



UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

Programme des Nations Unies pour l'environnement

Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Medio Ambiente

Программа Организации Объединенных Наций по окружающей среде

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Top Kenyan Athletes Support Half-Marathon to Celebrate UNEP's 40th Anniversary

Nairobi, 7 February 2012 - Kenya's top runners will join the public later this month for an historic half-marathon in Nairobi that will celebrate the UN Environment Programme's (UNEP) four decades of working for the environment and raising public awareness of what needs to be done to ensure the sustainable future of the planet.

Organized by UNEP in partnership with the Paul Tergat Foundation and the Athletics Kenya, the 21-kilometre celebratory run on 19 February will start at the Kenya Technical Teachers College in Gigiri, Nairobi. Champion runners Paul Tergat and Patrick Makau will lend their support to the event. Mr. Tergat held the world marathon record from 2003-2007, while Mr. Makau set the new world marathon record at last year's Berlin Marathon.

"The marathon in many ways is the starting gun for the global celebrations of UNEP's 40th anniversary, which appropriately will take place in Nairobi. It was in 1972, at the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, Sweden, when governments agreed to set up UNEP and later that year chose Kenya to be its home, making it the first UN headquarters to be based in the developing world," said Nick Nuttall, Acting Director of the UNEP Division of Communications and Public Information and UNEP Spokesperson.

"There are, as in any marathon, many milestones over the past four decades that extend from UNEP's role in the establishment of landmark treaties covering trade in endangered species to ridding the world of health hazardous chemicals and pesticides. In Kenya, UNEP has supported the government in analyzing the crucial, multi-million economic importance of the Mau forest complex which in turn is catalyzing its restoration. UNEP has also spearheaded the phase-out of lead in petrol in Africa which means people here are no longer exposed to a heavy metal that damages the brains of babies and infants," he added.

The event will coincide with the convening of the 12th Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC/GMEF). Dignitaries and officials from 150 countries attending the meeting are being invited to participate in a shorter five-kilometre run. The two events are expected to attract 1,000 registered participants.

"Globally, the relationship between sports and environment has been growing steadily so much so that the environment is now a key consideration in almost all sports planning activities. Every athlete requires a clean environment for optimum performance in his or her career," said runner

Paul Tergat, founder of the Paul Tergat Foundation.

“Our athletes have always used sport to bring positive change in society by using their iconic status to endorse community values and aspirations, such as the environment. By identifying with events like the upcoming half-marathon, athletes will lend their hand to efforts towards building a sustainable environment for generations to come,” he added.

Since 1994, UNEP has been integrating its work on the environment with sport and its initiatives in the world of sport have grown considerably. Today, it advises countries and sports federations on incorporating environmental considerations into all major sporting events.

UNEP is also represented on the Sport and Environment Commission, which advises the International Olympic Committee (IOC) on environmental matters relating to the Olympic Games. UNEP also supports the IOC in organizing world conferences and regional seminars on sport and the environment.

UNEP has worked on greening the Turin, Beijing and Vancouver Olympic Games and is currently working with the organizers of the Sochi and London Games on ways to minimize and offset the impact of the event on the local environment.

In 2001, UNEP organized the Global Forum for Sport and Environment (G-ForSE), a bi-annual forum in partnership with the Global Sports Alliance. G-ForSE brings together International Sports Federations, National Olympic Committees, organizers of major sporting events, civil society organizations and sport and environment enthusiasts to discuss major challenges and achievements in integrating the environment and sport.

In support of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, or Rio+20, in June, UNEP is providing assistance to the Brazilian authorities for two major future sporting events: the FIFA World Cup 2014 and the Olympic Games in Brazil in 2016.

“There are many more successes to report, but also a great deal of races left to run and work left to do in order to realize a sustainable century. UNEP is proud to be headquartered here and we hope the people of Kenya will demonstrate their pride in hosting UNEP by turning out and supporting the runners and the Paul Tergat Foundation,” said Mr. Nuttall

Registrations can be made at the following venues: Athletics Kenya, Nairobi; Ngong , Kaptagat Nike Camp- Eldoret; Grand Prix Hotel, Eldoret; Iten, Nyahururu, Kisii

An online registration form will soon be available at: www.unep.org/40thAnniversary

For more information please contact:

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