

World Cup 2010
 


NEWS

Planet dreams from Wangari Maathai



Felix Finkbeiner talks to the Press at the recently concluded Global Media Forum in Bonn, Germany, where he said Ms Wangari Maathai had been his inspiration on climate matters. Photo/LORRAINE ANYANGO

By LORRAINE ANYANGO in Bonn, Germany
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A simple class assignment ignited Felix Finkbeiner's huge passion for the climate. Now the nine-year-old boy rubs shoulders with the high and mighty.

And his passion for the climate change can be compared to that of the 2004 Peace Nobel Prize winner Wangari Maathai. At the end of a class presentation during his Fourth Grade in 2007, he wrote: "Let's plant million trees worldwide, a million in each country."

Million trees

It's from this that his Plant-for-the-Planet was born and students in Germany planted a million trees by last year. They pledged to plant another 400,000. Speaking during the Global Media Forum in Bonn, Germany Finkbeiner said: "I read a lot about Nobel laureate Wangari Maathai and her Green Belt Movement. I also read about Richard St. Barbe Baker. They have been my inspiration."

He said he wondered how Ms Maathai had planted 30 million trees in more than 30 years and decided to challenge children to plant trees for the planet. His latest campaign is *Stop Talking and Start Planting*. But the people he was addressing were largely talking, not planting.

Many said that a new legally binding deal on the climate was out of reach for 2010 and now more likely in 2011. Apart from deep splits over negotiating texts, US laws on cutting emissions is stalled in the Senate.

The May 31 to June 11 session was the biggest since Copenhagen, where more than 120 nations agreed on a non-binding deal to limit a rise in average world temperatures to below 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 F) over pre-industrial times. But it lacked details of how to reach this goal.

Unlike the other delegates, Finkbeiner is a boy of few words and big action. He recently served his area chancellor with a demand to be briefed on what his office planned to do about climate change. The chancellor has until September 1 to reply to Finkbeiner.

In the letter dated April 30, and addressed to Felipe Caderon Hinojosa and Angela Merkel, Finkbeiner is demanding for a Cancun-protocol based on climate justice so that children have a future. In the letter, he also promises that the children will continue planting trees until a fair climate agreement is reached.

"Fifty years from now, I will be on this earth. I certainly do not want to have the problems adults are experiencing." The undivided attention of the auditorium was centred on Finkbeiner, who left delegates challenged and deeply contemplating whether they had done enough to protect the lives of their children.

As the boy spoke, his passion for the climate was evident. He said he would not stop planting trees, adding that for most adults, the future meant "20 or 40 years. For children it means 80 or 90 years". "This is why children fight for our future. Copenhagen was a disaster and we cannot allow that to happen in Cancun."

Water minister Charity Ngilu wondered aloud after the boy's presentation: "Our (Kenyan) children know nothing about climate change. No wonder they keep on littering the streets and estates. It's sad that some of our leaders mislead the population on climate change and the dangers of cutting trees from forests.

"We should have climate change in our school curriculum to help our children have a better climate," she added. Mrs Ngilu was spot on. At the end of the global media forum, Finkbeiner was answering questions from the Press like any other climate scholar. And he did not need the help of any grown-up.

"Climate was not one of the things I dreamed doing, but now it has become my purpose and drive," he declared.