

YFS Speech, May 16 2018 DR Concert Hall

We invite you to close your eyes. Take a deep breath. Inhale - Exhale. This clean air is a privilege you share with the person next to you. This air is essential, and it is what binds us.

But not everyone has access to clean air. Keeping your eyes closed, now visualize a sandal factory in Cambodia. Breathe in the air of this factory.

Can you feel how heavy, sweaty, and putrid it is? Listen to the sounds of the factory. Can you hear how loud it is? Can you hear the banging of sewing machines? Can you hear the hammering of studs into shoe soles?

Now, return to Copenhagen and open your eyes.

Imagine a future for the factory in Cambodia. A future environment that is as clean as in this room. Let the calmness of this moment flow to create a different fashion industry. Imagine a future of empathy and equality, where the fashion industry has become a community for change.

We are the collective voices of the Youth Fashion Summit. We represent 36 different nationalities from all around the world, but today we are united as the advocates of the future generation to act on the vision of the United Nations for global prosperity.

For the last three days we have been joined in forging collaborative relationships to improve inclusion and active stewardship of our legacy in society.

By engaging with the Sustainable Development Goals, #3 for health and well-being and #5 for gender equality, we urge you to work with us to alleviate suffering and inequality.

Equal access to education is an important catalyst, for building partnerships and transparency. Our goal today is to facilitate an ongoing shift of mindsets, leading towards a future where an alliance of all people make our resolutions a reality.

How many in the room know the name of a garment factory worker?... Of a fibre farmer? Do they have children? Do they have access to fresh water?

Right now, the industry is demanding too much of its most vulnerable stakeholders: women and children.

Someone in this room has implemented onsite childcare for their workers. Another has replaced animal textiles with vegan alternatives. We want all stakeholders to collaborate, not compete, creating a platform of shared knowledge and best practices. This starts with each sector taking public responsibility for their impacts. Instead of working in silos, companies making a positive impact need to be transparent about their strategies. Only by leading through example can we enable systemic change.

We ask that each stakeholder take first steps towards a circular supply chain. By investing collectively in promising innovations, such as alternatives textiles and closed-loop production technologies, we steward a business model where transparency is inherent and the need for virgin fiber is eventually eliminated. This reduces the unsustainable dependence we place on our scarce water resources, the exorbitant amount of CO2 emitted, and the rapidly increasing quantity of microplastics released into our oceans each year.

Responsible legislation is a first step towards achieving global health and well-being. Its apparent that the system is broken when a worker's minimum wage does not even allow for three meals a day. By investing in relationships and solutions at the local level we can strengthen the global health of our industry.

We believe that fashion is a wonderful vessel that enables us to express our personality, creativity and diversity. However, there is a darker reality to fashion. We see an industry rife with gender inequality and oppression of women and girls, across every stage of the value chain.

The Sustainable Development Goal 5 encourages us to acknowledge the many conscious and unconscious biases rooted within the system.

It also inspires us to seek out new roads towards equality and empowerment for all genders.

As we all know, but might not fully acknowledge, the fashion industry is driven by women. 80% of garment workers are women and 66% of those are of the same age as us, standing on this stage.

How is it that a large part of these women are still oppressed and discriminated against in their everyday lives? No matter if it is a buyer earning less than her male colleague or a garment worker who has to fear for her safety within the factory.

We want a reality where humans come before profit and where women and men are treated equally at all stages. Where we continue to challenge existing mindsets, and relationships are rooted in honesty and compassion.

We want collaboration throughout the industry in order to have all genders on equal ground. By being the innovative frontrunners of the fashion industry we insist that you take the initiative and recognize the benefits and potential of diversity and inclusivity. We now have the evidence that this works - diversity delivers...across culture and profitability. We urge you to harness this opportunity within your organisations by offering education as a driving force for acceptance of gender as a spectrum, with the ultimate aim to empower all people within your value chain.

As actors within this human collective, we want you to do what you do best - use your creativity, energy and industry to alleviate the suffering of the oppressed.

We, the changemakers of Youth fashion summit, call upon you, members of the audience, to make this future that we have imagined a reality.

To the CEOs in the audience, we expect you to go beyond profit motivations and redefine value, as the health, well-being, and equality of all participants. The prosperity of this investment will manifest itself throughout your organizations.

To the Government representatives: we urge you to form legislations that support gender equality throughout all industries and stop suffering within the supply chain.

To Non Governmental Organizations: We encourage you to take advantage of your independent perspective and influence on the industry in order to guide the changes to come.

To the Media: We ask that you become a platform to acknowledge the disconnect between practices and promises of equality, and that you share our demands for the future of the fashion industry.

To the Manufacturers: We require that you give voices to all of the workers in the value chain, and that you are transparent in all of your methodologies.

And finally, to the Consumers, we want you all to be conscious and informed in your decision making, using your purchasing power to inform the industry of our collective investment in the equality and wellbeing of all.

We have the power to disrupt the fashion industry to make sustainability and equality the new normal. Now, I want you to take another deep breath with me.

Inhale - and exhale.

Consider the legacy that we will leave on the planet, for the air we breathe today, and for the air to be inhaled by our great-great grandchildren. Thank you.