

FEATURE STORY

City of Belo Horizonte in Brazil to host Earth Dialogues 2008



The city of Belo Horizonte in Brazil will host the upcoming Earth Dialogues on November 25-27th, 2008. Since Lyon in 2002, the Earth Dialogues have enhanced public understanding of emerging environmental and social inequality issues and served as platform to propose cross-sector initiatives for sustainable development throughout all sectors of society. The dialogues are a platform for civil society and international institutions to promote ethical and value-based behaviour change initiatives based on the principles of the Earth Charter. The ethical dimension of addressing modern environmental issues is one of the important objectives and agenda-topics in the Earth Dialogues and the principles of the Earth Charter are upheld as an essential component in attaining long-term sustainability.



Xavier Guijarro and organizers of Earth Dialogues 2008 announce plans in press conference.

The 2008 Earth Dialogues will highlight the programmes and efforts taking place in Brazil with focus on South American NGOs, government officials, civil groups, businesses and scientists. Through lessons learnt of programmes worldwide, participants will share expertise, best practices and successful sustainable development strategies. This synergistic approach encourages a greater visibility for the Earth Dialogues and an opportunity for Brazil to promote and complement current strategies for local programs.



Celso Claro, President of GC Brazil, and Xavier Guijarro, GCI Coordinator of Earth Dialogues inaugurate new Earth Dialogues logo.

Past Earth Dialogues have been successful in generating innovative solutions to emerging global environmental challenges through dialogue and capacity-building workshops in a sector-wide approach. To complement the Earth Dialogues and the Earth Charter principles, numerous side events will be held during these days, including concerts, trade fairs, exhibitions and ceremonies. Brazil and the city of Belo Horizonte will hopefully become a critical location for sustainable development strategies in the future through the ideas and initiatives initiated in the Earth Dialogues.

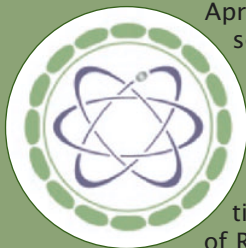
For more up-to-date information and resources on the Earth Dialogues, please visit the GCI website's information platform. ●

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PREVENTING AND RESOLVING CONFLICTS OVER NATURAL RESOURCES

..... ARCTIC EXPEDITION

■ 2nd Russian Nuclear National Dialogue brings nuclear into perspective



April 2008 (21st and 22nd) will see the second meeting of the Russian Nuclear National Dialogue (NND) which will be held in St. Petersburg, Russia. Green Cross, in collaboration with the Public Council of Rosatom, and the Russian

Academy of Science have jointly initiated the talks. Based on the first dialogues, the second NND conference will address Russia's energy future, nuclear legacies of the Cold War, and security and proliferation risks of nuclear weapons. The aim is to increase transparency, initiate a longer-term dialogue that includes all layers of society and stakeholder groups about nuclear and radiation safety in the Russian Federation, about overcoming and dismantling the weapons and waste legacies of the Cold War, and on the prospects for safe and secure development of nuclear and alternative sources of energy in Russia. The meeting will promote a better understanding among stakeholders of the many intertwined aspects of the civilian and nuclear sectors. It is a unique setting for multitudes of discussion regarding nuclear technology.

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■ Green Cross and UNESCO organize Water for Peace Conference

Green Cross France and UNESCO will host the "Water for Peace - Peace for Water" conference on November 13 in Paris. The event will take place during the European Union French Presidency and in perspective of the 5th World Water Forum in Istanbul taking place in March 2009. Ministers, intergovernmental agency delegates, international civil servants, private companies and NGOs will address the impact of global warming on the emergence of conflicts over water resources and resource management with a special focus on developing countries. Resolution and prevention mechanisms of these conflicts will also be discussed to emphasize the role of international cooperation over shared resources. This event will be concluded by a concert performed by the Orchestre National de Lille, directed by Jean-Claude Casadesus in the Maison de l'UNESCO. The concert will be open to the participants and the general public. More than 1,300 people are expected to attend the concert.

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Ambassadors alert public opinion in Arctic expedition

After the Sagax-Revo expedition to Greenland in July 2007, Green Cross France will soon embark on the Ambassadors for the Arctic expedition.



Photograph of Greenland mountains / photo: Arnar Thor Emilsson.

During the summer of 2008 (the second and last summer of the International Polar Year) Luc Hardy, who led last year's expedition, and Sebastian Copeland, board member of Global Green USA and renowned photographer, plan to conduct a new project in the North Pole as part of a long-term plan of several expeditions spanning three years. The mission is to deliver a message of peace and international cooperation to protect the Arctic and its resources amongst younger generations, as was done for the Antarctica expedition. The expedition will also convey a political, scientific, philosophical and ethical message to oppose territorial claims by the eight surrounding nations and promote the creation of international legal instruments to freeze the exploitation of the ocean's seabeds and regulate the exploitation of dry land resources.

