

Children and Youth Statement

**to the 25th Session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum,
Nairobi, Kenya 16-20 February 2009**

We, the UNEP Tunza Youth Advisory Council together with regional and indigenous youth representatives, present this statement on behalf of young people of the world, to the 25th Session of the UNEP Governing Council and Global Ministerial Environment Forum.

Children and youth, of unprecedented numbers, are engaged more than ever before. Worldwide young people are organized at the grassroots level, networking across borders, and making ourselves heard in environmental policy and decision-making processes. We remain committed to human development, and a collective approach to the struggle for a healthy planet and a sustainable global culture. We are conscious that ecological degradation disproportionately affects those oppressed by existing systems of power, and that we must work to address this.

We call upon governments, within this process, to acknowledge the special needs of marginalized groups, such as indigenous communities and disabled people, and the critical role they have to play at the national and international level.

We encourage governments to reconnect with children and youth as an important strategic group for environmental policy design and implementation. Specifically, young people must be further empowered to take part in national and international consultation and decision-making processes.

We note with deep concern that access to information, technology, and resources is not equitably distributed among children and youth geographically, especially between rural and urban settings. Governments should take action to allocate financial and technological resources broadly to ensure that young people everywhere have equal opportunities to actively shape their communities.

We demand governments to commit to a strong post-2012 climate regime in Copenhagen COP15, that will safeguard the survival of all countries and peoples. Right now the most vulnerable among us are not protected, nor are their voices sufficiently heard. Survival is not negotiable and it must form the baseline of any agreement.

We urge governments and the UN to recognize young people as an important stakeholder and a critical partner within the decision-making process leading up to the Copenhagen climate negotiations and beyond. This can be done through intensive consultation, sponsorship of youth participation, and support of children and youth lead projects. We also strongly suggest governments include youth on national delegations at international meetings, including Copenhagen. We, the young people of today, will inherit the world shaped by the outcomes of COP15. However, we do not want to be seen as victims, but as actors for change.

We urge governments to make green technology accessible and designed in such a way that it will respond to social and environmental needs worldwide. This must be done in harmonious relationship with the environment, tapping the knowledge of our ancestral cultures and traditional practices and values. While appreciating the merits of globalization and recognizing the importance of local initiatives in poverty reduction, we encourage governments to work for the creation of green jobs in the transition towards a green economy.

We ask governments to support, recognize, fund and implement the UNEP Tunza Strategy, starting in discussion today. The new strategy aims to involve young people in the environmental field,

facilitate the participation of young people in decision-making processes and train youth leaders to enhance their capacity to better implement the six subprogrammes of the UNEP Programme of Work.

Young people are important stakeholders in environmental decision-making processes. We are consumers, producers, victims, and beneficiaries. We are brothers, sisters, sons, and daughters. We will be the ones who live in the world shaped by your decisions. Let us now work together for our common future.

Please join us.

Thank you.