

Environmental Leadership Reinvigorated

Glion, Switzerland, July 3, 2009 – A group of emerging environmental leaders today pledged their personal commitment to creating a new wave of environmental action in the 21st Century. Speaking at the close of four intense days of discussion, the group set out their practical ideas on how to kick-start a deep change in the way the world economy works to prioritize human welfare and how to finally secure a long-lasting, sustainable, approach to the use and preservation of our environment, which is the fundamental basis of that welfare.

“This meeting sought to inspire and foster a new wave of leadership in global environmental governance, drawing on the knowledge of several generations of environmental leaders”, said Maria Ivanova, Director of the Global Environmental Governance Project and Government Department faculty member at the College of William and Mary.

The meeting in Switzerland drew together a stellar cast of environmental leaders over the past 40 years. They included Maurice Strong, the Secretary-General of the first United Nations conference on the human environment and the Rio Earth Summit; Mostafa Tolba; Elizabeth Dowdeswell; Klaus Töpfer, and Achim Steiner. “This was the first time that all five Executive Directors of the United Nations Environment Programme have been gathered together in one meeting,” said Maurice Strong. Other participants included Mohamed El-Ashry who was the CEO of the Global Environment Facility from its inception to 2003; Yolanda Kakabadse, the newly elected President of the WWF International; and Julia Marton-Lefèvre, Director-General of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. Senior diplomats that shaped today’s international environmental laws and structures, and those currently involved working to reshape that system, all took place in this debate with a key group of young environmental leaders.

“While the issues are complex and seemingly intractable, there are also many reasons for optimism”, said William Ruckelshaus, the first Administrator of the US Environmental Protection Agency. “We have made important strides on environmental issues, and need to keep moving forward with new solutions”, he said.

Current challenges identified by the emerging environmental leaders stressed the need to secure greater accountability on environment-related commitments, and advocating for a more central place for environmental issues in decision making and structures. “We need to be making investments in the right places – investing in skills, in young people from all fields, and in our leaders”, the young leaders said. “We will need to be as radical in our

thinking as the first generation of doers were, and take action through our networks, using new media and all the tools we have at our disposal.”

This historic event was convened by the Global Environmental Governance Project, a joint initiative of the Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy and the College of William and Mary in collaboration with the United Nations Foundation, the United Nations Environment Programme, the UN Institute for Training and Research, the Horn of Africa Regional Environment Center, and the governments of Germany, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland.

For more information, see www.environmentalgovernance.org and contact Maria Ivanova, Director of the Global Environmental Governance Project, maria.ivanova@environmentalgovernance.org; phone: +1 203 606 4640.