The young Ambassadors will be named as spokespeople for high stakes issues : climate, mineral resources, transportation, culture and biodiversity. The Arctic Ambassadors will pledge to protect the lands and ocean of the Arctic and commit to promoting a sustainable and peaceful future in the Arctic.

The first mission of summer 2008 will take its participants through the Northwest Passage, the Northern sea-lane that links the Atlantic to the Pacific passing between the Arctic islands of the Great Canadian North. The mission will highlight the geopolitical, ecological and economic stakes in the Arctic to alert public opinion with focus on the issue of oil and the reality of Arctic resources. Indeed, some experts now claim that a quarter of global oil resources are located in the Arctic. This mission will also entail a groundfloor investigation aimed to increase the amount of knowledge about oil resources through interviews and testimonies with the aid of indigenous populations, as well as observe wildlife and Greenland's mountains. The magnitude of the economic, ecological, strategic and geopolitical stakes in the Arctic poses a grave threat not only to the biodiversity of the region but also to the living conditions and culture of indigenous populations. The link between security, environment and poverty are now more relevant than ever in the Arctic. ●

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PREVENTING AND RESOLVING CONFLICTS OVER NATURAL RESOURCES

..... ACCESS TO WATER

Partnership increases water access in dry region of Yatenga, Burkina Faso

Despite the current political and economic predicament in Italy, Italians are still donating generously to important causes. As announced a few months ago, Mediaset, one of the Italian's private TV companies, launched a fund-raising campaign to finance different water-related projects in poor countries. GC Italy proposed to finance the digging of wells in the semi-desert region of Yatenga in northern Burkina Faso.



Elio Pacilio (Vice President and CEO GC Italy) and villagers benefiting from construction of water access points in Yatenga, Burkina Faso.

The lack of access to safe drinking water is the single most responsible factor of infant mortality and morbidity in the world. Today, 5 million people die every year from preventable, water-related diseases. In Burkina Faso alone, 40% of the population still has no access to water resources and 87% do not have adequate sanitation infrastructure. Establishing water access points throughout the Yatenga region will significantly improve the living conditions of the inhabitants living in one of the driest areas in the world.

The outcome of the fund-raising campaign has exceeded initial expectations and will now include more villages for the project foreseen at the beginning of March. By September, the campaign raised enough capital to extend the project to more than 14 villages. The project began in November 2007 and will continue for 20 months. Crucial water access points will be established in 14 villages amounting to 21 wells and 14 latrines leaving nearly 15,000 benefiting from this international effort. Green Cross Italy and Green Cross Burkina Faso are working in partnership to optimize results on the ground. GC Burkina Faso is benefiting from fund raising activities and hired 10 full time experts, including a manager, technicians and field workers, as well as equipment for its national office. The recently opened GC Burkina Faso office in Ouahigouya will be supported with the help of GC Italy for 20 months and eventually serve as a focal point for future projects in the area.

GC Burkina Faso has implemented numerous projects with strong outcome due to the active involvement of local populations and authorities, demonstrating strong potential for the long-term success of projects and contribute to the local economy. ●

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 GREEN CROSS IN BRIEF

Water Coalition seeks support of decision-makers to address water issues in France

The Water Coalition is a new actor in the French water arena, gathering NGOs involved in access to water and sanitation issues. The Coalition will contribute in mobilizing and strengthening the work of various actors in the water sector and influence change at higher decision levels where political decisions originate, development strategies are negotiated and crucial financial decisions are taken to advance water issues. The Coalition seized the opportunity of France's recent local elections in March to launch its website and media campaign, asking new mayors to appropriate water management and support foreign aid projects in the field of water and sanitation under French law. Green Cross France has been active in the Water Coalition since its foundation and a member of its coordination group.

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Expo 2008 in Zaragoza promotes water and sustainable development



To mark the occasion of Expo Zaragoza 2008 (14th June - 14th September) on Water for Sustainable Development, GCI is coordinating the production of an inspirational book of essays by some of the world's leading

figures in the field of water. The book "Water for Peace - Peace for Water" will help GCI create a comprehensive work on the Water for Peace Programme. Mr. Gorbachev has personally invited a number of people to join him in writing about a different aspect of the theme of water security to create a unique and important exposé of the issue and provide recommendations on future solutions towards Water for Peace. Many influential figures agreed to write about a particular aspect of the theme of water security, including Anna Tibajuka (Executive Director of UN Habitat), Shimon Peres (President of Israel), Stavros Dimas (European Commissioner for Environment), The Prince of Orange of the Netherlands, Michel Rocard (Former Prime Minister of France) and Loic Fauchon (President of the World Water Council).

