



Earth Dialogues 2008 Brazil gives birth to Minas Gerais Charter

Belo Horizonte, 29th November 2008 – The three days Earth Dialogues 2008 closed yesterday in Belo Horizonte Brazil with the adoption of the “Minas Gerais Charter” prescribing targeted action plans to further sustainable development both in Brazil and globally. The Charter will be presented at the World Water Forum in Istanbul, from 16 to 22 March, 2009.

The Earth Dialogues, attended by over 2000 people, started with an opening ceremony on the evening 26 November attended by 2007 Nobel Peace Prize winner and IPCC Vice-President Mohan Munasinghe and including a welcome addresses from Green Cross International President Alexander Likhotal and Minas Gerais State Governor Aécio Neves.

“People have been satisfying their greed more than their needs” **said IPCC Vice-President Mohan Munasinghe** during a press conference “ I believe that young people are the future of this planet. We know that we must succeed for the good of the next generation, to give them a chance to inherit a better planet”

GCI President Alexander Likhotal pointed out that the current financial crisis could sideline the climate change agenda. “We only have a few years to achieve a decline in global CO₂ emissions and ward off the worst consequences of climate change, and we need a global financial framework able to support the necessary transformations,” Likhotal said.

The two full days of discussions were split between working group meetings and plenary sessions featuring such notable speakers as Mario Soares, GCI Board Member and former President of Portugal, Narcio Rodrigues, Vice-President of the Brazilian National Congress, Dr. Ger Bergkamp, Director General of the World Water Council, Martin Lees, Secretary General of the Club of Rome and Ambassador Sérgio Duarte, UNO’S High Commissioner for Disarmament.

“The parliaments of the world understand now that they have to take action. That is why we are going to propose the creation of a world parliament for water at the forthcoming World Water Fourm” **said Narcio Rodrigues, Vice-President of the Brazilian National Congress**

According to **Ger Bergkamp, Director General of the World Water Council**, “many resources are limited. Water is not. It is part of a cycle, therefore it is renewable. But we haven’t been able to ensure that this cycle continues. It is only through collaboration of all stakeholders and exchanges of views that solutions will be found.”

The working group meetings were divided among four main themes: Water and climate change; Renewable energies for a sustainable society; New approaches to territorial planning; and International solidarity: South-South Cooperation

Bawa Jain, Secretary General of The World Council of Religious, insisted on the religious component of environmental action: “Over 90% of religious leaders do not have enough environmental knowledge. If well trained on environmental issues, they could play a major role to influence their respective community and drive environmental change”

“We cannot continue exponentially growth, there are limits to development. We also cannot tackle our problems as they were in the past, or as they are in the present, but rather as they will be in the future.” said **Martin Lees, Secretary general of the Club of Rome**

The event, hosted by the Government of Minas Gerais and Green Cross International together with Green Cross Brazil and the Renato Azeredo Foundation, strived to analyse threats and obstacles, unlock potential, fight injustice and forge partnerships to stimulate actions through which Latin America can further sustainable development both at home and globally. Participants focused on the dynamic and complex relationship between sustainable development and poverty, inequality, violence and the environment.

The Minas Gerais Charter will be shortly available on www.gci.ch.

For more information, please contact: David Alix – Green Cross International
- +41.22789.16.62 – david.alix@gci.ch

MORE QUOTES FROM THE EARTH DIALOGUES

Lucka Kajfez, Climatologist, IPCC, explained that “there are two essential elements when it comes to addressing water and climate change. One is mitigation, the other is adaptation. We are currently implementing one or the other, or a bit of one and the other. We will only tackle water problems by addressing equally both.”

Alexander Likhotal, President of Green Cross International

“It’s clear that the current development model leads us into a multiple crisis, and that raises today the question of leadership. Instead of responding to threats, we should be able to prevent them.”

José Israel Vargas, Former Minister of Science and Technology of Brazil

“Without the oceans, there’s no water because there’s no evaporation”

Ailton Krenak (promoter of the culture of Brazil’s indigenous groups)

“We, Indians, call this Earth our mother. They thought we were naïve to say this, and now they are starting to realise that we were not so wrong. You, the rulers of this world, look at this Earth as something sacred. That is how we, Indians, see it.”

Ian Lowe, President of the Australian Conservation Foundation

“We urgently need to address the issue of equity. But we need to use a value-based approach, based on two elements: ecological sensitivity and human solidarity.”