

## **The Earth Dialogues Minas Gerais, Brazil, 26 - 28 November 2008**

### **Sustainable development: best practices and innovative proposals**

*“The Earth Dialogues were inspired by our belief in the need to generate new energy and impetus to drive the movement to place ethics and human values at the heart of the struggle to harmonize the globalization process with sustainable development.”*

The Earth Dialogues Founders, Mikhail Gorbachev and Maurice Strong

The Earth Dialogues are a series of public forums launched in 2002 by Mikhail Gorbachev and Maurice Strong, and run by Green Cross International, which aim to mobilize global public interest and action to promote three objectives essential to the future of humanity: averting the ecological disasters which threaten our planet; fighting the scourge of poverty; and acting to ensure truly sustainable development.

The Earth Dialogues provide an open, interactive and solution-orientated platform for translating the principles enshrined in the Earth Charter into practice on the ground. The objective is to instil a strong sense of accountability in citizens, governments, businesses and organisations, and encourage collective ethics-based actions and partnerships.

The Earth Dialogues have been held in France, the United States, Pakistan, Spain and Australia, each one attracting speakers of the highest caliber, including world leaders, Nobel Prize winners, top scientists, civil society representatives and decision makers from across the world. In November 2008 the Earth Dialogues will be held in Latin America for the first time, in Minas Gerais, in the heart of Brazil.

The Earth Dialogues Minas Gerais will be convened in partnership with the Renato Azeredo Foundation, Green Cross International and Green Cross Brazil, with the support of the National Congress of Brazil, and the Government of Minas Gerais, through the State Ministry for Science, Technology and Higher Education, and the State Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development, under the high patronage of the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil. Over 1,500 people will attend the event, representing society in all its diversity.

#### **Objectives of the Earth Dialogues Minas Gerais**

The mission of the 2008 Earth Dialogues is 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 will focus on the dynamic and complex relationship between sustainable development and poverty, inequality, violence and the environment.

The major emerging economies - in particular China, India, Russia, Mexico and, of course, Brazil - have a huge role to play in furthering both sustainability and security. As the hosts of a vast share of its biodiversity and population, the decisions taken by these nations regarding energy consumption, food production and natural resources

management, will impact on the entire planet. These emerging markets have the potential to be the vanguard of a new age of truly sustainable development, rejecting the untenable paths taken by the industrialised world and embracing opportunities that do not disregard the environment and the poor. As climate change leaves more people vulnerable to environmental stress, the most important task is to decouple human development from the rising consumption of fossil fuels. Latin America intends to be a forerunner and proactive global partner in this process.

Extreme poverty is the most shameful problem faced by humanity today. In Latin America the issue is amplified by huge inequalities in income distribution. Pockets of plenty exist next to plagues of deprivation; profligate consumption against absolute poverty; and, most tragic of all, a wall of indifference to the daily suffering of fellow human beings. Such inequalities generate tensions and social conflicts, as well as jeopardizing much-needed investments. The majority of the world's poor live in tropical or savanna regions - a billion of them in unplanned slums: Brazil has a wealth of expertise to share with, and much to learn from, other developing countries in dealing with poverty and the related violence and social exclusion.

The Earth Dialogues Minas Gerais will be a unique opportunity to formulate alternative models for natural resources management and conflict resolution that nurture human wellbeing, diversity and security, while preserving nature for future generations. The forum will also mobilise strong political support for new initiatives to combat the perilous gap between rich and poor and address the non-material dimensions of poverty, including the sense of hopelessness that discourages millions of people from reaching their fullest potential, or caring for their environment.

### **Structure and Outputs of the Earth Dialogues Minas Gerais**

The debate will be centred around four main axes, the subjects of the four working groups meeting in three parallel sessions during the forum:

- 1. Water and climate change**
- 2. Renewable energies for a sustainable society**
- 3. New approaches to territorial planning**
- 4. International solidarity: South-South Cooperation**

Cross-cutting issues which will transcend all four groups include furthering education and citizen awareness, food and energy security and the Earth Charter.

Discussions will alternate between plenary sessions featuring inspiring keynote speakers and public debates, and intensive interactive working group sessions.

A groundbreaking "Blueprint" declaration, including targeted action plans, will be generated at the Earth Dialogues Minas Gerais. Success will be measured by the concrete actions, commitments and partnerships (local, regional, South-South and global) that are proposed, and followed-up on, and the distribution and recognition of the Blueprint declaration.