

PARTNERS IN ACTION

Civil society provides the backbone and the foundation for global efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of environmental sustainability. Civil society pressure, allied with sound scientific data, helped to create many of today's environmental agreements and institutions, and civil society participation is essential to achieving progress. In recent years UNEP has placed increased emphasis on strengthening its relations with civil society organizations to facilitate their greater involvement in intergovernmental decision making and to enhance UNEP's own effectiveness in fulfilling its mandate to provide environmental leadership.

The 23rd session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum in February 2005 saw further improvement in civil society participation, largely due to the dynamic regional preparatory process for the sixth Global Civil Society Forum, which was held at UNEP headquarters immediately prior to the Governing Council session. At the Forum, more than 110 civil society participants from 50 countries, representing youth, women's groups, NGOs, indigenous peoples and business, exchanged views on the Millennium Development Goals. The Forum also provided the platform for the participation of civil society representatives in the UNEP Governing Council, where their coordinated contribution, in the form of both oral and written statements, were included in the intergovernmental dialogue and influenced Governing Council decisions, especially on key issues such as chemicals and UNEP's work on poverty and the environment.

The seventh Global Civil Society Forum will be held in February 2006, immediately prior to the ninth special session of UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, where the topics of sustainable energy, chemical management and tourism are on the agenda. In preparation, UNEP supported the establishment of an independent West Asian Civil Society Host Committee and convened consultations in each of its six regions in October and November 2005 involving more than 250 civil society representatives. In November 2005, UNEP also

convened a meeting in Dubai to develop a global civil society statement based on inputs from the regional meetings. More than 150 civil society organizations are now accredited to the UNEP Governing Council, half of them gaining this status during the last two years.

ENVIRONMENT, GENDER AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The February 2005 UNEP Governing Council reaffirmed that gender equality is both "instrumental to and a precondition for economic empowerment, environmental management and sustainable development." Following a debate moderated by Lena Sommestad, Minister for the Environment of Sweden, and co-chair of the Network of Women Ministers for the Environment, the Governing Council adopted decision 23/11 'Gender equality in the field of the environment', which tackles the issue of equal participation in decision making, gender mainstreaming in environmental policies and programmes, and the assessment of the effects on women of environmental policies.

With the creation of a Gender and Environment Unit within UNEP's Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch in July 2005, UNEP stepped up its work to strengthen women's capacity to participate in and shape environmental policy and action at all levels, from grassroots to government. Gender equality is now a cross-cutting priority in all UNEP activities, and the organization is systematically integrating gender perspectives into all its programme design and implementation, along with measurable goals and indicators. An example is a joint project between UNEP and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD). The project Capacity Building of Women for Energy and Water Management in the Rural Areas of the Himalayas, conducted in Bhutan, India and Nepal, worked to empower women to meet their water and energy needs, freeing them from excessive drudgery and allowing them to increase their income and improve their status in society. Environmentally friendly and pro-poor technologies were



Kenyan Nobel Peace Prize laureate Wangari Maathai (left) and the Kenyan women's world middleweight boxing champion, Conjestina Achieng, at the launch of a UN advocacy campaign in Nairobi, Kenya, on 25 August 2005. The campaign focuses efforts in Africa to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, which include eradication of poverty and hunger and achieving environmental sustainability. © Tony Karumba/AFP/Getty Images

tested along with range of activities centred on integrating women in decision making and building their individual and organizational ability to manage household energy and water initiatives. In under two years, the project has made marked differences in the lives of women, their families and their communities. The pilot project in Nepal was selected internationally as a good practice example by the Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy. The lessons emerging from the pilot project experiences are documented in three publications and a film which was launched in December 2005.

In January and February 2005, UNEP organized an online discussion on emerging issues related to women and environment, collecting hundreds of testimonies and recommendations. In March,

during the review of the Beijing Platform for Action at the 49th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, UNEP helped to convene a special event with Nobel Peace Prize winners, such as Wangari Maathai and Rigoberta Menchu, to call attention to the links between peace, gender equality and environment. Gender, poverty and environment was also the Feature Focus of the 2004/5 UNEP *GEO Year Book*. Highlighting gender in relation to the Millennium Development Goals, the feature was a significant input to the UNEP Governing Council's deliberations.

