



COMMUNIQUÉ

500 Tunisian schools to join *The Green Wave* for biodiversity

Montreal, 9 August 2010. The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the year commencing 12 August 2010 the International Year of Youth. The theme of the Year is “Dialogue and Mutual Understanding”. The observance was proposed by the President of the Republic of Tunisia, H.E. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, and it coincides with the International Year of Biodiversity. Fittingly, an international seminar to celebrate the International Year of Biodiversity and the commencement of the International Year of Youth was held in Tunis, Tunisia on 6-7 August 2010.

During the seminar, a tree-planting ceremony was held at Montplaisir Park with the participation of children from Tunis and the city’s Mayor, Mr. Mohamed El Badji. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed between the President of the Association of the Mediterranean Network for Sustainable Development (AREMEDD), Mohamed Mehdi Mlika, who is also ministerial advisor to the Prime Minister of Tunisia, and Ahmed Djoghlaif, Assistant Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

The memorandum of understanding aims at engaging 500 Tunisian schools in *The Green Wave* initiative. Launched in 2008, *The Green Wave* supports education and awareness on biodiversity, aiming to reconnect children with nature and close the nature deficit gap of future generations. This year over 2,500 groups from 63 countries participated to the 2010 *Green Wave* celebrations on 22 May, the International Day for Biological Diversity.

Under the leadership of AREMEDD, biodiversity gardens will be established in 500 Tunisian schools comprising emblematic trees of Tunisia, in particular, olive, fig and date palm, as well as endemic aromatic and herbal plants. The gardens will be a minimum of 7 metres by 7 metres in size. The objectives of *The Green Wave* gardens are to familiarize the children who establish and nurture them with the objectives and activities of the Convention on Biological Diversity; promote a love of biodiversity in the hearts and souls of the new citizens of tomorrow; and promote a sense of proud ownership of the natural heritage of Tunisia among children and youth.

At the event, Mr. Mlika stated, “No one has the right to deny to the present and future generations their legitimate right to a healthy environment. Indeed there will be no life on Earth without the effective protection of biodiversity. This calls for strong and responsible stance and firm determination on the part of all of us.”

Tunisia’s Minister for the Environment, Mr. Nader Hamada said, “The objectives of *The Green Wave* campaign are the same as those that led President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali to suggest to the General Assembly to declare an International Year of Youth. I am very happy to see that the civil society of Tunisia is fully engaged in supporting this unique initiative of reconnecting the youth and children of Tunisia with their future which can only be green”.



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Mr. Djoghlaif said, “I would like to pay tribute to the people and Government of Tunisia under the leadership of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali for providing leadership in elevating the youth as an actor in their future which cannot be dissociated with biodiversity”.

During the ceremony at which the MOU was signed, and with the participation of the Tunisian authorities, Mr. Mlika, presented an AREMEDD award to Mr. Djoghlaif for his contribution in engaging civil society, and youth in particular, in the implementation of the United Nations objectives for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.