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ADDRESSING THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF WARS AND CONFLICTS

■ People's Assembly addresses consequences of rising sea levels

Warming seas, melting glaciers and retreating ocean ice are causing sea levels to rise placing coastal cities and natural resources at risk. Scientists predict that 145 million people in the Asia-Pacific region can be displaced if seas rise by 1 metre, endangering low-lying Pacific Islands and cities in the Asia-Pacific region. At the moment, no international convention covers the issue of environmental displacement caused by rising sea levels. GC Australia will host the "People's Assembly" in August to discuss the consequences and response to climate change in the region. Citizens will have the opportunity to engage with this vital dimension of emergency preparedness and the panel will also include recommendations of experts from science, humanitarian, environmental, business and legal backgrounds to deliver holistic approaches to address the issue. GC Australia will liaise with government and business leaders to ensure that the panel's recommendations are taken into account in Australia's emergency response.

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■ Post-conflict rehabilitation in Northern Iraq



A women's education centre in Halabja.

GC Switzerland and Société pour les peuples menacés commemorate the 20th Anniversary of the Halabja massacre in Northern Iraq. The town of Halabja is home to victims of Saddam Hussein's use of illegal chemical weapons. Today, Halabja

and surrounding areas are marked by poverty, lack of infrastructure and paralyzed economic and social development as a result of conflict. GC Switzerland announced plans to support local NGO WADI e.V in their rehabilitation activities in Halabja. Local efforts consist of providing basic infrastructure and counselling to help inhabitants cope with the effects of chemical weapons, poverty and prolonged conflict. A radio station will be launched as a medium for outreach and counselling while project teams will deliver social and medical support to affected families. Support will be delivered to communities affected by the consequences of war and reduce exposure to chemical contaminants present in the environment.

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..... SOCIAL AND MEDICAL CARE PROGRAMME

Identifying and mitigating "Hot Spot" areas in Laos

During the Vietnam War, more than 72 million litres of Agent Orange were discharged as a chemical weapon in the fields and forests throughout Vietnam and rural areas of Laos and Cambodia. Agent Orange is a toxic herbicide containing non-biodegradable dioxins. Local inhabitants have been exposed to Agent Orange for many years resulting in many health problems, particularly in certain zones with high concentration. In a joint effort between Green Cross Switzerland, the Laotian government and Hatfield Consultants, a pilot project is launched to identify the "hot spot" or most heavily contaminated areas throughout Laos in order to reduce exposure to and alleviate the impact of Agent Orange.

This project was preceded by influential study undertaken by Hatfield Consultants and the Environmental Research Institute in Laos, which indicated high concentrations of dioxin contamination as a result of Agent Orange in hot spot zones. These sites were found to be former military bases in which Agent Orange was stored and transported by plane. Landmines often surround these same sites, which requires additional resources and expertise for removing mines as integral to the program.

The project is designed to prevent contamination of Agent Orange in hot spot areas by reducing exposure whilst improving the living conditions of those affected by respiratory diseases, impaired nervous systems, physical disabilities, and other debilitating long-term effects of Agent Orange. Risk of exposure will be lowered through educational, social and medical activities. According to Christina Bigler, Chair of the SocMed Programme, the most successful method of preventing contamination today in hot spot zones is to build awareness and educate vulnerable populations to the risks of exposure and provide the tools to live accordingly. ●

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Affected families benefiting from social and medical rehabilitation services in Laos.

PROMOTING VALUES AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGES

..... ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Green Lane Environmental Diary program in GC Japan continues outreach

After nine years of the “Green Lane” Environmental Diary program, activities have expanded to include 100,000 elementary school children throughout Japan, totaling up to about 500,000 students since the beginning of the program.

The program is passed on from students to younger siblings and students every year. The city of Kitakyushu and the Shinjyuku municipality of Tokyo have further adopted this program to cover all the elementary schools in their area.



Cover of Green Lane environmental diary.

This year, 5,200 kids completed the diary over 3 months, reporting the effect of their ecological activities and their discoveries regarding various environmental issues. The issues reported went beyond local concerns, exploring global environmental issues as well. Beginning with small activities such as picking-up empty cans or saving water/electricity, students influenced communities to do take actions for preserving our environment.

