



PRESS RELEASE

Winners of the MIDORI Prize for Biodiversity 2016

31 October 2016 – The winners of the MIDORI Prize for Biodiversity 2016 have today been announced. The MIDORI Prize is a biennial international prize organized by the AEON Environmental Foundation and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity to honour individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity at global, regional or local levels.

The winners of the 2016 MIDORI Prize are: **Dr. Alfonso Aguirre-Muñoz**, Executive Director of Grupo de Ecología y Conservación de Islas, A.C. (Mexico); **Dr. Yury Darman**, Director of WWF-Russia Amur Branch (Russia) ; and **Dr. Vandana Shiva**, Founder and Director of Navdanya (India).

Each of the prize winners is awarded a commemorative gift and plaque and a monetary prize of 100,000 US dollars to support their work. They will be honoured at an Award Ceremony to be held on 2 December 2016 in Cancún, Mexico, in conjunction with the high-level segment of the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The prize winners will also deliver public lectures at a Winners' Forum that will be held on 7 December 2016 at the United Nations University in Tokyo, Japan.

“The conservation of the world’s biodiversity and the prevention of climate change are two of the greatest challenges of our time,” said Mr. Takuya Okada, Chairman of the AEON Environmental Foundation. “We hope that the MIDORI Prize will contribute to meeting this global challenge through mainstreaming biodiversity and promoting further actions to safeguard biodiversity.”

“For the fourth time, the MIDORI Prize for Biodiversity has been awarded to three individuals who have contributed in outstanding ways to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the fair and equitable sharing of its benefits,” said Mr. Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity. “I sincerely congratulate the 2016 winners for their numerous achievements and commend them for providing such positive inspiration.”



Notes for editors

(1) The 2016 MIDORI Prize Winners



Dr. Alfonso Aguirre-Muñoz

Executive Director, Grupo de Ecología y Conservación de Islas, A.C. (Mexico)

Applying an interdisciplinary approach that integrates the natural and the social sciences, Dr. Alfonso Aguirre-Muñoz has been tirelessly working for four decades on the conservation and sustainable management of coasts, islands and seas, with emphasis on the abundant and very diverse Mexican insular ecosystems. His application of advanced scientific knowledge in favour of large-scale, strategic and tangible conservation and restoration actions makes his work unique and exemplary.

For 15 years Dr. Aguirre-Muñoz has built and served as the Executive Director of the Mexican civil society organization, *Grupo de Ecología y Conservación de Islas, A.C.* (GECI), an organization with 100 skilled, specialized and dependable young professionals engaged in applied research, restoration of seabird populations and vegetation communities, eradication of invasive species, environmental education and outreach, island biosecurity, community development, public policies, and international cooperation.

Dr. Aguirre-Muñoz's perseverance to achieve strong conservation outcomes has had significant impacts on island conservation not only for Mexico but also worldwide. Thanks to his leadership, 59 populations of invasive mammals were removed from 37 islands throughout Mexico. This represents the restoration of more than 50,000 hectares of unique insular habitat, with wide impacts for global biodiversity. These achievements are also the result of his abilities and positive attitude to collaborate with the most diverse partners, including federal government agencies, the Mexican Navy, local fishermen communities, international organizations, foreign governments, academic institutes and universities, and a broad network of donors.

His work on public policies, include studies that provided the foundation for the creation of two biosphere reserves by the Government of Mexico: Guadalupe Island and Baja California Pacific Islands. Thanks to that effort, all the Mexican islands are now protected. Very recently, he coordinated the integration, also as a contribution to the effort of federal government, of the successful nomination to UNESCO of the Revillagigedo Archipelago, "Mexican Galapagos", as a World Heritage Site.

Twenty years ago, Dr. Aguirre-Muñoz proposed that federal coastal fringe along all of the Mexican



coasts be legally established as conservation areas. This innovative tool is currently protecting hundreds of kilometers of the rich Mexican coasts. Overall, his achievements contribute to several of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

In view of these outstanding achievements, Dr. Alfonso Aguirre-Muñoz is fully deserving of the MIDORI Prize.



Dr. Yury Darman

Director, Amur Branch, WWF Russia (Russia)

Dr. Yury Darman is a champion of the Russian conservation movement who has given inspiring leadership to the Amur Ecoregion Programme. He has devoted 40 years of professional service to the Amur River – one of the ten greatest rivers in the world. Since 1989, he has investigated the impact of dams on freshwater ecosystems and organized five campaigns against dam construction on the main stem of the Amur River. He has integrated scientific and traditional knowledge into a comprehensive programme for biodiversity conservation under the umbrella of iconic rare species, such as the Amur tiger, the Far Eastern leopard and the Oriental stork. Thanks in large part to his efforts, protected areas in the region have been increased and species populations have recovered.

