

CHAMPIONS OF THE EARTH

Five inspirational environmental leaders from the worlds of government, business, research and grassroots activism received the UN's highest environmental accolade, the Champions of the Earth Award, at a ceremony marking the close of the Sustainable Development Goals summit in September 2015.

The annual prize is awarded to outstanding leaders from government, civil society and the private sector whose actions have had a positive impact on the environment.

H.E. Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh, the National Geographic Society, Paul Polman, CEO of Unilever, the Black Mamba Anti-Poaching Unit and Brazilian cosmetics firm Natura were all recognized for their achievements.

The 2015 awards, presided over by UNEP Goodwill Ambassadors, actor Ian Somerhalder and model Gisele Bündchen, as well as actress Nikki Reed, were focused on supporting the Sustainable Development Goals.

The awards do so by illustrating – through the examples of the laureates – that the transition to low-carbon, resource-efficient, inclusive and sustainable economic models is not just possible, but already in progress.

“At the summit, we witnessed a historic moment. 193 nations committed to a sustainable path forward for the entire planet and its peoples through the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals. This is a major achievement, but the hard work now begins in earnest,” said UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner.

“With 17 goals that integrate all aspects of our economies, societies and the environment, the challenge is formidable. Each of these five Champions of the Earth demonstrates that this challenge can, and I believe will be met to help usher in an equitable and sustainable future for all.”

For more information on the award, visit www.unep.org/champions



Natura, for unparalleled commitment to trailblazing sustainable business models. © Marlos Bakker Fotografia LTDA



Clockwise from bottom left: Nikki Reed, Ian Somerhalder, UNEP Deputy Executive Director Ibrahim Thiaw, Gisele Bündchen, UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner. © Brashler / Fischer



H.E. Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh, for leadership on the frontline of climate change. © UNEP



National Geographic Society, for over a century of life-changing science, exploration and storytelling. © Michael Nichols



The Black Mamba Anti-Poaching Unit (South Africa), for outstanding courage in fighting the illegal wildlife trade at community level. © UNEP



Paul Polman, CEO of Unilever, for challenging business norms to show that sustainable, equitable and environmentally-conscious business is smart business. © UNEP