Amongst the participants, 200 children participated in the Award Ceremony in which the “Eco Products 2007” ecological business convention was held. Minister of Environment, Mr. Kamoshita participated in the ceremony and praised the students for their efforts. In parallel to the Award Ceremony, the Eco Kids Summit was held and organized by youth panelists including children from Sri Lanka. Students showed vivid interest in the diary- writing program. Recommendations from the panel were submitted to the Minister of Environment.

The number of companies contributing to the program is steadily increasing while some companies such as Japan Airline and Fuji Film utilize the diary for educating staff and families. At Eco Products 2007, volunteers mobilized to demonstrate the environmental activities made by different companies. The Eco Products convention demonstrated the various ecological activities and insights of Japan's business society.

Changing one's lifestyle is the most essential component in preventing further deterioration of the environment but a transition to sustainable lifestyles requires time. The strategy of the Green Lane program is to promote ecological reform through advocacy at the individual level to spread throughout society to reach family members, teachers, community, business circles and policy makers. ●

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GREEN CROSS IN BRIEF

Green Cross Russia promotes education for sustainable development

Green Cross will be launching the 14th International “Education for Sustainable Development” Conference to be held in Velikii Novgorod, Russia on the 28-29th of June. The mission is to educate, promote healthier living, and raise awareness as to the state of the environment. The conference will hold discussions regarding the integration of different forms of education in programs and promote new forms of public engagement to address ecological issues, including issues of public health, natural resources and the role of government. The issues will be discussed in plenary section meetings and “round tables” discussions. Development is strongly linked to proper use of natural resources and the topics include renewable energy and the economical use of non-renewable resources in the resource-saving policy. Therefore, emphasis will be made on public education on the sustainable use, protection and conservation of natural resources.

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Sports manual teaches environmentally sound practices in Spain



The official presentation of “*Environment and Sustainable Development Manual for non-Olympic Sports*” is taking place on April 22nd in Barcelona, Spain. Green Cross Spain, in collaboration with Olympic Barcelona Foundation and the Ernest Lluch Foundation, released this book as a reference guide for sport managers, sports organizations, athletes, and the general public to learn good ecological practices and improve environmental standards in all non-Olympic sport practices. The manual contains practical information for the sports sector, which can be applied in various sports settings such as urban and rural centres, choice of equipment and more.

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**PROMOTING VALUES
AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGES**

..... ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

GC Ukraine establishes new partnerships in the field of ecological education

For several years, GC Ukraine has developed partner relations with local structures, state institutions and other organisations to participate in ecological education activities. At the end of last year, GC Ukraine partnered with the National Ecological-Naturalistic Center for Youth under the patronage of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. A consequence of the new-found partnership is the joint effort in the release of Parostok, a children's ecological journal. This opened new information channels to promote GC Ukraine activities and GCI. GC Ukraine invites all national organisations to send material for Parostok in order to share achievements and experiences.

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Greenland hosts seminar on environmental policies

Narsaq, Greenland will be hosting a Seminar on Environmental Policies and Climate Change on April 19-23. The goal of this seminar is to generate discussion specifically addressing the criticism that Greenlanders are not doing enough on the environmental front. The country's commitments in the field of environmental policies shall be viewed from a non-governmental organization's vantage point. The seminar is sponsored by the Committee for Nature and Peoples in the North, Greenland, the World Wide Fund for Nature, Denmark, and GC Sweden.

The seminar addresses the background paper "A Seminar on Greenland's Environmental Policies and Climate Changes". The intention of this report is to reflect Greenland's self-understanding in a fair manner, exploring Greenland's landscape, culture and environmental issues. By addressing the issues now, the seminar hopes to avoid future conflict, regarding both physical and cultural effects on Greenland in line with the Green Mission to promote sustainability and peace.

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GCI welcomes two new family members

We are very proud to announce the creation of two new national offices in the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Principality of Monaco. For full details on the newly established offices, please visit the news section on the GCI website

In My Homeland drawing contest grows rapidly

The 'In My Home-Land' drawing contest has received 10,654 drawings from 24 countries from Europe and around the world. The reasons behind the growing success, teachers explain, is that participants are asked to present drawings on different themes and ecological issues that are close to home. Today, 55,000 drawings are registered with information on each work or art in order to promote the project and respond to inquiries. The international jury selected 482 drawings for the International Children's Art Exhibition in Minsk on March 28th and also nominated 103 young artists for an achievement award. In addition, four exhibitions were selected to showcase young artists in Belarus and throughout Europe.

The jury consisted of professional artists, editors of art magazines, book-illustrators and teachers. When asked what would happen to the all the other art pieces, Chairman of Jury Leonid Gomonov responded this is not a competition but an awareness of nature through art. ●

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International jury selects drawings for awards and exhibit. To date 55,000 drawings are registered.

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