

Press release

Unity in diversity or: “We are all developing countries”

50 young people from 18 countries present their declaration to Development Minister Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul

Bonn, 29 May 2008 – 16 percent of the world’s population are responsible for 45 percent of the global ecological footprint. “That means if everyone consumed as many resources as the industrialised countries we would need three planets. But we only have one!” That is the sobering realisation of 50 young people from 18 countries, who presented their declaration on saving biodiversity to German Federal Development Minister Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul.

And yet the young people – participants in the International Youth Summit Go 4 BioDiv – are in fighting spirit. In their declaration, they call for new models of development: “Industrialised nations have to develop ways of reducing their ecological footprint, whereas the majority of the world’s population should be able to improve their living standards.” The young people, who come from countries as diverse as Benin, Russia, Viet Nam, Bolivia, Madagascar and Germany, also intend to share in the responsibility. They are already working in their home countries - as rangers, oceanographers or students of environmental science - towards conserving biological and cultural diversity. They know from experience that nature and species protection begins with small steps. They see education as playing a key role: “As members of civil society, we call for accessible, high-quality environmental education and communication for everyone.” A further core idea: too little consideration is given to the root causes underlying loss of biodiversity. They see the major reasons that need addressing as being lack of knowledge, poverty, population growth and consumption patterns. They also call for people to strive for a fair distribution of the benefits gained from using natural resources.

Now, as the UN conference on nature protection in Bonn is drawing to a close, the young people are looking to the future and promising: “We will hold our decision-makers accountable for their words and actions, measuring them for instance by the quality of national reports on the state of biodiversity. Politicians should have the courage to take decisions towards a more sustainable world even though these might be inconvenient,” their declaration states.

The young people, aged between 18 and 33, have been in Germany since 16 May. They developed their political messages and a range of creative and artistic presentations during the ten days they spent in the Bavarian Forest National Park. This included a piece of dance theatre entitled *Go 4 BioDiv!* which they made with the support of a team of choreographers and presented today, Thursday, on the main stage at the Expo of Diversity. The Youth Summit participants will maintain the network they have created even after they leave Germany.

Go 4 BioDiv was made possible by the support of the following cooperation partners: German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Bavarian State Ministry of the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection, the City of Bonn, the Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt (DBU - German Federal Environment Foundation), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH and the Bavarian Forest National Park.

Go 4 BioDiv

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Further information is available at: www.go4biodiv.org

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