

Mr. Chairman, distinguished representatives, on behalf of the Children and Youth Caucus I thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

The basis of rural development is the provision of the community with the resources and skills to instigate their own process of development. The purpose of such development is to empower the community members, particularly children and youth, to develop innovative solutions to issues specific to their area. Because the majority of people in rural areas are subsistence agriculturalists, any effective rural development strategy must consider that economic empowerment is intrinsically linked to the development of successful and sustainable agricultural systems. Additionally, special attention should be paid to developing a more robust rural economy so that non-farm activities can provide economic support and mitigate risks inherent in dependence purely on agriculture.

Providing economic security for rural families through agriculture and rural development will decrease the dependence on child labour in rural areas. According to “Human rights watch” of the nearly 250 million children engaged in child labor around the world, the vast majority- 70 percent, or some 170 million- work in agriculture. Young **girls** are **especially** burdened by **both** domestic and agricultural responsibilities. Alleviation of these responsibilities will afford young people access to education and the possibility of a better future.

As Dr Colien Hefferan pointed out as a member of the plenary, “education is important, beginning with youth”. We have all realized the significant empowerment rural education provides. In representing the perspective of the children and youth of the world, this caucus believes that it is time to translate this recognition to exponentially increased effort to provide such education geared to the needs of rural communities. This should include among others proximity of education establishments, including secondary and tertiary education, and practical high, quality curricula.

Rural education should be designed to build the capabilities of rural people, including youth and children, so that they may best serve their own community. They must have the skills and the resources to create and implement their own development initiatives. Only in this manner can truly sustainable practices be achieved in rural communities.