

20th session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration

Consultation with Observers

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Remarks by United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth

I thank you for having me today. My name is Steve Lee. I'm the Organizing Partner of the Major Group for Children and Youth. The Major Groups were created back in 1992 through the General Assembly resolution Agenda 21 to guarantee that the most vulnerable voices of our society have a voice and have a seat in sustainable development discussions. Now the Major Groups, including Major Group for Children and Youth, are guaranteed a voice in the High-level Political Forum on sustainable development and this stakeholder mechanism has been replicated throughout different conventions and policy processes across the UN system. My job is to coordinate all of the children and youth voices that are participating in policy processes and public administrative processes within the United Nations to ensure that young people have a voice and our most common denominator of the future we want are advocated in these processes.

I'm really pleased to be here today. We, as the Major Group for Children and Youth, on behalf of the voice of children and youth, would like to endorse and support the eleven Principles of Effective Governance and eight expert recommendations that are provided here today. These also echo the Recommendations to Ensure Meaningful Civil Society Participation at the UN, also endorsed by several Member States and thousands of civil society organizations alike.

Today I'd like to talk about how to meaningfully engage young people in national policy processes as discussed within the principles of effective governance.

The first is to guarantee us a seat. Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child safeguards the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child. The 2006 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child said "the new and deeper meaning of this right is that it should establish a new social contract. One by which children are fully recognized as rights-holders who are not only entitled to receive protection but also have the right to participate in all matters affecting us. This implies, in the long term, changes in political, social, institutional, and cultural structures." A social contract cannot benefit the community, if it does not come from the community. Even if it does, it won't endure the test of time. If we don't have a seat at the table, we will be forgotten and will be taken advantage of. Participation and Collaboration are

principles of effective governance for a reason. Guarantee us a seat and ensure that we can participate.

The second point is in order for us to meaningfully participate and collaborate, you got to catch us up. Child, adolescents, youth, elderly: these described life stages universal to all human beings. It's a unique function of time at unique points in someone's life. Because it's a function of time, we as young people just haven't been alive for that long. So you need to catch us up in order to actually participate and make good decisions, at the table, not only for children and youth, but for everyone at the table. You can't just give us a seat and say, "We've checked off. You know, young people are here. Good job." You need to catch us up so we can really participate in these discussions.

Then you need to invest resources accordingly. You need to get us involved earlier than others at the table. We need to go learn about it. We need to spend time getting caught up. You need to send us to learn about these things ahead of time. Make sure to guarantee us a seat so that we can be at the table making decisions together, participating in collaborating, and in order to do that meaningfully, ensure that we've been given the resources and the time to be caught up to make good decisions together. Thank you very much for having me today.