

The UNEP Magazine for Youth



TUNZA



for young people · by young people · about young people

TUNZA 2009 YOUTH CONFERENCES - What we want from Copenhagen

2010 - INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF BIODIVERSITY



‘We have to protect the Earth, not just for us but for future generations.’

Yugratna Srivastava at the UN High-Level Summit on Climate Change

TUNZA

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Partners for Youth and the Environment



UNEP and Bayer, the German-based international enterprise involved in health care, crop science and materials science, are working together to strengthen young people's environmental awareness and engage children and youth in environmental issues worldwide.

The partnership agreement, renewed to run through 2010, lays down a basis for UNEP and Bayer to enlarge their longstanding collaboration to bring successful initiatives to countries

around the world and develop new youth programmes. Projects include: TUNZA Magazine, the International Children's Painting Competition on the Environment, the Bayer Young Environmental Envoy in Partnership with UNEP, the UNEP Tunza International Youth/Children's Conference, youth environmental networks in Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America, North America and West Asia, the Asia-Pacific Eco-Minds forum, and a photo competition, 'Ecology in Focus', in Eastern Europe.

International Year of Biodiversity



With more than half of us living in towns and cities, spending less and less time in direct touch with the natural world, it is not altogether surprising that a recent UK survey revealed that children have trouble identifying common wild creatures. Thirty-seven per cent could not identify a bee – more than a third mistook it for a wasp and some even confused it with a fly. And worryingly, only 26 per cent often go for walks in the countryside. They are not alone. Another survey found that two thirds of European citizens didn't know the meaning of 'biodiversity', the term we use to describe the variety of life on Earth and the natural patterns it forms.

That's why the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) supports UNEP's highly successful Billion Tree Campaign, and encourages hands-on learning experience through its Green Wave initiative.

Part of The Green Wave is a campaign for youth world-wide to plant a tree at 10 o'clock in the morning local time on 22 May – the International Day for Biological Diversity – creating a 'green wave' across time zones. Another part of The Green Wave is a biodiversity photo contest that aims to help young people take an interest in nature on the eve of 2010, the International Year of Biodiversity.

The goals of this significant year are to raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity and of steps that can be taken to prevent its loss. As Ban Ki-moon said in a June 2009 message: 'There is no better place to start raising awareness and inspiring action than in schools and families... I encourage students, parents and teachers to ride The Green Wave and spread the word.' I would like to second the Secretary-General's words and call on youth everywhere to join in the fight to save our most precious resource: biodiversity.

Dr Ahmed Djoghlaif
Executive Secretary
Convention on Biological Diversity

For more info, see <http://greenwave.cbd.int>

EDITORIAL

Five times in the last half billion years or so of the Earth's history, its entire web of life has been ripped apart by a mass extinction, in which up to 95 per cent of its species may have been lost. After each one, it took the natural world millions of years to recover and, when it did, it was fundamentally different from what had gone before. Mammals got their chance to flourish, for example, after the last mass extinction – some 65 million years ago – finished off the dinosaurs. In the words of the great paleoanthropologist and conservationist Richard Leakey, such catastrophes 'restructure the biosphere'.

Now it is happening again. But whereas all the previous ones had natural causes – such as a massive meteor strike as with the death of the dinosaurs, or sudden global warming or cooling – this time we are responsible. For the first time ever, one species is threatening all the others, as humanity increasingly takes over and destroys the world's natural habitats. Extinctions have, of course, always happened; only about 3 per cent of the species that have ever lived are alive today. But now they are occurring at 1,000 or even 10,000 times the natural rate. Half of all the world's current species are expected to disappear by the end of the century. To say that the effects would be devastating does not even begin to do justice to the consequences.

Early this century the world's governments repeatedly promised to avert this growing disaster within the decade. European heads of state resolved in 2001 that 'biodiversity decline should be halted with the aim of reaching this objective by 2010'. The following year, Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity – now made up of over 190 countries – committed themselves to 'a significant reduction' in the rate of biodiversity loss by the same date, and the world's governments adopted the same target at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg.

Yet we now stand on the threshold of the target date and nothing has changed. If anything, the rate of loss has increased; the approach of the sixth great extinction has speeded up. This whole-scale failure is a betrayal of the planet and of our, and succeeding, generations. We must do everything we can to ensure that this wasted decade is not repeated, that the world finally slows and then halts the appalling rate of artificial extinction, for the sake of life on Earth itself.



Big ask

The vast conference room buzzed with the energy and voices of 800 young people between the ages of 10 and 24, representing more than 100 countries. As they huddled at circular tables in groups of 10, language, age and cultural barriers disappeared as they focused on a single task: finalizing a statement asking world leaders – on behalf of the world's 3 billion young people – to take decisive action against climate change at the Copenhagen talks in December 2009.

