



With breaking stories and
newswire products from

UN NEWS CENTRE



President and singer among five winners of UN environment award



2011 Champions of the Earth (l-r) Angélique Kidjo, President Felipe Calderon, