

Report on The National Forum 2000 and National Forum Youth during and after the Conference on War-Affected Children

YOUTH CLOSING STATEMENT AT EXPERTS MEETING

Ladies and gentlemen, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to let us voice our ideas and opinions involving war-affected children in this international setting. Being able to work with experts from around the world not only motivated us to make a difference, but also gave us concrete ideas of how to start.

We would like to put our words into action by creating an international organization of youth responsible to support the implementation of the recommendations made here regarding children and youth affected by war. With political and financial support from governments and NGOs, our recommendations would become realities. During this conference we met with Minister Minna who indicated her support for this project. Last night, we met with Mr. Otunnu, who discussed our participation in a movement for the protection of war-affected children. This would include children to children networks, advocacy campaigns, and a youth advisory council that would provide advice and support to his office. We can see that the time has come for co-operation between the youth and adults on the issue of war-affected children.

Let's make it possible for the voices of children to be heard in the global community. This organization could do this through activities such as lobbying, pressuring governments, and running campaigns to adopt better policies concerning children and war. In addition to these tactics, we would also like to use resources that are currently available to create a worldwide network of youth which will be focussed on this issue, and determined to make life better for those who are suffering. Holding discussions and workshops to educate children regarding their rights, advising and facilitating program development, and identifying priorities for research, are some examples of what the youth can do if the opportunity would be given.

Youth support will not only help to implement Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but will also set an example for other nations to put youth participation into practice. By working together we will be one step closer to war prevention and peace building.

During the past week, we've seen and heard stories from the young victims of war.

We are tired of only being the victims, we want to be the ones who make a difference.

A change must be made. We urge experts and organizations to work with us in making this project become our reality.

