

**Ladies and Gentlemen, esteemed delegates, and honored guests,**

One year after I was appointed ESD Youth Delegate by the Climate Action Ministry in cooperation with the Austrian Commission for UNESCO, I am honored to address you once again today.

It is great that there is a forum, that sets the focus on ESD and all matters concerning it, but as I stated already last year, in order to obtain real sustainable development and reach target 4 of the Agenda 2030, we need to be aware of several educational concepts, all stated in target 4.7 and how they lead to a better understanding on how education systems can and must be transformed.

Therefore, I would like to highlight a publication Serafin mentioned before – published by the Austrian Commission for UNESCO and its advisory board titled “**transformative education, global citizenship education and education for sustainable development. An exploration.**”

The purpose of the paper is to clarify these terms and demonstrate the links between them. Moreover, it aims to shed light on both the educational policy and overall political contexts which form the background for the current discussion concerning and surrounding these concepts.

Transformative education is a new way of asking an old question: the question concerning the potential change for individuals brought about by learning and education and the effectiveness of pedagogical action in achieving social change.

The possible umbrella terms, transformative education and transformative learning, label all issues in their own way and thereby create room for discussion and the necessary critical examination that is required on a consistent basis.

Therefore, I am urging you to widen the focus of UNECEs important work, especially concerning youth and their demands. The focus of our work should be on the interconnectedness of the world and not on permanently reminding young people of their personal responsibility.

Without the implementation of significant changes and laws that actually target the responsible parties, not one single issue concerning climate change, biodiversity loss and many more, can be solved.

It should not only concern youth. But instead, this concerns all. Of course we all need to learn, but the focus should not be only on young learners, but the potential of people in power to learn about these issues as well.

Speaking to you last year, I stressed that young people are eager to share their knowledge and to take action. And that’s what we did.

Austria has seen significant youth involvement in sustainability initiatives and remarkable youth-led climate action.

One outstanding example is the “climate lawsuit” filed by twelve children with the Austrian Constitutional Court. Their aim was to annul parts of the Austrian Climate Protection act, arguing that childrens’ rights were endangered due to insufficient climate protection measures. Unfortunately, the case was dismissed on formal grounds. Yet, the complaint highlights that young people are increasingly mobilizing against policies and actions that violate their constitutionally guaranteed rights.

Also, there has been a development of Youth being invited to join conferences, podium discussions and are actively taking part in the political field of sustainability. To see people my age taking part in the discussion, and being invited to the table feels like real change. But, some other events like the Youth Forum for the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health last year in Budapest, showed how far we still need to go.

Additionally, there were several conferences being held by and for youth, for example the LCOY and the RCOY. Representatives of over 30 parties took part in the discussion, and the final European youth recommendations are actually being published next week.

A key aspect of these gatherings was the formulation of clear demands by young people. We know what change we would like to see. Still, we and all of us need to be provided with a better overview on all current initiatives and definitions concerning ESD and GCED.

A common language, common understanding, is a good start. This could enable us to create synergies between existing projects and initiatives and the changing demands and interests. Young people can be the linkage between initiatives, we are connected in this world, we are aware of what young people in other countries, in other regions are doing.

We not only demand significant investments in green infrastructure and renewable energy sources, but we are urging for stricter laws, aiming for a rapid transition to a low-carbon economy.

Additionally, we call for the governmental support of youth in their demands by the responsible people in positions of power. This needs to happen by the establishment of formal mechanisms at all governmental levels to ensure the meaningful youth engagement which has a real impact on policy decisions.

An example here would be an inclusive and diverse youth advisory board that actually enables young people to voice their opinion via a direct channel to policy makers.

Also, there must be dedicated funding and resources for youth-led sustainability projects, empowering young people to drive local and innovative solutions.

All young people, regardless of their economic and educational background, regardless of who and where they are, should have the opportunity to work on issues that will define their future. The time for mere lip service is over; we need real commitments and actions now.

### **Conclusion**

Youth cannot and must not be merely passive recipients of education and of developments.

No, we are determined to be active and leading in the sustainability movement.

It is crucial that transformative and quality education is supported by all member states and that also youth is supported in the process.

Only by doing so can we hope to build a more sustainable and just world. The urgency of the situation demands immediate action. We must all commit to making a significant difference for our planet and future generations, starting now.

Thank you for your attention.