Distinguished chair, honourable delegates, dear fellow youth delegates,

As the representatives of the German youth to the United Nations we are here to convey the voices of our country’s young people. In the past months we travelled over 10 000 km and engaged with over 1000 young people to capture their visions, thoughts and demands for our global society. On our tour one thing became very clear: young people are far from being apathetic or apolitical. We as young people do hold opinions and we are very willing to engage in meaningful discussions. We encountered three major priorities:

Firstly, we demand equal opportunities for everyone and a society free of discrimination, stereotypes and intolerance towards persons belonging to socially marginalized and vulnerable groups.

Secondly, we are convinced that both quality education and non-formal learning opportunities allow young people to become full, active, autonomous and critical citizens in society.

And thirdly, there is a need for full and effective youth participation at all levels. We therefore demand new and appropriate channels to enhance youth participation in policy making.

One priority on our tour was the social inclusion of those young people who face particular difficulties in life.

In a women’s refuge we met a girl who had been subjected to physical, sexual and psychological abuse in her former life. All forms of gender-based violence must end. Her story is one too many and must not repeat itself—neither in Germany nor anywhere else.

We also met a 12-year old girl who told us that ‘Everyone should be able to love who they want.’ What sounds so simple, so obvious, is still a mere dream for many gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersexual people around the globe. Discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity is a human rights violation. Yet, in many parts of the world the denial of this fundamental human right still has no consequences. It is clear to us: Loving someone should not be a crime.

On our tour we also had the chance to meet groups of young migrants. While facing challenges in their daily lives, at school and in the labour market, migrants are a great asset to our society. Without any doubt: Migration should not be seen as a threat, but as an opportunity. Just as 200 persons died tragically at the shores of the European Union a few days ago, it becomes clear that migration policies should be reviewed in order to acknowledge the benefits of diversity.

After having encountered a great variety of young people, we call upon the world community to shape a global society that is equal, inclusive and open to everyone regardless of their nationality, socioeconomic status, state of health, race, sexual orientation or gender identity.

The second priority we would like to share is formal and non-formal education as well as the transition to employment. Our overall aim is equal access to free and high quality education from primary to tertiary level for all young people. With regard to non-formal education, youth-led organisations play a crucial role because of their various educational opportunities. A strong civil society needs strong youth-led organisations. Sufficient funding is thus a precondition for quality youth work. Both schools and youth-led organisations prepare young people not only for active citizenship but also for success in the job market.
Therefore, the transition from education to employment needs to be facilitated with quality career guidance counselling, entrepreneurial training and paid internships and apprenticeships. We urge the United Nations to set a good example by paying its interns. When young people are in employment, it is their right to benefit from equal and fair treatment, notably in decent jobs. Education and employment are prerequisites to full and active participation, which leads us to our third priority.

Young people want to actively participate in society and in decision making. **Youth participation** should not be misused as an instrument of symbolic politics. Participation should be seen as a dialogue about our common future. Participation moves us from being powerless to being empowered. Therefore, relevant youth issues have to be defined, monitored, and implemented in a holistic policy approach. The World Program of Action for Youth is a good example. Nevertheless, clearly defined indicators measuring the success or failure of a member state with regard to youth issues are still lacking. We strongly believe that policies about young people should always be designed with young people. Some possible tools to foster youth participation are information youth contact points or innovative online participation tools. Furthermore, a judicial youth check before passing a law as it is common usage in some countries would pay heed to the precious and necessary stance of young people on the issues affecting them.

As for youth participation at the United Nations there is still need for much improvement. We would like to ask all of you, honourable delegates: “Where are all the young people who could take their seats to represent the young people of your country”? Be brave and give young people the chance to participate. Youth delegates are of great value due to their fresh perspectives, creativity and idealism. The United Nations, that is all of you, honourable diplomats, can make youth participation meaningful. Listen to what young people have to say in the upcoming negotiations.

Honourable chair, distinguished delegates,

To put our heartfelt wishes in a nutshell: **Social inclusion** and **quality education** are the driving forces for **full and effective youth participation**. As recognized by the Secretary General in the following statement: ‘We must help young people to build the future they want. This should be in our hearts and on top of every agenda.’ We as youth delegates strongly agree. Let’s put these words into action! Let’s listen to youth voices at the decision making table! Let’s work together as equal partners!

**Thank you very much.**

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**German UN Youth Delegates:**

Elise Zerrath - elise@jugenddelegierte.de

Florian Nowack - florian@jugenddelegierte.de

www.jugenddelegierte.de // www.youthdelegates.de

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