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Young People Representing Half the Planet Campaign to Make Rio+20 a Green Economy Hit

Social Networking to Mobilizing Communities Spotlited to Awaken World Leaders to Back a Sustainable Century

UNEP Tunza International Children and Youth Conference

27 September to 1 October 2011

Bandung, Indonesia, 1 October 2011– While some UN conferences can become over-preoccupied with commas and square brackets, young people from across the globe today underlined their singular and committed preoccupation--action to save and fast track a future for planet Earth.

The delegates, representing all the regions of the world and over 100 countries, were in Bandung, Indonesia, for a unique five-day event that has also put the final touches to children and youth's requests to governments attending the Rio+20 conference in Brazil next year.

Topping the agenda after almost a week of animated and active debates, panel discussions and cultural exchanges, was how to fast forward a Green Economy.

Many of the participants to the Tunza conference underlined their concern over jobs, but not just any job: Jobs that are fulfilling, worthwhile, decent and contribute to an acceleration of sustainable development.

“The trends and science tell us that we cannot wait another generation (until a Rio+40) before we act ... the green economy is our only future,” the young people’s Bandung Declaration states.

Young people refer to the Green Economy as “the only integrated framework that is truly sustainable ... placing human well-being, social equity and environmental protection on equal footing.”

Adeline Tiffanie Suwana, a 14 year-old from Indonesia, said, “As children, we can plant trees, clean rivers and beaches, but we cannot stop industries from polluting our rivers, we cannot force them to adopt green economy. We want policies and laws that will make industries sustainable.”

The Bandung Declaration identifies access to green jobs as critical for achieving a sustainable transition to the Green Economy.

It states that, “In the next ten years, as the world’s population passes 7 billion, we need to provide jobs for more than 1 billion young people – employment that will both enable them to live productive and worthwhile lives and to contribute to the transition to a just Green Economy.”

Daniel Isfer Zardo, a 24-year-old from Curitiba, Brazil—the host country for Rio+20 - said he believed that access to green jobs should be at the heart of the sustainability debate.

“We have to look at our communities, our society, our environment, and realize that we cannot reduce poverty or protect the environment without green job opportunities, especially for young people. This is something that policy makers must consider, if we want the Green Economy to take off,” he said.

According to latest estimates, nearly 40 per cent of the world’s unemployed, over 80 million people, are between the ages of 15 and 24.

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director, who attended this week’s meetings and debates, said: "Throughout the past week the voices of 1,200 young people have spoken with passion and eloquence here in Bandung. Their positive vision, extraordinary energy and creative solutions must be part of the dialogue on the Road to Rio +20 conference next year. Representing half of the world's population it is vital that their efforts and inputs are

not overlooked.”

"Too many of our youth feel a sense of powerlessness and frustration with the 'way things are'. Leaders should listen more carefully and attentively to them and ensure that their willingness to become involved is supported. Not only do young people have ideals, solutions and energy but they are often free from some of the finger pointing, political gamesmanship and vested interests of the past that can hijack a fresh future. The youth gathered in Bandung is the best antidote to a world which continues to rationalize mass unemployment, poverty and environmental destruction in the name of economic progress--and part of the best hope for a transformational Rio+20," he added

The young people state in their Declaration that the Earth Summit of 1992, in which several landmark agreements on climate change to the loss of biodiversity were agreed, was ‘transformative’.

But they add that the warning signs that were debated have now become the realities of today and urged governments to move swiftly and decisively towards developing national green economy transition plans.

They also request governments to adopt alternatives to GDP as a measure of wealth—an issue which is now under debate in the run-up to Rio+20 as one of several so-called ‘Big Ticket’ items.

Specifically, the Bandung Declaration lays out children and youths commitment to the following action plan over the next nine months or so to Rio+20:

- Lobby their governments to make Rio+20 Earth Summit a top priority.
- Adopt more sustainable lifestyles and reduce their ecological footprints.
- Educate their communities and raise awareness about sustainable production and consumption.
- Support the work of young scientists and entrepreneurs that is geared towards Green Economy solutions.
- Contribute to the global, regional and national discussions on sustainable development.

H.E. Professor Gusti Muhammad Hatta, State Minister for the Environment in Indonesia said, "The Bandung Declaration articulates in specific terms the policies and actions that young people of the world believe should be at the heart of the Rio+20 agenda. We are pleased Indonesia played host to this important event, and I hope we succeed in carrying the message of future generations to world leaders."

The Bandung Declaration will be communicated to the Rio+20 Conference by the Government of Indonesia and the United Nations Environment Programme by the deadline for submissions of 1 November 2011.

Notes to Editors:

About the conference

The Tunza International Children and Youth Conference on the Environment is being hosted by UNEP with the support of the several UN entities including ILO, UNICEF, UNFPA, FAO, WMO, UNESCO and UN/DESA, as well as international youth organizations like the World Organization of the Scout Movement and the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, and private sector partners, such as the Bayer corporation.

About the participants

The children and youth taking part in the conference were selected from 3,000 applicants on the basis of their environmental projects and how active they are on green issues. Participants are divided into two groups: children (10-14 years old) and youth (15-24 years old).

About Tunza

The Tunza Youth Strategy, adopted in 2003 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/

The Bandung Declaration can be accessed at the same site.

About Rio+20

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development will be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on June 4-6, 2012. For more information, please visit www.uncsd2012.org/

About the UNEP Green Economy Report, please visit <http://www.unep.org/greeneconomy/>

UNEP Green Jobs report

http://www.unep.org/labour_environment/features/greenjobs-report.asp

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