

Major group on Children and Youth.

The Youth Caucus would like to emphasize the importance of involving young people in development and the fight against desertification, as the 'Bamako Statement' calls on governments to ensure that young people are involved in the management of natural resources and decision-making processes in those countries most affected by drought and desertification. However, despite the fact that the twin issues of desertification and the role of young people in development have long been major concerns since the 1995 Beijing Conference and the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, very little has been done in Europe in this regard up to now.

Young people have most valuable intellectual and practical contributions to make and do bring unique perspectives to help the fight against desertification, starting from their local communities and territories. Government representatives who are here today should promote awareness and facilitate the participation of local populations, particularly women and young people, in their respective countries as stated in Article 5 of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

We have barely heard the words 'children and youth' yesterday and today, but we have to be accounted among the main stakeholders in the process, as we will be the ones bearing the brunt of your decisions and actions now and in the future. Europe can still try to counter the effects of early droughts and incumbent desertification, but no action will produce positive, long-lasting outcomes if young people are not involved in the process from an early start.