



THE SECRETARY OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

June 11, 2014

Martha's Vineyard Youth Leadership Initiative  
P.O. Box 4551  
Vineyard Haven, Massachusetts 02568

Dear Youth Delegates:

I am extremely privileged to have the opportunity to welcome you to the 10th annual Youth Leadership Summit for Sustainable Development. I want to extend a special welcome to those who have travelled a great distance to attend this unique event.

You have all expressed different reasons for choosing to attend this Summit. Some of you are here because you are curious about other islands and their ways of life. Some of you are here because you want to protect and preserve the fragile ecosystems of your island. Some of you are here because you have recognized local, national, or international problems, and you want to do something to address these issues. Among all of these noble reasons for your attendance, I see a common thread: you are all here because you are willing to confront – and solve – some of the most difficult and perplexing problems that our world faces. You are all here because you understand our future depends on the ability of your generation to recognize the imminent need for sustainable development across all fronts.

I understand this year's summit is dedicated to the ocean. Growing up along the coast of Massachusetts, my family has long had a powerful connection to the ocean. I have loved exploring the New England shoreline for as long as I can remember. A bit later in life, I discovered how essential the ocean truly is to so many aspects of our day-to-day life. The ocean fuels our trade; it provides much of the food we eat and the air we breathe; and it is home to vast, extraordinary ecosystems, from the coral reefs to the kelp forests.

Today, our ocean resources are threatened more than ever by unsustainable fishing practices, record pollution, and the devastating effects of climate change. In fact, protecting the ocean has become one of the most difficult global challenges we face today. The good news is we understand what we need to do in order to deal with these threats.

Just a few days before your summit, I will host an international conference aimed at addressing the dire state of the ocean. It is our responsibility to leave to future generations the same healthy, vibrant oceans many of us have been fortunate enough to enjoy throughout our lives. We need as many voices as possible in this ongoing discussion, contributing solutions that will make a difference. I support opportunities for your voices to be heard.

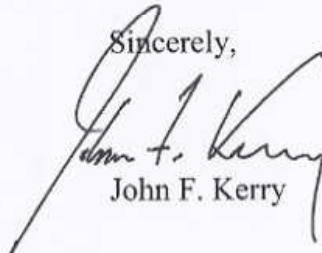
This summit presents a tremendous opportunity to use your imagination and creativity in ways that will translate into real results. Whether this means pursuing entrepreneurial ventures or making connections with other youth throughout the world, all of you have the

power to create substantive change for the future of our planet. I would encourage you to look into similar work being done by the Small Island Developing States Youth Network. Some of these youth will be gathering in Samoa in August to discuss their shared challenges and ideas for overcoming them. Perhaps there is a way to join forces in the future to amplify your efforts.

Your participation in this summit will prepare you to become leaders in the movement towards sustainable partnerships and living habits. You will learn how to develop action plans, troubleshoot challenges, and hone your leadership qualities into strengths that can help you connect with people from all walks of life.

I hope you enjoy your time in Massachusetts, and again, I want to sincerely applaud you for all that you have done, all that you are doing, and especially, all that you will do in the future to build a more sustainable world. Our task is a difficult one, but with young, inspired leaders like you, willing to lead the fight, I have no doubt we will prevail.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John F. Kerry". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "J" and "K".

John F. Kerry