

Denmark – 1992

Mr. Jensen

UN Youth Delegate Programme

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32. **Mr. JENSEN** (Denmark), speaking on the subject of young people, read one of the 1,200 open letters addressed by Danish schoolchildren to the world, and stressed the importance of letting young people make their opinions known, since children always suffered the most in crises. That was true not only of the world's poorest countries, since, even in industrialized countries, children were often left behind in the competition for education and jobs. In the big cities, many abandoned children lived in the streets and were only removed from sight during major events like the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the 1992 Olympic Games. Under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in addition to their fundamental human rights, all children enjoyed the rights appropriate to their condition.

33. Environmental protection was one of the major problems of the current age, necessitating local, regional and global efforts and cooperation. It was not enough to adopt new agreements and conventions; the world must radically change its habits and consumption patterns, which could only be done through cooperation, economic compensation, debt remission and the exchange of technologies between rich and poor countries in order to ensure sound development.

34. Youth organizations all over the world had put the environment at the top of their agenda and the rising generation was willing to cut back on consumption in order to improve the environment. Sixty per cent of the world's population was under 30, yet young people had virtually no say at the Rio Conference. They had had great hopes of the Conference, but its results had fallen far short of their expectations. Both the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity had [*11*] been hobbled by the short-term economic interests of certain countries. Furthermore, no firm commitment had been given to provide the necessary funding. The Conference had resulted in promises of a mere \$2-2.5 billion, an amount which would do nothing to change the imbalance between rich and poor countries and was very far from the \$125 billion a year required for the financing of Agenda 21. Without financial resources, sustainability and the preservation of nature would be an illusion. It was therefore vital that the follow-up to the Conference, a process in which young people were eager to participate, should receive the necessary financial support.

35. In the United Nations, young people saw a force capable of ensuring peace, equality among rich and poor countries and solutions to the world's environmental

problems. The support and attention received worldwide by the Organization must be put to good use, making it stronger and more dynamic. It must ensure that its decision-making process was based on broader and more active participation, an essential prerequisite of democracy and development. It should therefore involve public organizations more widely in its work and reassess its ties with non-governmental organizations, which currently were performing no real function. At the same time, it should ensure that children throughout the world, from primary school onwards, were taught the importance of global cooperation.

36. As a youth delegate, he regretted that so few countries had included young people in their delegations participating in the work of the United Nations and that no one sought the views and suggestions of young people, although they had both the courage and the necessary ability to make an active contribution to world development.

