

**CHILDREN AND YOUTH STATEMENT FOR THE PANEL ON
AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
– DELIVERED 6 MAY 2008**

As a representative of the Children and Youth, we recognize that all of the delegates here have highlighted numerous challenges and constraints for both agriculture and rural development. While we acknowledge the validity of these concerns, we choose instead to focus on that which will make agriculture and rural development more sustainable, viable and appealing to the youth in both developed and developing countries.

We propose that what is needed is a complete moral and ethical revolution that takes into account the inter-sectoral approach needed to truly transform the current agricultural and rural development status. There needs to be more support for generating public awareness and promoting a positive image of sustainable agriculture and rural development through the use of both conventional and alternative media and artistic forms.

We recognize that the promotion of women in agriculture needs to be supported; that there needs to be an increase in the notion of an “academic” farmer, and that small-scale enterprises need to be nurtured as a means of achieving food security.

Governments need to make farmer education a priority and should provide substantial financial resources for farmer support programs, particularly to address the issues of climate change that have been highlighted here. They should take a more active role in transforming formal and non-formal educational processes to incorporate a more holistic and positive understanding of the critical role that farmers play in society, recognizing it as the fundamental basis for economic and community life.

Particular attention also needs to be paid to social development programmes, with a focus on capacity and skills development amongst rural youth and children, considering that 70% of the rural agricultural labour force is comprised of child labour. These social development programs must also address the issue of HIV/AIDS and its overwhelmingly negative influence on agricultural production and rural advancement. We are surprised that this issue has not been significantly addressed by the delegation today.

The task before us is not merely a technical one but also a moral one. It is no less than the transformation of our thoughts and behaviours so as to allow our economic and social structures to uplift and extend the benefits of development to all peoples.