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13-Year-Old Artist from Philippines Wins International Children's Painting Competition on the Environment

Twentieth Anniversary of Competition Sees Over 600,000 Entries from 99 Countries

Bandung (Indonesia) / Nairobi, 27 September 2011 – A love of walking in forests in her home country of the Philippines inspired the winning entry of 13-year-old Trisha Co Reyes in the 2011 International Children's Painting Competition on the Environment. Trisha beat over 600,000 other young people to win first place in the competition, which is organised by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Trisha's entry shows a young girl pulling back a large grey curtain covered in images of dying trees in a polluted landscape, to reveal a colorful forest filled with abundant wildlife. She says the painting is an appeal for people to appreciate the value of forests and to encourage them to plant trees.

"My painting shows two sides; a good and sustainable forest and the causes of forest destruction", said Trisha.

"Forests are essential for life on Earth, but [today] the destruction of the forest has become a worldwide problem. We must treasure the earth's greatest biological treasure, so that we will always have forests in our lives."

As the overall winner, Trisha receives US\$2,000 in prize money and an all-expenses-paid trip to the TUNZA International Children and Youth Conference on the Environment in Bandung, Indonesia (27 September – 1 October), where she will be formally presented with her award.

The second-placed painting is by 14-year-old Erina Hashimoto from Japan. Her entry shows a human eye watching a mini-forest, where ants, ladybirds and other insects crawl over leaves and branches.

"I can find such a lot of species in a small corner of the forest, so when I was creating this picture, I felt like I joined in their world to live together with them," said Erina.

"If each of us looks at our surrounding natural environment with tender eyes, the Earth can change and become an enriched planet."

Monica will join the overall winner and five other regional winners at the Bandung Conference to accept her award. This year's other regional winners are Monica

Adhiambo Arego (Kenya), Marylène Schröder (Germany), Lara Garcia (Argentina), Ali Alali Mariam (Bahrain) and Prerika Chawla (USA).

The 2011 International Children's Painting Competition marks the twentieth anniversary of the contest, which has seen over 3 million children from some 100 countries paint their fears of a damaged environment, as well as their hopes and solutions for tackling problems such as deforestation, habitat destruction and pollution.

Six previous winners – from Bulgaria, Japan, Kenya, Malta, Nigeria and Russia – will be attending the Tunza conference in Bandung to join in the anniversary celebrations. They will present the 2011 winners with their awards and help launch a new book containing some of the best paintings submitted by children over the past 20 years.

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director, said: "This year's competition links the children of Rio 1992 with those who are children in the run-up to Rio+20. The world today is markedly different to the world of UNEP's original children's painting competitions—geopolitically and economically with increasing and accelerating challenges linked with finding decent employment for youth and countering rising environmental degradation."

"What hasn't changed, however, is the skill, the talent and the inspiring paintings of the world's young people which over the years have provoked admiration, reflection and action among the millions who have viewed them on walls, calendars and postcards and via the Internet—indeed they just keep getting better. Congratulations to the winners and to all who have taken part since the 1990s up to today," he added.

"[It was] during an art lesson at my school my teacher brought up the paint for the planet competition", remembers former painting competition winner Andrew Barolo from Malta. "Little did I know that it would be my painting that would be chosen to be awarded such a prestigious prize."

Andrew will soon start a university degree in architecture and hopes to use his passion for the environment in his future career.

"Hopefully as a qualified architect I will be able to do even more to preserve our local environment by pushing for more "green homes" which, whilst not compromising functionality, also stop contributing towards global warming", he says.

The International Children's Painting Competition has been organized every year since 1991 by UNEP and the Foundation for Global Peace and Environment (FGPE). Bayer and the Nikon Corporation joined as organizers in 2005 and 2006 respectively.

TUNZA International Children and Youth Conference on the Environment

The award ceremony for the international painting competition is just one of several events taking place at the TUNZA International Children and Youth Conference in Bandung.

Organized by the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and UNEP, the event will bring together around 1400 young people, mentors and celebrities from 100 countries. Participants are divided into two categories: children (age 10-14) and youth (age 15-25).

Under the theme 'Reshaping our Future through a Green Economy and Sustainable Lifestyles', the conference will explore the role of young people in sustainable development and provide youth input to the upcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, also known as Rio+20, which will be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012.

One of the main outcomes of the conference will be a "Bandung Declaration", which will provide a global youth statement on sustainable development in the run-up to Rio+20.

The TUNZA conference will also review the contribution of youth to the International Year of Forests and explore how young people can encourage their peers to adopt more environmentally-friendly lifestyles.

The TUNZA conference is a follow-up on the decision adopted at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, in Johannesburg, South Africa, which states that views of the children's should be incorporated in decisions regarding environment. Men and women who attended the Rio de Janeiro and Johannesburg conferences as youth delegates will also take part in the Bandung event to mentor their successors and share their personal experiences of youth activism on sustainable development.

To view a photo gallery of the winning entries in the 2011 International Children's Painting Competition on the Environment, please visit: www.unep.org/tunza

The official website for the 2011 TUNZA International Children and Youth Conference on the Environment is: www.unep.org/tunza/conference2011

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