



Fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health

Budapest, Hungary, 23–25 June 2004



EUR/04/5046267/YD

24 June 2004

41345

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

YOUTH DECLARATION¹

Our health cannot be negotiated. It is a precondition of our personal development and happiness. Nobody should make money on the back of other people's ill health. We need and deserve a fundamental human right to a clean and healthy environment. We also need access to information and education to be able to most effectively take care of our health.

We realize that the development of mechanisms to protect and promote our environment and health does not come cheap, and requires appropriate investing. Moreover, we believe that people need greater understanding of the fact that the consequences of not investing now will result in greater human, financial and environmental costs in the future.

On the occasion of the Fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health we raise demands in the following areas.

1. There is a lack of political will to create and agree upon **legally binding commitments** at this conference. Accordingly, we want:

- The Children's Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe (CEHAPE) to become a legally binding document at the next conference.
- The goals within this document and national Children's Environment and Health Action Plans (CEHAPs) to be supported by timelines and indicators.
- The Table of Actions to become part of CEHAPE and to be implemented.

2. There is a lack of political will to **implement previously agreed commitments**. Accordingly, we want:

- Countries to ratify and implement the Kyoto Protocol, Stockholm Convention and all other related international environment and health agreements.

3. We are very concerned that the population of the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) **face severe environmental and health problems**. Accordingly, we want:

- Equal opportunities for all European citizens, so that everyone can live in a healthy environment.
- All young people to have access to free basic health care.

- A just and sufficient level of financial and technical support for the countries of EECCA to tackle the growing environment and health problems.

4. There is **not enough cooperation between environment and health** authorities, professionals and civil society. Accordingly, we want:

- More cooperation between these groups at local, national and international level.
- Better coordination between the “Environment for Europe” and the “Environment and Health” processes.
- Better and more transparent cooperation and coordination among activities of United Nations bodies and between international and intergovernmental organizations in Europe.

5. There is a **lack of a coherent and integrated** policy making. Accordingly, we want:

- Equal importance for environmental, social and economic issues.
- Governments to allocate more resources for environmental and health issues.

6. There is a lack of safeguards to compensate for the fact that **children, women and youth are more susceptible** to environmental and health risks. Accordingly, we want:

- Policies to protect these groups.
- Special protection for young people in disadvantaged situations.

7. We consider the following issues as *priority areas*:

a) **Food security, safety and quality.** Within this area we call for:

- The introduction of a moratorium on genetically modified organisms (GMOs).
- A reduction in the level of chemicals used within agricultural processes and food manufacturing and processing.
- Governments to develop and regularly monitor food quality and nutritional standards.
- Properly funded healthy meals for school children, particularly those from lower income backgrounds.
- An obligation on food-producing companies to indicate the effects of preservatives on people’s health.

b) **Air pollution and green spaces.** Within this area we call for:

- The mainstreaming and introduction of alternative forms of clean and sustainable transportation.
- The promotion of public transport and the necessary infrastructural support.
- An obligation on owners to install particle filter for diesel engines.
- The reduction of pollution from industries and energy production.
- An end to the transferring of unsustainable technologies to countries with transition economies.
- Investment in research and development to create new, clean and environmentally friendly technologies.
- The development of strategies to preserve a sufficient number of green spaces and parks in cities.
- The creation of designated areas for physical activity, provided that these do not adversely affect the number of available green spaces.

c) **Waste.** Within this area we call for:

- A reduction in waste production through more sustainable lifestyles.
- The provision of a sufficient number of recycling facilities.
- The prohibition of nuclear waste exportation and re-processing.
- Governments to ensure environmentally sound and socially just waste treatment including removal, separation and recycling.

d) **Access to clean water.** Within this area we call for:

- Access to clean water for everybody.
- The installation of up-to-date water treatment systems and sanitation.
- A reduction in wasteful water consumption.
- Special attention to be given to polluted ground water areas.

e) **Tobacco and alcohol.** Within this area we call for:

- A ban on all tobacco and alcohol advertising.
- A smoking ban in public places to be introduced in the long-term.
- Effective enforcement of legal age limits for the sale and consumption of tobacco and alcohol.

f) **Education.** Within this area we call for:

