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Winners of UNEP Champions of the Earth Awards 2008 Call for Urgent Action on Climate Change

Catalysts for the Global Green Economy Honored at Gala Evening in Singapore

Singapore/Nairobi, 22 April 2008--Seven leading lights in the battle against global warming who are also catalyzing the transition to a greener and leaner global economy were today acknowledged as the 2008 Champions of the Earth.

The winners, ranging from His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco and the Prime Minister of New Zealand to a Sudanese climate researcher who has been successfully piloting climate-proofing strategies in some of the most stressed communities on Earth, received their trophies at a gala event in Singapore.

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) who presented the awards which are hosted in conjunction with the annual Business for the Environment Summit (B4E) said: "The golden thread that links each one of tonight's winners is climate change, the challenge for this generation and the disaster for the next unless it is urgently addressed".

"Our winners for 2008 light an alternative path for humanity by taking responsibility, demonstrating leadership and realizing change across a wide range of sustainability issues. These include more intelligent and creative management of natural and nature-based resources from waste and water to biodiversity and agriculture," he added.

"Thus each one is living proof that the greening of the global economy is underway and that a transition to a more resource efficient society not only makes environmental sense but social and economic sense too. I am sure their leadership and their achievements will inspire many others to act as it inspired us at UNEP to name them the 2008 Champions of the Earth," said Mr Steiner.

The gala event was hosted by UNEP; the Singapore Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources and the Singapore Tourism Board with the support of various sponsors and partners including strategic partner Asia Pacific Resources International Holdings Limited (APRIL); corporate partners The Dow Chemical Company and OSRAM; The event's international public relations partner is Edelman, and its global media partners are CNN and TIME.

His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco, the European winner, has become an international advocate for greater action on climate change and natural resource management.

In 2005 and 2006 he followed in the footsteps of his great, great grandfather Prince Albert I, by going to the Arctic witness at first hand the impacts. This inspired him to establish a foundation in his own name that currently supports close to 60 projects globally.

In thanking UNEP for awarding the prize, the His Serene Highness pledged to "carry out missions to raise the alarm and heighten awareness in the field. The world is facing an

unprecedented threat. We must assume our responsibilities without delay and rise to the challenge that history has placed upon our path”.

Abdul-Qader Ba-Jammal, the former Prime Minister of Yemen who was awarded the prize for West Asia, said it was vital to make the connection between improved management of nature and natural resources and the “upgrading of peoples quality of life”.

A staunch advocate of more intelligent management of water resources and the need to address sustainable agriculture in dry-lands, he said the awarding of the UNEP prize was not only a personal delight but a “high responsibility”.

Timothy E. Wirth of the United States, whose professional and public life has been shaped by climate change and fostering support in his home country for greater action to cut emissions, said: “With each passing month, each passing year we learn more about the urgency of the task”.

The winner for North America added:” We still have some ways to go, but we still have time to act before chaos and catastrophe hit the globe”.

Liz Thompson, the winner for Latin America and the Caribbean whose many achievements include inspiring and pioneering a response to a major challenge for small island developing states--improved solid waste management—said: ”You go to work every day and do something you are passionate about. But do not think anyone is taking notice at this level”.

The former Minister of the Environment and Energy of Barbados said she was “gratified, overwhelmed and shaken” by being named a Champion of the Earth which will spur her on to get the world to take climate change issues more seriously.

Dr Atiq Rahman, the Champion for Asia and the Pacific, said the award would spur him on to ever greater “zeal and to work even faster and stronger” to tackle the issues facing his native Bangladesh and the world as a whole.

“I am impatient. Climate change as a man-made disaster is coming at a rapid rate. A one metre sea-level rise would lead to a fifth of my country under water. If we can’t feed the people, there will be chaos,” he said.

Dr Rahman, Executive Director of a leading South Asia sustainability think-tank, said everyone in the world would, in the final analysis “rise together and deliver a better future for this planet or we will all sink together. By integrating environment and development, we are trying to show that North and South and rich and poor do not have two different fates”.

Dr Balgis Osman-Elasha, the winner for Africa, said: “ I am trying to convey the message of climate change, to simplify the message, to make it reach the people who are going to be impacted”.

The Sudanese researcher has worked on a range of research projects in her native Sudan, including Darfur demonstrating to vulnerable communities the feasibility of adapting to climate change and extreme weather events.

Also a leading author with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which last year co-won the Nobel Peace Prize, Dr Osman-Elasha added: “To be awarded the Champions of Earth is

an honor. It gives you the feeling and the power to do more and I think the proudest moment is yet to come. We have no other planet—there is only one Earth: this is the message!”

The UNEP Special Prize for Champions of the Earth 2008 was awarded to **Helen Clark**, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, whose country has set the trail-blazing target of being climate neutral.

“We have launched the world’s first, 100 per cent coverage and all sectors Emissions Trading scheme and we will meet the goal of 90 per cent renewable energy by 2025,” she said.

Ms Clark said her vision was “sustain the biodiversity, the cultural diversity and environmental integrity that we have had in our world and which is very, very much under threat”.

She described being awarded the Special Champions of the Earth prize from UNEP as “just an incredible boost” and a boost for her country’s reputation: “You do get your critics. But we are making a difference and we will keep making a difference”.

Notes to Editors

For full details of the 2008 UNEP Champions of the Earth award winners please go to <http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=525&ArticleID=5738&I=en>

Or the UNEP Champions of the Earth official web site <http://www.unep.org/champions/>

Champions of the Earth is an international environment award established in 2004 by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The annual prize rewards individuals from around the globe who have made a significant and recognized contribution globally, regionally and beyond, to the protection and sustainable management of the Earth's environment and natural resources. Candidates are judged by a senior UNEP panel with input from UNEP's regional offices.

Past Champions of the Earth winners include among others: Ms. Massoudeh Ebtekar, the former Vice President of Iran; H.E. Mikhail Gorbachev of the Russian Federation; H.R.H. Prince Hassan Bin Talal of Jordan; Jacques Rogge and the International Olympic Committee; and Al Gore, the former Vice President of the United States.

The Champions of the Earth are invited to accept their award at an international ceremony which will be held in Singapore on 22 April 2008. The event will be hosted in conjunction with the Business for the Environment Summit (B4E), details of which can be found on the UNEP website.

No monetary reward is attached to the prize -each laureate receives a trophy made of recycled metal especially designed by the Kenyan sculptor Kioko and representing the fundamental elements for life on earth: sun, air, land and water.

For More Information Please Contact

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