The week-long Tunza International Children and Youth Conference, in Daejeon, Republic of Korea, in August, was one of the largest ever international gatherings of young people calling for climate change action. UNEP combined its children's conference and its youth conference for this Global Town Hall to support the United Nations-led Seal the Deal campaign.

Seal the Deal set out to galvanize public and political support for a fair and comprehensive global climate agreement in the last few months before Copenhagen. It included an online petition and rallies in 100 capitals around the world.

'Young people's voices will and must be heard because they will inherit the outcomes of our actions,' says UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Future leaders

During the Tunza Conference, UNEP's Executive Director Achim Steiner led a dialogue between young people and a panel that included Korean Prime Minister Han Seung-soo, Environment Minister Lee Manee and eco-adventurer David de Rothschild.

'I believe you, the future leaders of the world, will do the best job of looking after our fragile planet Earth,' said the Prime Minister. 'There is an old Chinese adage, "A crisis poses danger, but it also presents opportunity". I hope we will all make the wise choice to seize the moment and turn this crisis into an opportunity.'

Mr Steiner then opened up the discussion to the youth, asking what they already do, and what young people could offer.

Marisol Becerra, from the United States of America, told how her community youth project in Chicago maintains a Google map documenting the city's toxic sites, such as coal-fired power plants, and the health problems they cause. 'I hope that everyone here and in Copenhagen makes public health a priority,' she added.

'In my province, a company proposed building a coal-fired power plant, which my organization then stopped by actively opposing it,' said Edgar Geguinto. 'Then our province was struck by an oil spill, the biggest in the Philippines, which destroyed much biodiversity. But for three years afterwards, local youth organized and cleaned up the river. We have the power to change the world.'

When Mr Steiner asked what young people would do if negotiations at Copenhagen failed, the answers from around the room were swift and forceful. All agreed that giving up is not an option.

'Intergovernmental conferences have never greatly influenced my work,' said Linh Do, who started a campaign to change a million light bulbs in Australia. 'If nothing comes out of Copenhagen, I will feel even more motivated to continue my current environmental work – it will be that much more urgent.'

Building steam

During the eight weeks before the Global Town Hall meeting, young people around the planet had hammered out a draft statement using the new web-based networking platform <http://uniteforclimate.org>. Then, in Daejeon, participants considered each item in the draft, debating changes and additions. More than 200 young people in 15 cities around the world – including Cuernavaca (Mexico), Nairobi (Kenya), Canberra (Australia), Bangkok (Thailand), Vancouver (Canada) and Athens (Greece)



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– contributed to the proceedings in real time via the web.

As each table agreed on changes, volunteer facilitators sent them via laptops to a designated group – the 'Theme Team' – who collated comments and redrafted the statement on the spot. After three hours, the revised document was ready. Wireless keypads let the entire room vote on each change, and the final version was read out to a cheering crowd.

Hannah Aulby, from Australia, appreciated how the process and technology gave each participant an equal voice. 'It was very democratic. At other conferences I've attended, the strongest personalities, loudest voices or most sophisticated lobbying powers got their way.'

Delegate Joon Ho Yoo, from Busan, Republic of Korea, enjoyed the opportunity to work directly with younger people. 'I was surprised that, although they were younger than me, they had so many innovative ideas. I learned a lot from them.'

Finalizing the statement was the culmination of a day filled with impassioned discussion about climate change, the active role youth are already playing, and their hopes for the future.



Karen Eng



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'In many ways this process of coming to an agreement on a final text mirrors what will happen in December in Copenhagen,' said Achim Steiner, who pledged to take the statement to the September 2009 High-Level Summit on Climate Change convened by the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. The statement was also sent to government leaders throughout the world.

'It is very important to include the voice of children and youth in every environmental decision. It is our request to all politicians that they please take this statement into consideration in Copenhagen,' said 13-year-old Yugratna Srivastava from India (pictured with Al Gore on the front cover), who addressed the High-Level Summit on behalf of the world's young people, and presented the statement.

Never give up

'Sealing the Deal is important, because it would acknowledge climate change to be a critical global issue,' said Walid Amrane, from Algeria. 'But if nations can't agree, civil society – particularly young people – will have to initiate a bottom-up process. Individuals will have to spread information, support innovation and change minds. We must not be victims, but actors.'

The youth statement is made on behalf of the world's 3 billion people under the age of 25, and asks governments, citizens and youth to commit to taking action on climate change. Here are some excerpts. For the full text, visit www.unep.org/tunza.

