



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 April 2013

Original: English

Substantive session of 2013

Geneva, 1-26 July 2013

High-level segment: annual ministerial review

Statement submitted by Association for Social and Environmental Development, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



Statement

The Association for Social and Environmental Development is a non-profit-making company based in Calcutta, India, that works on nature conservation through public awareness, action research and people's participation. We have been working with youth on nature conservation since 2001.

The Association proposes that young people have a transformational role to play in achieving Goal 7 of the Millennium Development Goals, on ensuring environmental sustainability. Youth can take a leadership role in nature conservation in their local areas, can network to share experiences with youth in other parts of India and globally to increase impact. Young people aged 15 to 24 make up 1.2 billion of the world's human capital. There are 315 million young people aged 10 to 24 years in India, representing 30 per cent of the country's population. When their energies and capacities are harnessed, they can be a global force for nature conservation.

Working to create youth nature leadership in India through its "green rhinos" programme, we are experiencing that youth can take a transformational role in nature conservation. They are overcoming existing challenges and perceived barriers resulting in new levels of confidence and presence and inventing new possibilities beyond those thought possible. Since April 2012, 98 young people have received transformational leadership training. They have created school-based projects on nature conservation and have involved about 300 of their peers. Most of this work is based in the Indian Sundarbans, a world heritage site and the only coastal mangrove habitat with a population of tigers. The projects undertaken by them include the planting of 2,000 tree saplings and a two-month garbage cleaning drive in a girls' school leading to the installation of garbage pits by the school authorities. Young people in Calcutta have campaigned for the rational use of plastic bags. In the pipeline for 2013 are the planting of 5,000 tree saplings, the cleaning of 60 water bodies and a campaign to halt sound pollution in the Sundarbans.

We would invite interested organizations and schools globally to consider transformational youth nature leadership as a vehicle to attain the Millennium Development Goal on environmental sustainability.
