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**Philippe Cousteau's EarthEcho International and the United Nations Environment
Programme Join Forces to Engage Youth this Spring in
The Bridging the Gap Challenge**

--Joint Campaign Aims to Promote Environmental Awareness and Action Between Earth Day
and World Environment Day--

Washington, DC (April 18, 2011) - Philippe Cousteau's environmental education nonprofit organization EarthEcho International and the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for North America Office (UNEP RONA) today announced a special campaign to encourage and help middle and high school students to take action to protect the planet between Earth Day, April 22nd and World Environment Day on June 5th.

Inspired by UNEP RONA's Bridging the Gap initiative, which mobilizes and extends the energy of Earth Day to lead the way to the United Nations World Environment Day, the campaign features EarthEcho's Water Planet Challenge, an unprecedented call to action that helps youth and educators create service-learning projects in their own communities.

"This spring, EarthEcho is partnering with UNEP to help students and educators across the country become part of a global youth movement," said EarthEcho International Co-founder and CEO Philippe Cousteau. "The *Bridging the Gap Challenge* is an opportunity for young people to take a leadership role in creating a brighter, more sustainable future."

"UNEP RONA is excited about this new partnership, and welcomes the support of Earth Echo in spreading the word about the Bridging the Gap Challenge," said Amy Fraenkel, Director of UNEP RONA. EarthEcho's reach will help ensure that the youth continue to play a significant role in safeguarding the planet," added Ms. Fraenkel.

During the six-week *Bridging the Gap Challenge*, EarthEcho and UNEP will provide students and educators with extensive web-based tools, service-learning materials and a wealth of content designed to help them take action starting in their own backyards. Challenge participants will find everything they need to get started at www.earthecho.org including the following tools and resources:

- EEI's new downloadable Water Planet Challenge Action Guides provide educators and students with step-by-step guidelines and action-focused resources. Action Guide topics include Community Cleanup, Energy Efficiency and Water Quality;

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- Inspiring stories of youth taking action around the globe at www.unep.org/tunza/youth.org;
- *Bridging the Gap Challenge* participants will have the opportunity to share their stories and inspire others worldwide by registering their project at <http://www.unep.org/wed/aroundtheworld/>; and
- Participating students and educators can explore the option to use their Challenge projects to apply for grants through Youth Service America (www.ysa.org).

Launched as a feature commitment at the 2009 Clinton Global Initiative annual conference, EarthEcho's Water Planet Challenge provides comprehensive science-based environmental education materials, tools and resources to empower youth to take action to restore and protect our critical water resources. The Water Planet Challenge is currently available to more than half of U.S. schools through a partnership with Discovery Education.

EarthEcho International:

EarthEcho International is a leading environmental nonprofit committed to youth engagement, action and leadership through education. EarthEcho helps young people everywhere understand the critical role we play in the future of the planet through the one thing that connects us all – water. EarthEcho International is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization founded by siblings Philippe and Alexandra Cousteau in honor of their father Philippe Cousteau Sr., son of the legendary explorer Jacques Yves Cousteau. For more information about EarthEcho International, visit <http://www.earthecho.org>.

About UNEP RONA:

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the voice for the environment within the U.N. system. The Regional Office for North America (RONA), established in 2000, serves Canada and the United States. RONA's mission is to build support in the regional for UNEP's work, to promote effective responses to international environmental challenges and to foster cooperation on environmental issues between North America and the broader international community. To achieve this mission, RONA's strategy is to promote collaboration between UNEP and all sectors of North American society, including U.S. and Canadian governmental institutions, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and other civil society groups. To obtain information about the environment and UNEP please visit www.unep.org.