Listen to our voices

The future needs strong vision and leadership.

We, young people – 3 billion of the world population – are concerned and frustrated that our governments are not doing enough to combat climate change. We feel that radical and holistic measures are needed urgently from us all.

We request our governments to:

- have strict laws and enforcement against those who pollute and degrade the environment;
- transition toward a green economy;
- make engaging environmental education mandatory in schools and universities.

We appeal to all citizens of this planet to:

- develop and promote the infrastructure and use of public transportation and eco-friendly alternatives;
- engage in environmental campaigns and education;
- commit to sustainable lifestyles to reduce carbon footprints.

As young people, we will:

- engage in environmentally friendly activities especially planting, nurturing and protection of trees;
- communicate environment and climate change through the media and social networks like uniteforclimate.org, Facebook and Twitter, and develop environmental websites;
- support and promote the efforts of the UN Secretary-General to Seal the Deal in Copenhagen.

What next?



Conferences are one thing, but what happens once they are over? After the Global Town Hall (see pages 4-5), Tunza youth delegates got down to working out what to do next. They held regional and sub-regional meetings, where they caught up on each other's projects and discussed action plans for the next two years.

'It's good to find out about the environmental concerns and youth projects in Asia-Pacific,' said Alok Basakoti from Nepal. 'Water pollution was mentioned a lot, as were melting glaciers and the unwise use of water.' He added: 'When I return to Nepal, I will organize a Seal the Deal seminar, petition and rally.'

Nolana Lynch, from Tobago, said the Latin American regional meetings helped her gain perspective on the effects climate change is already having on her country. 'Coconut trees are being uprooted by seawater and the changing seasons mean mangos ripen in January instead of June,' she reported. 'As a region, we have much to do, made harder because we speak English, French, Portuguese and Spanish, so we are all translating for each other.'

Each region's plans reflected on the last 100 days before December's Copenhagen Conference, including educating and mobilizing young people, asking governments to Seal the Deal, and spreading the word through the internet.

Delegates also found out what their peers were doing in other parts of the world. They heard, for example, about Ella Bella Constantinides' striking Miss Earth pageant in South Africa, recognizing young women's environmental commitment and involving them in activities like planting community vegetable gardens and conserving wildlife.

like a spider's web: if some parts are destroyed, the whole web loses balance,' said Kyu Hwan Lee, from the Republic of Korea.

Field trips – such as to Uam Historical Park and a cultural centre that taught traditional tea making – rounded off the



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week. Heather Smith from the United States went to a local river to learn about freshwater fish. 'We used traditional nets made of bamboo and string to catch fish. One person holds the net under the water, while the other splashes to herd fish into it. The guide told us about the individual species and explained their roles in the ecosystem.'

Emilio Perez from Argentina said. 'When I go home, I'll visit the education minister to ask for environmental education to be added to school curricula. I had this idea before I came, but attending the Tunza conference has given me resources and tools such as contacts, the youth statement and printed materials like TUNZA magazine. Being associated with UNEP means I am more empowered. Maybe now I'll have a voice.'

SPOTLIGHTS • SPOTLIGHTS • SPOTLIGHTS

Crafty solution

Margaret Koli works alongside wardens in Kenya's national parks, clearing wire snares laid by poachers to catch elephants and antelope. 'My group, Youth for Conservation, takes the snares to craftspeople, who twist them into decorative animal figures and sell them to fund the project.' The group hopes that youth action will inspire Kenyans to appreciate the country's natural heritage. See www.youthforconservation.org



Karen Eng



Karen Eng

Svetlana Unru, from Tajikistan, spoke of helping poor mountain village communities build solar greenhouses and energy-saving wood stoves, while Canadians Darrick Lee and Michael Darnel performed an award-winning rap about reducing ecological footprints.

Workshops on sustainable cities, youth and climate change, environmental governance, climate change and biodiversity offered a chance to take on new ideas. 'In the biodiversity workshop, I was struck by the idea that the environment is

Platform heals

Anne Walraven, the European Tunza Advisor from the Netherlands, has just launched an online platform that consolidates details of youth environmental initiatives in one place. 'The idea originated in the European regional meetings at the 2007 Tunza Youth Conference,' she says. 'I met someone who was doing a similar project but we didn't know about each other. Now the project has gone global.' See www.bigamma.net

Fishy business

Maribel Ramos works with a Bolivian youth environmental organization, Quanrakyu, which focuses on protecting one of the country's most important wetlands, Lago Uru Uru. 'The lake used to be full of fish, but now local people can't eat them, thanks to litter and mining waste,' she said. 'My group visited schools, talking about ecological hazards. The local government took notice and decided to clean up the lake, with our help. We also teach school children how to make things out of recycled rubbish.'

