

Principles of Youth Caucus Priorities
Commission on Sustainable Development
May 2008

1. The ethical dimensions of sustainable development

Sustainable development programs must be based in ethical standards and on respect for human rights. Governments should follow through on agreements with their own people and with international organizations.

- **Agriculture and rural development:** Agriculture constitutes the fundamental basis for economic and community life, yet agricultural workers are often underpaid and undervalued. Development strategies and plans must value and promote sustainable agricultural practices that benefit farmers and livestock holders, the poor and society in general.
- **Water and sanitation:** Water and sanitation are central to communities' and individuals' health and welfare. Climate change must not be seen as an excuse for poor progress in reaching water and sanitation targets. Public-private partnerships must be approached with caution, and only be undertaken if they can ensure equitable supply and quality to all users, regardless of gender, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, nationality or any other distinction.
- **Drought and desertification:** All countries, whether developed or developing, have a responsibility to address global drought and desertification by changing production and consumption patterns and by finding ways to plan for and mitigate drought.
- **Africa:** More efforts must be made to portray Africa's potential as a positive and constructive voice in sustainable development.

2. Integrating diverse sectors and stakeholders

The voices of small farmers, workers, women, young people, the poor and other undervalued groups are too often silenced in dialogues about their own development. Every effort must be made so that these groups can genuinely participate in decision-making processes about their own development, and take power over their own lives.

- **Agriculture and rural development:** Both institutional and community-based education programs will help rural families take charge of their own lives and livelihoods. In turn, this will decrease rural-urban migration; allow families to arrive at economic security; work to block the spread of HIV/AIDS into rural areas; and simultaneously encourage children to retain family agricultural and pastoral traditions while discouraging agricultural child labor.
- **Interlinkages and cross-cutting issues:** NSDS must be adopted and actively implemented by all countries in a way that involves stakeholders from many different sectors and backgrounds.
- **Drought and desertification:** Integrating diverse voices in combating drought and desertification will ensure that mitigation and coping plans are comprehensive.

3. Education and capacity building

Education should be people-centered, and work to promote best practices, human rights, and environmental sustainability. The process of dialogue and learning is one of the best ways to encourage genuine participation in sustainable development.

- **Agriculture and rural development:** Proximity to educational centers, contextual and relevant education, and communication--both between farmers or livestock holders and with outside institutions--will promote rural development by allowing people to share ideas and learn what is most applicable to their own communities and livelihoods.
- **Water and sanitation:** As water and sanitation services are developed, communities must be consulted about their needs and priorities. If infrastructure is to remain sustainable, any water or sanitation program must involve community members in an educational process of organizing, planning, implementing, and evaluating the project.
- **Drought and desertification:** Communities must be party to decisions affecting their ecosystems and livelihoods. In order to do this, information about climate change and other environmental issues must be communicated open and transparently.