Another highlight of the February Governing Council meeting was the presentation of a comprehensive report giving an overview of the relationship between environment and cultural

diversity. Cultural practices help to maintain a significant part of the world's biodiversity. At the same time, entire systems of social, cultural, economic and political practice and expression rely on key elements and events in the natural world. UNEP recognizes the need to consider local perceptions, knowledge and experiences regarding the environment, and is a strong advocate for indigenous people, who are among the poorest people worldwide and whose voices are too often unheard.

SPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

UNEP has a growing programme to engage the world of sport—from individuals engaged in sport to international federations and the sporting goods industry. 2005 was designated the International Year for Sport and Physical Education by the United Nations General Assembly to promote education, health, development, and peace. UNEP had a number of activities during 2005 to celebrate the International Year. In July, UNEP and the Global Sports Alliance co-organized and hosted the Sport Summit for the Environment as part of Expo 2005, in Nagoya, Japan, for more than 300 participants, including representatives from the International Olympic Committee (IOC), FIFA, the International Association of Athletics Federations and the World Federation of the Sporting Goods Industry.

Later in the year, in November, UNEP hosted the sixth World Conference on Sport and the Environment at its headquarters in Nairobi. Organized jointly with the IOC, the conference highlighted the link between sport, peace and environment. As well as representatives from international sports organizations and federations and from the sporting goods industry, the Conference also saw the participation of a number of world renowned athletes, such as the Namibian sprinter Frankie Fredericks, the Kenyan marathon runner Tegla Loroupe, and Ethiopian World and Olympic 10,000 metre champion Kenenisa Bekele. The Conference acknowledged the link between peace, security and the sustainable

management of the environment, and applauded efforts by organizers of Olympic Games and other organizations, such as FIFA, to incorporate environmental sustainability in their planning and conduct of major sporting events.

During the World Conference on Sport and the Environment, the organizers of the Torino XX Olympic Games unveiled its *Sustainability Report* detailing its initiatives to cut greenhouse gas emissions, minimize water use in snow-making and promote eco-friendly hotels to make the Games the greenest ever. UNEP has worked closely with the Torino Games organizers to ensure that environmental aspects are taken into account before, during and after the Games. UNEP has also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Beijing Organising Committee for the 2008 Summer Games to helping the city with its

During the sixth World Conference on Sport and Environment, UNEP mounted a poster exhibition of well-known sports personalities featuring a personal environmental message. The message of the posters was 'Be a Champion for the Environment'.

Sport and the environment

Be a **CHAMPION** for the **ENVIRONMENT!**

"I breathe at least twice as deeply when I'm running. Air pollution is a threat to my health and my physical performance."

Frankie Fredericks
Athlete

UNEP
United Nations Environment Programme



The Declaration of the Sixth World Conference on Sport and Environment cited the UNEP Nature and Sports Camp as an example of best practice in providing leadership and training in achieving peace and sustainable development through sport. The UNEP Nature and Sports Camp gives underprivileged children the chance to learn sports, offering them equipment and training to which they would not normally have access. It also helps them to become environmentally conscious and responsible citizens. © UNEP

environmental planning and with environmental public awareness campaigns during the Games. A similar understanding has also been agreed with FIFA to implement a joint environmental programme—the Green Goal initiative—before and during the 2006 FIFA World Cup in Germany.

The Declaration of the Sixth World Conference on Sport and Environment also called upon the world of sport to identify and share examples of best practice in providing leadership and training in achieving peace and sustainable development through sport. It cited as an example the UNEP Nature and Sports Camp, which was reinforced in September 2005 when UNEP signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Sadili Oval Sports Centre in Nairobi. The UNEP Nature and Sports Camp gives underprivileged children the chance to learn sports, offering them equipment and training to which they would not normally have access. It also helps them to become environmentally conscious and responsible citizens. To complement their sport, the children take part in a range of activities to build their confidence and help them discuss and look for solutions to the issues that directly affect them, such as the environmental problems of waste, sanitation and pollution, and other issues, such as HIV/AIDS. Through the project, children have become involved in cleaning up their environment, planting trees and recycling. At the same time, levels of drug taking and truancy have decreased, and girls are staying in school and getting better results. UNEP's goal is to replicate this programme in other developing countries, and in less privileged neighbourhoods in the developed world.



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