

AFRICAN ENVIRONMENT DAY/ WANGARI MAATHAI DAY WORLD WILDLIFE DAY CELEBRATIONS

UN Complex, Gigiri, Nairobi
3 March 2014



Background

- Nearly 300 students, youth and stakeholders participated in the 2014 Africa Environment Day, Wangari Maathai Day and World Wildlife Day celebrations at UNEP's headquarters, Gigiri, Nairobi;
- Under the theme of “**Youth - Healing the Earth: Environment. Education. Empowerment**”, the half day long celebrations emphasized the importance of mobilizing the younger generation in promoting positive action in conserving and protecting the environment;
- The celebrations were jointly organized by the Green Belt Movement (GBM) in collaboration with the Wangari Maathai Institute of Peace and Environmental Studies (WMI) and UNEP's Environmental Education and Training Unit (EETU), in partnership with the Regional Office for Africa (ROA) and the Division of Communication and Public Information (DCPI);

Opening Plenary

- **Achim Steiner**, Executive Director and Under-Secretary (UNEP), welcomed participants and emphasized the need to influence environmentally sound practices and curb poaching and the illegal trade of wildlife products. He called upon youth to actively conserve the environment so as to safeguard present and future ecosystem services and resilient communities since land degradation also hampers Africa's food security aspirations. He stressed the need to hasten the Green Economy transition through harmonious conservation and sustainable development, for greener and more-inclusive economies, sustainable future and food security for all;
- **Prof. Judy Wakhungu**, Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Water & Natural Resources (Kenya), recognized UNEP's support in promoting positive ethics, values and practices towards a sustainable environment. She highlighted the importance of environmental education especially for youth, women and marginalized communities in eradicating extreme poverty and hunger (MDG 1) and environmental sustainability (MDG 7). She pledged the Kenyan Government's support towards environmental conservation for both food security and wildlife conservation;
- **Wanjira Maathai**, Chair (GBM) and Director of Programmes (WMI) emphasized the need to understand what is happening in the world through research and outreach in the bid to secure a healthy environment. She highlighted the legacy of late Prof. Wangari Maathai, by inspiring youth;
- **Amb. Dennis Awori**, Chairman (*Toyota Kenya*) recognized the contribution of Prof. Wangari, urged youth to preserve the environment, and pledged Toyota East Africa's continued CSR support; and
- **Stephen Njoroge**, (*We Care Club*) challenged fellow youth to draw practical conservation inspirations from Prof. Wangari's initiatives in protecting the environment, and reduce their carbon footprints through fuel efficient technologies. He finished by highlighting his “**We Care Club**” which fosters to reshape children's environmental inheritance through greening and caring for trees.

Youth Dialogue 1: Food Security, Agriculture and Desertification

- **James Nyoro** (*Special Advisor, Food Security and Climate Change – Kenya*) highlighted the plan of the Govt. of Kenya in response to climate change; He promised to raise funds through his networks to host a youth forum in the near future, whereby project proposals can be developed for investment;
- **Augusta Abate**, (*UN Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*) urged the youth to embrace “**Conservation Agriculture**” so as to curb food insecurity in the country and promote economy growth and creation of jobs;
- **Suzanna Owiyo** (*UNEP Goodwill Ambassador*) presented her “**Soko Bila Waste**” initiative and stressed reduction of “food print” as a way to limit food waste;



Youth Dialogue 2: Wildlife Conservation

- **Paula Kahumbu**, (*Executive Director, Wildlife Direct*) shared her experiences on conservation of elephants. She emphasized joint efforts on wildlife conservation by champions in all spheres of life and called for increased support for the “**Hands off Our Elephants**” Campaign;
- **Paul Mbugua**, (*Spokesperson, Kenya Wildlife Service*) lamented on the growing disconnect between youth and wildlife conservation. He challenged youth to take charge of wildlife conservation; promote eco-conservation ventures; and help stop the demand for wildlife products;
- **Laura Darby** (*Great Apes Survival Partnerships, UNEP – GRASP*) presented an interactive apeApp application developed to support the conservation of endangered apes (www.apeapp.org);



Conclusions and Close:

- **Suzanna Owiyo** passed on her conservation message through an inspiring song;
- **Ayub Macharia** (*National Environment Management Authority – NEMA*), emphasized the need to change consumerism and promote transformative interventions, including the engagement of youth through NEMA;
- **Mahesh Pradhan** (*UNEP Environmental Education and Training Unit*) highlighted the importance of partnerships in promoting environmental education; and reiterated the need for youth voices and actions, whereby every day becomes a Wangari Maathai Day!



Follow-up:

- Consider hosting the 3 March celebrations on an annual basis as partnership between GBM and UNEP;
- Organization of a youth forum with support from the Special Advisor, Food Security and Climate Change – Kenya, for the development and funding of youth led project proposals;
- Explore potential for partnership through Kenya Green University Network (KGUN) in promoting green jobs, greening campus, curriculum and implementation at Universities;
- Engage with already established youth networks and initiatives – including YMCA and UNEP Tunza;
- Explore potential for enhancing agriculture/food security through innovative mobile technology;
- Link youth with eco-enterprises to ensure a clean environment;
- Profile youth best practices in NEMA events and magazines; and
- Mainstream climate focused education and inclusion into national curriculum.