

HabitatNet International Biodiversity Symposium for Youth

To: The United Nations General Assembly, New York, NY USA

During a two week period in January, 2005, seventy-three courageous and committed high school students, representing nine nations from around the world, came together for the FIRST “Youth Symposium For Biodiversity”.

This grass-roots project was organized and coordinated by HabitatNet (Souhegan High School – Amherst, NH), El Eden Ecological Reserve (Quintana Roo, Mexico), and Amigos de Sian Ka’an (Quintana Roo, Mexico) and held at the El Eden Ecological Reserve.

Students attending the Global Symposium for Youth on Biodiversity submitted project abstracts regarding the conservation work they are doing at their home sites. All worthy projects were accepted and funding was found for all to attend.

During the two week period, these high school students overcame language and cultural differences while collaboratively writing a “Youth Accord On Biodiversity Conservation”. Conserving global biodiversity was their central theme. All of the students presented the work they are doing at their home sites to the other students (and began developing a network of “kindred spirits” of youthful peers concerned about their collective future and beyond), collaborated on a biodiversity conservation project at the El Eden Ecological Reserve, and put their collective voices to print! Their voices follow.

Through Global collaboration on biodiversity conservation, our cultural and biological future is ensured.

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Nationalities of student attendees:

*Belgium
Dutch Netherlands Antilles (Saba)
France
Germany
India*

*Indonesia
Italy
Mexico
United States*

“Youth Accord On Biodiversity”

**January, 2005
El Eden Ecological Reserve,
Quintana Roo, Mexico**

Preamble

We are today's tomorrow. What happens today does not just affect the future, it *is* the future. There are plants and animals living today that have not yet been discovered, that may never be discovered, because of our carelessness and thoughtless aspirations. We need to allow for the existence of all species on this planet.

All species have a right to live. Only humans destroy the Earth and annihilate entire species in our quest for comfort and power. It is up to us as one species on this planet – and in particular to the people in power - to stop the harm that is being done to the world. When any local or global decision must be made, we need to consider each option's potential impact on the environment. Countries will go to war, leaders will be assassinated, people will starve and overthrow their governments, and terrorist attacks will be made. However, after all of this, nations, societies, and cultures will try to be pieced back together and people will continue to hope for a better future. The Earth cannot any longer fix itself. The best way to save our home is to save it now. Your decisions as international leaders are *our* future and the future of millions of plants and animals. Please make the right ones for our future's future.

Our work together as an international group of students respectfully requests you to include our voice in your important work. We submit the following considerations for hope ... for all ... for the future.

Youth Accord On Biodiversity

- The earth is a beautiful diverse planet on which humankind lives as a part of nature. Nature is a gift that needs to be cherished because it provides the three necessities: food, water, and shelter. It also has to be around for future generations to enjoy. Therefore it is necessary to conserve what is left of it. What happens to the environment should be closely monitored and regulated.
- Set a common international goal to conserve biodiversity. The decisions of the global community as a whole have the influence and the power to change things now. Anything that is to be changed environmentally needs to be a global effort. The people will notice if the government starts funding more to environmental efforts and they will follow. Without the influence of the government there will never be a large impact.

- Change is needed to preserve the beauty of nature meaning that new laws, funding for equipment, research, and informing the community about the cycle of life which includes all creatures and plants is necessary.
- Encourage people by issuing tax incentives to organizations that promote and use positive conservation skills.
- Make it easier to recycle by putting recycling bins around public places throughout the world and support recycling programs.
- Support Government funding for water purification.
- Support Government funding towards technology that has a low environmental impact.
- Promotion of conservation efforts, volunteers for conservation organizations, awareness towards the destruction of natural habitats, the training of teachers about environmental information, teaching children about nature, and remembering that they are the ones who will inherit the earth.
- Education is the key to understanding the importance of conserving biodiversity. Education for the youth about the environment is needed at a larger scale since they are the ones who will be responsible for it when we are gone. It gives youth around the world an opportunity to come together to experience the environment and express their concerns about what is happening to it as well.
- Promote learning in the classroom (grade 1-6) about recycling, nature hiking, and other community activities that are healthy for the environment. Promote in classrooms (grades 7-12) for the older students to teach the younger students by running these programs.
- All living things have the right to exist. In order to exist they need food, clean water, clean air and natural habitats. Species become endangered and then extinct. It is necessary to protect them before they become endangered. If one species is hurt or destroyed then the rest of the species around them will also suffer because they depend on each other like we depend on them to survive.
- Waste management and energy efficiency need more restrictions so that companies and consumers have guidelines to improve our pollution situation. Politics on emissions such as CO₂ and other greenhouse gasses need to be stricter to maintain the environment. Pollution damages the ozone layer and instigates global warming. The reverse or slowing of the process of global warming will help preserve the habitats, ecosystems, the species that live there, and prevent the destruction of the planet

- Acid rain is caused by toxic chemicals that are evaporated with the water that become rain, this rain destroys trees and the other living things that it comes in contact with; therefore it is necessary to find a new way to filter the emissions of smoke stacks, power plants, and cars which should reduce the amount of acid rain.
- Set development restrictions as a small step to help protect and preserve many of the natural habitats left in or near urban areas. Make sure that the human population does not surpass the carrying capacity of the land on which homes are being built. Encourage the use of environmentally safe construction materials.
- Regulate deforestation so that it is not as damaging to the environment because it not only destroys the trees, but the birds, insects, and other organisms that live on them and around them.
- Protect the coral reefs and the ocean's ecosystem more strictly from over-fishing, pollution, and the other problems that occur through the meddling of humankind in the ocean. People as well as millions of animals and other organisms depend on the life in the reefs and ocean for their survival. The reefs also protect the islands and coastlines from hurricanes and other violent storms and the ocean supplies much of the world's oxygen.
- Keep a close eye on ecotourism which is alright until it begins to damage the delicate environment that hosts it.
- Support restraint from disturbing the natural events on the planet.
- Maintain balance on earth by saving the ecosystems that organisms live in. Open spaces need to be saved from development and other forms of destruction because the organisms that live there support us.
- We need to conduct more research on what is happening to our environment. New medicines, alternatives for environmentally endangering products, and other discoveries come from the studies of plants and organisms that have been discovered. Also, we need to conserve all organisms so that we may continue to search for new species because so many have not yet been discovered.

Summary

The crisis of global biodiversity does not lie in nature, it lies within mankind. Mankind must become aware of what we are doing to our planet. Laws and regulations are a step in the right direction, but are not enough to change our world's fate. To change the global perception we must become aware of not only our actions, but the consequences resulting thereof. Conserving biodiversity is our future! We are in this together. We must unite our efforts to rescue our world, for it is the only home we have. As a part of nature, humans must willingly and consciously unify to conserve and honor the gift of nature.