Sprouting bulbs

Richard Merritt, from the United States, calls his Let's Raise a Million campaign an 'urban ecological student project'. Students replace incandescent bulbs with energy-saving ones



Juventud Ecologista en Accion

(CFLs) in the homes of low-income, ethnic minority families, free of charge, and return after three months to see how much they've saved on energy bills. In the first phase, Richard's team replaced 1,200 light bulbs in more than 130 homes. In the second, with the help of high-school volunteers, they changed more than 5,000 bulbs in 400 homes. 'People from ethnic minorities are the least represented people in the climate talks,' he says. 'We want to help those who can't afford CFLs because they are more expensive than incandescents.' See www.letsraiseamillion.org



Let's Raise a Million

Trees, not words



Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP, along with the United Nations, supports 11-year-old Felix Finkbeiner, who has pledged to plant a million trees in Germany. You too can join his quest for climate justice. Visit www.plant-for-the-planet.org



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'Children want to plant millions of trees worldwide: one million in each country,' say 11-year-old Felix Finkbeiner from Germany and 13-year-old Yugratna Srivastava from India.

The two were among the most active participants at the Tunza International Children and Youth Conference, tirelessly promoting their new campaign: 'Stop Talking, Start Planting'. It asks children worldwide to organize tree plantings to draw attention to climate change, especially in the run-up to Copenhagen.

'On 29 September, we announced the campaign at a press conference in Austria, and children between the ages of 10 and 14 all over the world started planting in their countries,' said Felix.

Yugratna added: 'That day, I asked the children in my own country to plant trees too. India's quite big, so I hope I'll get the support we need.'

Felix founded the campaign after seeing *An Inconvenient Truth* when preparing a school presentation about climate change. 'Then I found out how Wangari Mathaai planted 30 million trees in 30 years, and about UNEP's Billion Tree Campaign,' he recalls.

'Stop Talking, Start Planting' supports the UNEP campaign, which encourages individual people, communities, business and industry, civil society organizations and governments to plant trees. UNEP's most recent goal is to plant a total of 7 billion trees by the end of 2009. So far, nearly 6.5 billion have been pledged, and 4.3 billion planted.

Felix explains: 'Each tree takes up 10 kilograms of carbon every year. Trees also help supply us with freshwater, and protect biodiversity.'

'If we get a network of children planting millions of trees in say 50 or 100 countries,' added Yugratna, 'politicians and environmental leaders will listen.'

Vote for a voice

'You are giving these young people a mandate to represent you,' said Theodore Oben, Head of UNEP's Children and Youth Unit, to 220 youth delegates assembled in Daejeon, Republic of Korea, as they prepared to elect the new Tunza Youth Advisory Council (TYAC).

The election, which took place at the Tunza International Youth Conference, generated excitement. After getting to know each other over the course of the Conference, delegates selected two peers from each of UNEP's regions – Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, and West Asia – for two-year terms of office. Global indigenous youth also won representation for the first time, bringing membership of the council to 14.

Among their responsibilities are raising environmental

awareness among young people, advising UNEP on ways to better engage youth, and helping to build and facilitate networks around the globe. They also lead youth direct-action campaigns in their regions.

Meanwhile, UNEP works to give the TYAC – and through it the youth of the world – a voice at international environmental negotiations, such as its annual Governing Council meetings.

'The people you are electing today speak at most of these forums,' explained Oben. 'Young people have a seat, just like every minister, and make their voices heard, telling leaders things that they usually don't hear.'

'So you need to make sure to choose a group who will speak on your behalf – and keep you informed afterwards.'

Meet the TYAC: just after the election, the new members spoke to TUNZA.

GLOBAL INDIGENOUS

**Yaiguili Alvarado García (Kuna),
Panama**



Indigenous people are very connected with nature, so everything that is lost in biodiversity affects us. There are networks of indigenous organizations, but they're not connected to UNEP and youth movements like Tunza. Engaging the world's indigenous youth won't be easy: every other region has a UNEP office, for example, but we don't. The first step is to start making links.

AFRICA

Walid Amrane, Algeria



I plan to promote more youth participation at the decision-making level at intergovernmental climate negotiations. I will also actively support the Seal the Deal campaign in the run-up to Copenhagen. But my first priority is to consolidate the African network, improving communication and exchanging information on lessons learned.

change negotiations, as well as afterwards. Whatever decisions are made there, it will be just the beginning.

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Linh Do, Australia



One of my goals is to engage more with the indigenous people of Australia, to help their voices be heard. I also want to make sure that the Pacific islands – often forgotten about in Australia – are always given consideration in

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