

Policy Paper - Statements der Jugendlichen

10th session intergovernmental work group on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights (IGWG)

Genf, 16.-20.12.2024

Side-Event am 17.12.2024, 14:00-15:00 Young Voices for the Binding Treaty

Dieses Policy Paper stellt eine Sammlung von Statements von jungen Menschen dar, die sie in der 10. Session der IGWG im Zuge eines Side Events eingebracht haben. Gemeinsam haben sie sich zum Thema Nachhaltige Ernährung und Lieferketten ausgetauscht und einzelne Inputs erarbeitet, die sich mit verschiedenen Aspekten dieses Themas befassen, was auch ihnen besonders wichtig ist. Die Teilnahme wurde unter anderem durch das Projekt „Nachhaltige Ernährungssysteme und SDGs“ ermöglicht und verbindet so auch verschiedene SDGs (Ernährung, Arbeitsbedingungen, Geschlechtergerechtigkeit, Bildung). Jugendpartizipation ist ein entscheidender Aspekt für politische Veränderungen: junge Menschen können ihre eigenen Vorstellungen einbringen und so ihre Zukunft mitgestalten.

Die folgenden Statements wurden von Sprecher:innen beim Side Events eingebracht.

Clemens:

I am an 18-year-old student from Austria and have enjoyed 11 years of education. Now I am attending the final year of high school. Afterwards I am able to study engineering, because I was lucky enough to get an excellent education.

But while writing this speech and enjoying a hot chocolate, somebody had to work for this chocolate. And this somebody, let's call him Kojo, could be one of those 1.5 million children, in west Africa, working under exploitative conditions to harvest cocoa. Kojo means Monday, because he was born on a Monday in 2006, a year with a bad harvest. He has four siblings, one of whom died at birth. Kojo has an injury on his left hand from working on the plantation.

We both are young people. We both are humans. We both have the right to education. But: I can shape my future but he can't. I can have a job, which I am interested in and passionate about, but he can't. And because he has no possibility to go to university, he has no choice but to work as a cocoa farmer whether he likes to or not, as his parents, and his children will need to help him. Under exploitative conditions. And guess what: This cycle will repeat until something happens.

And this something is a global supply chain law. This something is what can be decided here. By you. It may affect our prices in Europe and America in a negative way, but can we really enjoy low prices, when we think of Kojo? It is for him. It's for those 1.5 million children. For their future. For humanity.

Thank you!

Alina

Hello everyone, I'm here today to talk about something we probably all love — chocolate. In this time of the year where many people celebrate Christmas — we see a lot of chocolate in the form of Santa Claus or other festive treats. As we dive into the holiday spirit it's important to think beyond the festive packaging and consider the full value chain that brings that chocolate to our hands.

When we talk about the value chain of a chocolate Santa, we're talking about a process that starts far away from our holiday celebrations. It begins on cacao farms, where the beans that make up chocolate are grown. These farms face issues like deforestation or pesticides which cause environmental harm and the worsening of climate change.

But the issues don't end there. The cocoa industry is notorious for its human rights violations, with child labour and poor working conditions. Workers are forced to work for long hours in hazardous environments, earning very little for their labor. This exploitation is deeply embedded in the value chain that leads to the shiny chocolate Santas we buy, wrapping up what should be a symbol of joy in a package of injustice.

As we unwrap these chocolates, we should ask ourselves: How many of the workers who helped create this were paid fairly? How is the future of our planet affected by the environmental degradation caused by unsustainable farming practices?

The reality is that the chocolate industry is just one example of how global value chains are often built on the exploitation of both the environment and vulnerable communities. The cocoa that makes our Christmas chocolate is part of a much larger story - The climate crisis and historical injustices have to be taken into account, as many corporations continue to profit from exploitation and neo-colonial power structures.

We have all witnessed the consequences of unchecked corporate practices in the chocolate industry and beyond - We need stronger international mechanisms to ensure accountability across borders and throughout the whole value chain - from pesticides on the fields to waste management. So as young people, we need a treaty that ensures accountability, promotes ecological restoration, empowers communities and delivers the access to justice that so many have been waiting for.

As we're talking about "young" voices in this event I want to make some comments about what effective and meaningful youth engagement actually should look like.

Being here the first time, I've noticed that not a lot of young people (meaning 25 or younger) are here in these negotiations, less than for example at other UN conferences such as the UNFCCC climate conference.

And of course it is also a very technical topic and not easy to grasp every detail of it. But this is the same for every person new in this process, not only young ones and with the right support and preparation I'm convinced young people can provide and are already providing important perspectives these negotiations should not be missing! Effective and meaningful youth engagement in negotiation like these should follow quality standard, is accessible for a diverse variety of young people, has sufficient funding and support structures and does not only ask them about "youth topics". We are experts of our own lived reality not only of our age, so we want to participate in every topic that is part of life - for example "business and human rights".

