



## Sienna Nordquist - USA

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First of all, I just want to thank all of the hosts of this program for inviting us here and giving us the opportunity to share our voices and our stories. I also want to thank everyone that I have had the wonderful opportunity to meet and talk with. I have loved hearing your stories and your ideas; if I have not yet met you already, I hope that I do it before this conference ends, because I've just been so inspired by all of you, and I hope that we can create as much change as possible.

So, my proposal is the "Sustainable Development Guardians Program" which I envision as each different UN agencies field offices, providing the resources and investment for local youth in those areas to create programs and projects for Sustainable Development. So, for example, if the UNDP has a field office, they might specifically train the youth in their communities to create programs for social and economic development. If there is a UNHCR field office, they might help migrants in those areas learn how to reduce inequalities. But, I think that this investment should not just spark change among those who best understand the problems of their region; it should also be supplemented with debate education and debate practice.

I was a nationally competitive debater in the United States throughout high school, I was ranked in the top 1% of United States debaters and I was very fortunate, this past summer, to work at the largest and most successful debate institute in the world and get to train and mentor students from the United States and from China. I have just seen through debate education the most wonderful form and supplement of education that you can have.

A debate teaches you to analyze both sides of a situation, to view both sides of a story and therefore to try and understand what is the best means of implementation. I believe that this is very important for us in our investment of these local youth, to make sure that they are looking at both sides of the story, so they are sure that when they implement something within their communities it has the expected results that they want and is the best and most efficient means of doing so.

I also believe that by providing the youth with positive communication skills and the ability to voice their opinions, they will be able to convince and persuade their community members that they should be supportive of the change that they are making. I think that sometimes there is a disconnect between the "champions of change" within communities and the rest of the society. So, hopefully by investing in this youth with communication skills, they'll be able to individually –through their persistence– bridge this gap and help all of the society to get behind them; because at the end of the day, the Sustainable Development Goals can not be achieved if only youth are behind it, they can not be achieved if only men are behind the Sustainable Development Goals. To achieve our vision for 2030, we need everyone to be on board, and that requires us at each community level to persuade individuals that this is what they should be supportive of.

Now, debate and our way of communicating is different across societies, so I do not view this debate education as being uniform across each region. I think that in the United States we focus a lot on Western philosophies in our debate such as Kantian ethics, Lockean social contract theories, Rawls, etc., and I think that it will be really cool to see how different regions take the different warrants, that take different forms of evidence comparison and analysis. But I think that the one universal thing that this program can achieve is that as a human race we will stop talking at each other and start speaking with each other. I think that is an investment that is incredibly worthy for us to make. I think that by utilizing already the field offices that exists with the UN agencies, we are going to be most productive and efficiently utilizing resources we already have. But I think that we should not necessarily back away from private partnerships as well. I think that even though there is a lot of problem with private corporations not caring about the sustainability of their initiatives, there are still some private corporations and specifically international corporations that care about the sustainability of the communities that they affect. And I think that we should reach out to them to see if they're willing to support this investment, not only of education, but also the investment for all Sustainable Development that we can create and localize within these communities.

So, by creating these partnerships between different UN agencies, the communities and, by bridging the gaps through debate, I believe that we will create not only a discussion but also something productive through this. If you need evidence that debate is powerful in helping individuals to find their voice it was because I was a debater that I realized that I was so interested and invested in Sustainable Development. Debate gave me the confidence to pursue what I wanted; it gave me the confidence to apply when I was 16 years old to be a Global Community Champion with the United Nations Women. It gave me the persona and the confidence to then achieve that and help people around the world through that duty, that incredible, duty and privilege that I was able to have and because of debate I am here, it is what led me on my journey here and is why I am having a

voice here today. So, if debate can do that for me, imagine what it can do for everyone around the world and all these local communities that need to have their voice heard.

Thank you so much for your time, for your consideration and for making me a part of this discussion.