

Netherlands – 1996

Mr. Huijsmans

UN Youth Delegate Programme

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10. **Mr. HUIJSMANS** (Netherlands), speaking as his country's youth representative, said that the United Nations tended to portray young people in a one-sided manner as homemakers and builders of families. But young people were politically committed; they were capable of assuming responsibilities and shaping their own lives. With their energy and vision, they could make a long-term contribution to world peace. The United Nations should offer opportunities to the young and enable them to play a full role in the life of society. A charter on the rights of youth was necessary in order to give young people a voice and empower them through personal responsibility.

11. There were situations where the rights of young people were continuously violated. In many developing countries, particularly in Asia, those in authority placed greater emphasis on economic development than on the development of democracy. Over the years, young people and students had played a significant role in the pro-democracy movements in Thailand, South Korea, the Philippines, China, Myanmar and, most recently, Indonesia. In some of those countries, students had been prohibited from dealing with political or social questions. If they demonstrated in public, they ran the risk of arrest and interrogation with the use of intimidation and violence. Those were flagrant violations of the basic right of young people to concern themselves with important social issues, such as improving the situation of landless peasants and workers. The authorities concerned should enter into dialogue with the various groups in their societies, particularly students.

12. The conscription of children for armed conflicts was shocking. The United Nations should take immediate measures to ban the recruitment of children and to demobilize child soldiers, helping them to resume their education and lead normal lives. A working group was elaborating a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in order to raise the minimum age at which children might become involved in armed conflicts and for voluntary recruitment in the armed services. He hoped that the draft protocol would be adopted and implemented as speedily as possible and that stricter rules would prohibit the use of child soldiers.

13. The United Nations should view young people as active participants in solving problems, not just as victims. Member States could be instrumental in that regard by guaranteeing the rights of young people and providing them with greater opportunities. The Organization could increase the number of young trainees in

United Nations agencies and could target development aid for projects run for and by young people.