So when organising your delegations - Civil Society or States, think of including young people - ask them for their opinions, their written input, let them speak or just simply ask them in which way they would like to be included. I would be more than happy to assist in this:) And all of the points mentioned are not only true for young civil society members but civil society engagement in general.

Lets' come back to this little piece of chocolate my grandma gave me before I travelled here to have something sweet when negotiations are though.

As we approach the holidays, I invite everyone here to think critically about where our chocolate comes from and who bears the true cost of our enjoyment. But it is not the responsibility of individual consumers but of big business on which we should focus. And as we have seen - voluntary commitments of these transnational corporation are not sufficient we need as strong binding treaty that ensures that companies are held accountable for their impact on both people and the planet. By strengthening this treaty, we can ensure that the joy of Christmas chocolate doesn't come at the expense of others' rights or the health of our planet.

Thank you.

Felix

Cobalt Blue was used by many European artists for blue skies in decadent paintings. Cobalt red is the way the Kongo and its children are being exploited for our electronics.

Dear guests,

I am typing this on my computer, powered by precious minerals and stones from all over the world. Surrounded by batteries and devices, we forget the true cost of our electric fascination. It is Cobalt that is fuelling our

smartphones and laptops. Almost three quarters of which is mined in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Its cobalt reserves and production are unmatched by any other country. In around 20% of these mines, conditions are gruesome and inhumane.

40.000 children have to work in conditions that are slowly killing them. Day and night they are forced to work for mere pennies. War and poverty leave no option but the mines. With no support system to speak of, people live from day to day. Big corporations stain their hands with the blood of these children by continuing to buy Cobalt for their production of batteries.

Robbed of education and choice, the children working in these mines are carrying our digital future on their backs. Electric cars and technology are supposed to bring us closer to a sustainable future, yet they are simultaneously stealing the prospects of Congo's children.

How can we dream of a brighter future and forget to include so many people? It is our duty to protect all people on our planet. We must take responsibility of our actions and hold those who exploit workers and our planet accountable. The LBI we are discussing today is one way to achieve this. Its importance cannot be understated. For the children of Congo, for our future.

Thank you.

Nicole

Welcome, ladies and gentlemen and honourable representatives. Thank you for taking the time join us today. As we all know, the United Nations was created to emphasise the need for peace, and more importantly - to maintain it. Peace does not only mean the absence of war, but also a person's right to individual peace and wellbeing.

To achieve this form of peace, individual freedom and rights must be upheld and it must be ensured that individuals are not exploited and receive fair wages. It is the duty of the UN to ensure these freedoms and rights. In today's economy however, the garments we wear often come at the cost of workers, many of them women, being paid mere cents for hours of exhausting labour. Imagine that a woman working 14 hours a day in a factory making clothes earns just one euro – a sum that is supposed to cover for her most basic needs as well as her children's education and the care of her parents.

The woman's only possibility of living a healthy and stable life is to be paid a fair wage and that her rights as a worker are enforced. But right now, this woman is forced to work without rest, regardless of her state of health. To make this terrible injustice a thing of the past the United Nations must embark on a new path where the freedoms and rights of each individual are forever ensured.

To achieve this, the women's rights must be safeguarded. Women are among the greatest victims of the global economic system. Fundamental to the protection of the rights of women is not only their guarding, but also their access to remedy. In order to guarantee this, information must be accessible. These cases are no exception to the fact that knowledge is power: Knowledge of your rights and entitlements. Knowledge of how to assert these rights and entitlements.

Thus, it is fundamental to analyse and tackle structural barriers, as inequalities are deeply rooted in history and continue to hinder access to justice. Moreover, it is highly necessary to monitor the effective regulation of businesses, with no one looking, the experiences of women are undermined and rendered invisible.

It is important to point out the gender-sensitive access to remedy. Law systems, historically designed and do not necessarily take into account the female perspective. Therefore, any gender-responsive legal assistance to victims throughout the legal process is often missing. A woman who is supported by someone who understands these challenges will stand taller and fight more confidently than one who is left to face the system alone.

As stated in Article 5 of the Treaty, it is the duty of all member states to protect victims of exploitation and defend human rights. Taking up the sword for human rights means ensuring that justice is accessible to everyone.

Thank you very much

Conclusio:

Junge Menschen bringen im Zuge der Projektaktivitäten ihre Ideen ein und können so zeigen, welche Aspekte für sie in den unterschiedlichsten Verhandlungen die bedeutendsten sind. Gerade das kann ein prägendes Erlebnis auch für Verhandler:innen sein, die so hören, worauf junge Menschen im Bezug zu Nachhaltigkeit, zu Lieferketten und Menschenrechte wertlegen und dies auch in ihre Arbeit einfließen lassen.

Mit Unterstützung vom

- Bundesministerium
Land- und Forstwirtschaft,
Klima- und Umweltschutz,
Regionen und Wasserwirtschaft