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Stop Talking Start Planting



Europa Newswire / Photo: Luiz Rampelotto

“Forests for People” was the main theme of the International Year of Forests, launched today (2 February 2011) at a ceremony at the United Nations (UN) Headquarters in New York.

The ceremony presided over by General Assembly President Joseph Deiss, was part of the high-level segment of the UN Forum on Forests, an intergovernmental policy forum dealing with forest-related issues.

Deiss noted that it is very meaningful that the International Year of Forests follows on the heels of the International Year of Biodiversity (2010), which concluded with the adoption of a new strategic plan containing targets on significantly reducing, by 2020, the rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests, and sustainably managing forestry to ensure biodiversity conservation.

He reminded guests that each minute they spent on the planet breathing in and breathing out, “about 25 hectares of forest are lost mainly due to conversion to other uses.”

Nobel Prize Laureate Wangari Maathai, who was present at the ceremony, noted in her address that the importance of the International Year was the opportunity to explore the value of the trees, the forests and the environment, as well as environmental services.

Maathai stressed that it was “virtually impossible” to realize any of the other Millennium Development Goals if goal number seven on sustainability was “only given lip service”.

She added that sustainability of resources like water, trees and forests was “the mother of all other MDGs,” and if governments ignored sustainability “they are also giving only lip service to the other MDGs and it shows.”

Twelve-year old Felix Finkbeiner, founder of the "Plant for the Planet" foundation was inspired by Wangari Maathai at the age of nine and went on to plant an additional million trees in Germany. Today his organization is working in ninety one countries.

Addressing the event in the company of other children from the foundation, Felix told everyone how four years ago "Plant for the Planet" had begun to plant trees around the world and invited everyone "old and young; rich and poor" to join forces adding "together we can plant a trillion trees; we can start a trillion tree campaign."

Following his speech Felix took the opportunity to cover the mouth of the President of the General Assembly, Joseph Deiss as he and other children have done with other leaders around the world to make the foundations point 'Stop Talking Start Planting'.

In an interview later in the day, Felix explained they had started the campaign "Stop Talking Start Planting" because of the need for more action.

He also explained that in total there were about a hundred thousand children participating in planting trees worldwide in 91 countries.

The General Assembly declared 2011 as the International Year of Forests to raise awareness on the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests, on which at least 1.6 billion people depend for their daily livelihoods and subsistence needs.

Forests are also home to over 60 million people, mainly members of indigenous and local communities, who reside in forests.

Source: UNTV

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