Dr. Darman took leadership in the elaboration and implementation of the Programme for Protected Area Network development, which now covers 12% of the Amur Ecoregion. He prepared scientific background materials and contributed to the establishment of Norskii nature reserve, Orlovsky federal refuge, and seven provincial wildlife refuges (in total 980 thousand hectares) to save the unique migratory population of Siberian Roe deer (more than 40,000 animals) and the biodiversity of the boreal taiga and the northern wetlands. In cooperation with the Wild Bird Society of Japan, and Tokyo and Hokkaido Universities, he conducted a large-scale investigation of the migratory paths of cranes and stork. Based on the results, all important stop-overs and breeding grounds were designated as protected wetlands along the Amur River and its tributaries (12 new protected areas on 943 thousand hectares). Since 2000, he has been focusing on the creation of a protected area network for the Amur tiger. Through his efforts, 2 million hectares of protected areas were created, including innovative arrangements related to national parks and ecological corridors. The biggest success has been the gazetting of the Bikin national park (1,160 thousand hectares) in 2015. Now, 25% of Amur tiger habitats are under protection which, together with anti-poaching and law enforcement, has contributed to increasing the population from 350 to 430 adult cats.

Cooperation with civil society, engagement in policy-making, and international cooperation are each



essential to the success of such conservation activities. Dr. Darman initiated a public campaign, “Save each of the survivors”, to protect the last population of the Far Eastern leopard (also known as the Amur leopard) and, consequently, this rarest cat has stepped out from the edge of extinction (recovering from 30 to 80 animals). The establishment by Government of a united federal protected area, the “Land of the Leopard”, which covers 262 thousand hectares (60% of the species remaining habitats) was a major success of the efforts. An initiative to prevent forest fire (leading to a major decrease of burned area) and promote reforestation (planting 1.5 million Korean pine seedlings) was implemented to restore degraded habitats. His conservation activities reach across borders. Cooperation between bordering nature reserves along the Amur River is conducted with reserves in China and Mongolia under a large international initiative, the “Amur Green Belt”.

Dr. Darman also elaborated and implemented a large project to ensure sustainable use of non-timber forest products instead of logging in the context of a Russian-German Climate Initiative. He has given focus to interlinkages between biodiversity and climate change and faced important biodiversity challenges through his influential work on the ground.

Given the reasons mentioned above, the contributions made by Dr. Yury Darman to biodiversity are tremendous and he well deserves the MIDORI Prize.



Dr. Vandana Shiva

Founder and Director, Navdanya (India)

Based on the principle of “Earth Democracy,” Dr. Vandana Shiva has dedicated her life to protect biodiversity, save seeds, and promote traditional organic farming methods that protect farmers’ rights. Since the mid-1990s, she has been promoting traditional knowledge and livelihoods, sustainable agriculture and biodiversity conservation, particularly in support of small communities and marginalized groups, including women, small farmers and indigenous and local communities in India. Dr. Shiva founded Navdanya, a network of seed keepers and organic producers spread across 18 states in India that provides training on sustainable agriculture and agroecological techniques.

Navdanya’s farm in Uttarakhand conserves more than 2,300 varieties of paddy rice, wheat, barley, oats, mustard, millets, pulses, spices, vegetables and medicinal plants. Innovative agroecological techniques are developed and adapted to local resources and biodiversity studies in this experimental farm. In 2004, a learning center, Earth University, was also set up. Navdanya has helped set up 122 community seed banks across the country, trained over 800,000 farmers in seed conservation, food sovereignty and sustainable agriculture, and helped set up the largest fair-trade organic network in the country.



Women are keys to Navdanya's work. Diverse Women for Diversity is the global movement started by Dr. Shiva in 1995. The movement has rejuvenated women's skills, knowledge and livelihood related to seeds, and processing of healthy traditional foods, thus empowering women, and benefitting society.

Navdanya's "Seeds of Hope" project is a good example to highlight the effectiveness of the organization's work at local level. Between 2011 and 2015, 486 farmers (95% of them women) have been trained in Uttarakhand and have converted to organic farming, 55% produce surplus, 13 community seed banks are operating, and biodiversity has increased by 25% and soil quality by 10%. Festivals, marches and informative rallies are used to raise awareness on biodiversity, food sovereignty and farmers' rights over seeds. Navdanya's work based on biodiversity in agriculture has increased food and nutrition security. Measured as Nutrition per Acre and Health per Acre, biodiversity conservation has the potential to feed two India's. Through True Cost accounting measured as Wealth per Acre, incomes of small and marginal farmers have increased 10 fold. Dr. Shiva and Navdanya's work thus contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals and particularly to Goal 1, to end poverty in all its forms everywhere; Goal 2, to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture; Goal 5, to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; Goal 12, to ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns; Goal 13, to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts; and Goal 15, that includes to halt the loss of biodiversity. "Seeds of Hope" encourages women's spearhead role in communities' food security. Understanding the mechanisms and issues of climate change, farmers can change their production habits with the support of citizen consumers.

