

Integration of the youth is essential for biodiversity conservation

Nagoya, CBD-COP10, 28 Oct 2010

After ten days of exchange and preparation in a nature-based camp at Mt. Fuji and three days of political advocacy at CBD-COP10 in Nagoya, youth from natural World Heritages sites all over the globe united in the International Youth Forum Go4BioDiv agrees: the integration of the future generation in biodiversity conservation both on the ground and in international negotiations must be strengthened in the future.

Go4BioDiv brought together 34 young adults from 23 different countries. During their time at the slopes of the emblematic Mt. Fuji, the young people collectively shared their own experiences, challenges and threats concerning their sites. They also engaged in creative activities which were shown in Nagoya: they designed a treasure box which was filled with treasures from their sites, and with the help of professional choreographers, they developed a dance performance. Experts prepared the participants on specific topics and engaged in conceptual debates. Vesna Vujcic-Lugassy, Chief of Communication, Education and Partnership Unit in the UNESCO World Heritage Center gave an overall introduction to World Heritage and Deputy Director General Bill Jackson of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) addressed the youth group on the role of IUCN with regards to World Heritage Sites. Bastian Bomhard from the World Conservation Monitoring Center (UNEP-WCMC) spoke about climate change and its impacts on World Heritage sites while Thora Amend from GTZ gave an input on biodiversity and the CBD. With this background, the Go4BioDiv participants prepared several side-events, as well as a press and networking strategy for COP10.

One of those was an official CBD side-event on indigenous issues: several indigenous youths discussed the role of local communities and their personal involvement in nature conservation, but also the challenges they are facing. The represented youth and invited experts – Nigel Crawhall (TILCEPA chair) and Grazia Borrini-Feyerabend (CEESP) – agreed that a very important part of biodiversity conservation is the dialogue between all stakeholders, especially between the different generations.

Other highlights of the Go4BioDiv activities were two dance performances, one followed by a panel discussion between youth representatives, Gretchen Kalonji, ADG Science of UNESCO and Julia Marton-Lefèvre, Director General of IUCN. Both guest speakers expressed their support for a stronger youth involvement in the protection of biodiversity and underlined their desire for further collaboration with the Go4BioDiv Youth Forum.

For the promotion of their messages at COP10, the participants produced personal video statements, an exhibition and a brochure with their own stories. They called upon decision-makers and the public to halt biodiversity loss and conserve their treasures – not only by their official activities and documents but also by their personal interaction with COP10 attendees.

In order to carry on with the initiative, the Go4BioDiv participants decided to redesign the Go4BioDiv website to include information about the represented natural World Heritage sites, threats they are facing and the participants' personal involvement in nature conservation. The site should provide both a space for internal exchange and discussion but also for external information. The young messengers are highly motivated to continue their cooperation and are already getting prepared for COP11 in India – future networking will be essential for that.

For more information, please consult www.go4biodiv.org or contact Nina Treu, [n.treu\(at\)unesco.org](mailto:n.treu@unesco.org).

www.go4biodiv.org