazardous waste and banish or minimize its trans-boundary movement. Realise and enforce a total ban on dumping of nuclear and e-waste.
- Develop waste prevention and minimisation policies.
- % of member states to fully implement the Basel Convention and the Bamako Convention.

## Water

- Ensure freshwater withdrawals are in line with water supplies and limit the depletion of finite water resources
- Decrease in area of plastic soup and other polluted waters
- Establish commonly adopted Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in order to protect marine resources and provide oversight of marine extractive industries;

## Youth

- Ensure young people's roles in decision-making on the allocation of resources for children's, adolescents' and young people's health, education and environmental policy and programming at all levels;
- Improve monitoring systems including the monitoring of disaggregation by age, in particular inclusion of children and youth.
- Programming designed to build the capacity of young people to collect and validate data ensuring youth-led and youth-friendly monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in the design, planning and implementation of national policies and programmes

*More complete list of all our proposed indicators and targets can be found on our website: [www.childrenyouth.org](http://www.childrenyouth.org)*

## Next Steps:

The post 2015 process preparatory process is ongoing. We continue to focus on regularly updating the international constituency on opportunities for engagement, funding and ensuring that young people can contribute to the dialogue / have a space to be heard. The MGCY remain committed to ensuring that young people have a mechanism to participate and contribute concretely to international policies that impact our collective futures and present.

Some specific initiatives include capacity building, outreach and advocacy exercises on the 10 Year Framework on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns at a global and regional level (15 focal points: 2 per region, 2 global, 2 communications) over the next two years: <http://childrenyouth.org/about/who-we-are/scp/>

Increasing awareness, promoting participation and active involvement of young people from the SIDS in the activities of the post2015 agenda and international year of the SIDS. This is facilitated by 8 focal points (2 per region, 2 global, 1 deputy OP) from SIDS: [http://childrenyouth.org/category/task-forces\\_and-process/small-island-developing-states/](http://childrenyouth.org/category/task-forces_and-process/small-island-developing-states/) over the next two years and in the 4 main SIDS languages.

We actively support the work of the post2015 LAC, East African and Asia Pacific Youth by running webinars, preparing capacity building materials, having mentors available and ensuring that they are comfortable leading their own processes yet working with the global constituency to ensure consistency.

Apart from these specific initiatives, we also have thematic policy focal points, outreach, capacity building, participate actively in UN processes and all updates are on our website [www.childrenyouth.org](http://www.childrenyouth.org)