Based on her approach and knowledge of agronomy and economic research, Dr. Shiva has been influential on policies at national and international levels, and has contributed to the world discourses on biodiversity, access and benefit-sharing, and biosafety. She has promoted and developed alternative agricultural solutions jointly with small farmers in India. She has contributed as an expert to the Convention on Biological Diversity and to India's Biodiversity Act, Plant Variety and Farmers Rights Act, and Forest Rights Act. Her great influence in challenging policies has shaped a planetary alliance to protect the planet's biodiversity and people's rights.

As described above, the great achievements of Dr. Vandana Shiva are in line with the principles of the Prize. She is therefore a truly deserving winner of the MIDORI Prize.

(2) The MIDORI Prize for Biodiversity

The MIDORI Prize for Biodiversity is an international biennial prize co-organized by the AEON Environmental Foundation and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. It aims to raise public awareness about the importance of biodiversity and to contribute to the objectives of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity 2011-2020. The Prize honors individuals who have made



outstanding contributions to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. It aims to encourage positive action for biodiversity and inspire others by showcasing the notable work of those that it honors.

The MIDORI Prize was established by the AEON Environmental Foundation in 2010 to mark the United Nations International Year of Biodiversity, the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity held in Nagoya, Japan, and the 20th anniversary of the AEON Environmental Foundation. The MIDORI Prize for Biodiversity has been organized for the fourth time in 2016.

For more information visit: www.midori-press-aeon.net/prize/index.html

The Judging Committee for the MIDORI Prize for Biodiversity 2016

Committee Chairman

Takuya Okada, Chairman, AEON Environmental Foundation

Judges

Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity;

Co-organizer of the MIDORI Prize

Mariana Bellot, National Coordinator, Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN-Mexico), United Nations Development Programme

Jae Chun Choe, Founding President, National Institute of Ecology, Korea; Distinguished Professor of EcoScience, Ewha Women's University

Kunio Iwatsuki, Professor Emeritus, the University of Tokyo

Daizaburo Kuroda, Senior Fellow, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies

Anne McDonald, Professor, Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies, Sophia University

Takako Takano, Professor, Center for International Education, Waseda University

Shiro Wakui, Professor, Department of Environmental and Information Studies, Tokyo City University; Vice Chairman, Japan Committee of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity

(3) AEON Environmental Foundation

The AEON Environmental Foundation was established in 1990 based on our principles of pursuing peace, respecting humanity, and contributing to local communities.

Since its establishment, the Foundation has made diverse efforts supporting environmental NGOs and NPOs, undertaking tree planting in Japan and abroad, and in order to promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, awarding domestic and international prizes, and developing human resources in the environmental field. In 2015, the Foundation organized the fourth "Japan-China



International Symposium on Environmental Issues” in Beijing, China in commemoration of its 25th anniversary. It also presented the “AEON Beijing Environmental Proposal” with the aim of resolving global environmental issues beyond generations and borders.

In 2009, the foundation established “The Japan Awards for Biodiversity”, a domestic prize that, like the MIDORI Prize, is awarded biennially. The two prizes are awarded in alternate years.

In order to sustain our green planet for future generations, through its various activities the AEON Environmental Foundation will make further efforts toward supporting biodiversity.

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(4) Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and entering into force in December 1993, the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty for the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of the components of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits derived from the use of genetic resources. With 196 Parties so far, the Convention has near universal participation among countries. The Convention seeks to address all threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services, including threats from climate change, through scientific assessments, the development of tools, incentives and processes, the transfer of technologies and good practices and the full and active involvement of relevant stakeholders including indigenous and local communities, youth, NGOs, women and the business community. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing are supplementary agreements to the Convention. The Cartagena Protocol, which entered into force on 11 September 2003, seeks to protect biological diversity from the potential risks posed by living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology. To date, 170 Parties have ratified the Cartagena Protocol. The Nagoya Protocol aims at sharing the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources in a fair and equitable way, including by appropriate access to genetic resources and by appropriate transfer of relevant technologies. It entered into force on 12 October 2014 and to date has been ratified by 88 Parties. For more information visit: www.cbd.int. For additional information, please contact: David Ainsworth on +1 514 287 7025 or at david.ainsworth@cbd.int; or Johan Hedlund on +1 514 287 6670 or at johan.hedlund@cbd.int.