- The promotion of healthier nutrition.
- The provision of practical environmental education for children from a very young age, which would include an element of peer education.
- Better education about sustainable consumption patterns to be fully integrated into school curricula (in line with the aspirations of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, proclaimed in General Assembly resolution A/RES/57/254 of 2002) and public campaigns to make young people more conscious consumers.
- Public campaigns to discourage the use of alcohol and tobacco.
- Better prevention and health promotion programmes in schools that are relevant to and meet the needs of young people on alcohol, drugs and tobacco.
- Political will and resources from government to work to change our behaviour towards the environment, so as to encourage more global cooperation and innovate actions.
- Raising awareness about the state of the environment and its effects on human health.

8. The following principles should be fundamental to national and international policy development in the area of health and environment:

1. Precautionary principle;
2. Polluter-pays principle; and
3. Environmental and health impact assessment.

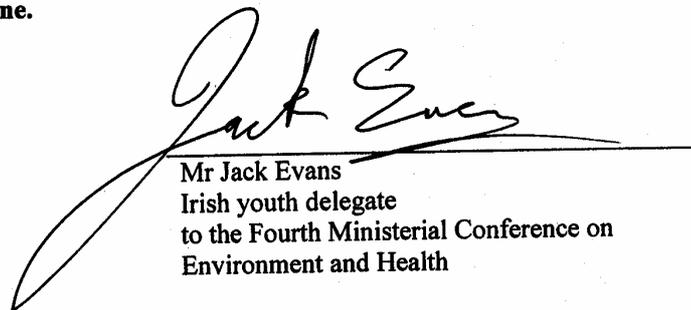
9. Young people have a fundamental role to play in the formulation of policy on health and environment, in related decision-making processes, and in the building of a healthier and more sustainable world. We are already making real and positive change in our local communities, countries and internationally. We

strive for innovative and successful solutions to global challenges by exchanging information, sharing best practices and by cross-cultural networking.

10. If young people are to continue to play this essential role, it is incumbent on all governments to support and harness our potential. Accordingly, we call for:

- National governments to involve a young person within their national delegation and provide funding to enable young people to fully participate in international processes and events.
- Funding to be made available to support youth-led initiatives on environment and health, and other follow-up activities.
- That young people are involved in the process of creating national CEHAPs, and in the implementation of the Table of actions.
- Youth to have a seat on the European Environment and Health Committee.
- Youth to participate in the International Coordination Committee on CEHAPE.
- WHO to begin a process of involvement of young people, similar to the United Nations Environment Programme's successful "Tunza" programme.

The conference has been talking about young people for more than a year. We demand that from now on ministers involve young people from the outset in the preparations for conferences such as this in the future, and also make a commitment to youth participation in the implementation and monitoring of national CEHAPs. Nevertheless, today's youth will grasp the opportunity for participation and cooperation presented to us by this conference, we will pursue this advantage to build a sustainable network among ourselves to monitor the implementation of CEHAPE within our own countries, and we will work in cooperation with governments to truly build a healthier and more sustainable future for everyone.



Mr Jack Evans
Irish youth delegate
to the Fourth Ministerial Conference on
Environment and Health

¹ In 2003 the European Environment and Health Committee (EEHC) requested a youth input into preparations for the Fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), as a member of the EEHC, was requested to take the lead and use its existing youth and children network (UNEP Tunza) to develop a mechanism for young people to reflect on the Children's Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe (CEHAPE) and shape a youth perspective in the form of a youth statement.

Discussions were initiated among several European environment and health-based youth groups, which led to the holding of a UNEP-supported workshop (in March 2004) for young people to discuss the CEHAPE and other issues related to environment and health.

The outcome of the workshop was an agreement by the young people to prepare a declaration. A first draft of this declaration was produced. Further sharing and discussion of the draft was organized to include a broader network of young people in the Region, culminating in the Youth Parliament facilitated by the Ministry of Health, Social and Family Affairs of Hungary that took place on 22 and 23 June 2004. The Youth Declaration of that Parliament is the outcome of this participatory process.

The participants in the Youth Parliament included official youth delegates to the Ministerial Conference representing 19 countries, UNEP Tunza representing 22 countries, several Hungarian youth groups, and youth representatives from the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom.