

Young People Step Up Pressure on World Leaders to Clinch a Crucial Climate Deal in Copenhagen

Daejeon/Nairobi, 23 August 2009 - Rallies in 100 cities will be organized by young people across the world as part of a major push to persuade governments to Seal a meaningful Deal at the crucial UN climate convention meeting in Copenhagen in just under 110 days time.

Youth delegates pledged to keep global warming high on the international agenda as the Tunza International Youth Conference on Climate Change ended today in Daejeon, Republic of Korea.

"Climate change is the greatest threat we are facing in the 21st century, and many countries are vulnerable. If we the children and youth don't act now, we cannot be sure there will be a future for us, for future generations. We want to make sure that future generations will inherit a better place to live in," outgoing Tunza Youth Advisory Board member, 22-year old Jessie James Marcellones from the Philippines, said.

Regional Action Plans, agreed during the conference and covering Asia and the Pacific, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, and West Asia include:

- Mobilizing youth for the upcoming UN climate change meeting that opens on 7 December in the Danish capital;
- Reaching out to other environmental groups, especially during the September 21-25 Climate Week;
- Educating others about the Copenhagen meeting on campuses, in school and among churches, sports teams and more;
- Letter-writing, phone banking, visiting officials to 'Seal the Deal';
- Social Networking through the Unite for Climate, Facebook, Twitter and other e-fora;
- College campaigns and tree planting initiatives.

The 220 youths, aged 15-24, were joined by 580 children in Daejeon City in South Korea. It has been the largest truly global conference of young people on climate change ever.

Seventeen-year-old Yaiguili Alvarado Garcia, from the Kuna indigenous group in Panama, expressed the need for adults to hear and listen and understand why the young need their support.

"There are a lot of indigenous cultures that are losing, because nobody wants to hear what we want to say, what we know about Mother Earth, and it is frustrating for us because we have so many things to share and the world doesn't listen to us," she said. "There are many things we asked the governments to do and we know it is hard, but we want to work with them, we just want to make a better place for the children, for the animals and plants. It is about time we stop thinking just for us and think also for other beings that cannot speak for themselves. It is time to stop being selfish."

Yaiguili Alvarado Garcia is among the 13 newly elected Tunza Youth Advisory Council members. The Tunza Youth Advisory Council has two Youth Advisors for each of the six regions, and two representing indigenous groups. The Council advises UNEP on better ways of engaging young people in its work and represents youth in international environmental negotiations.

"This global Youth and Children gathering under Seal the Deal Campaign is the largest international gathering of young people this year advocating for climate change action. Their voices will and must be heard because they will inherit the outcomes of our actions," said the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon.

"The young people of the world are the generation that will inherit the transformational decisions governments need to take in less than 110 days time. If their passion, commitment and ideas can be embraced by world leaders and governments over the coming days and weeks, then a climate agreement that can put the world on track to a low carbon, resource efficient Green Economy can be secured," said Achim Steiner, Under-Secretary General and Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP).

UNEP organized the conference with the support of the UNEP National Committee for Korea, the Daejeon Metropolitan Government, and Tunza global programme partner, Bayer AG, as well as UNICEF, UNFPA, FAO, WMO, the World Organization of the Scout Movement, the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts and 350.org. Other private sector sponsors include Hyundai-Kia Automotive group and Samsung Engineering. Nickelodeon TV Asia is the media partner for the event.

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About Tunza

The Tunza Youth Strategy, adopted in February this year by UNEP's Governing Council, is a long-term strategy to engage young people in environmental activities and in the work of UNEP. The word 'Tunza' means 'to treat

with care or affection' in Kiswahili. The Tunza initiative aims to develop activities in the areas of environmental awareness and information exchange on the environment for children and youth. For more information, please visit www.unep.org/Tunza/



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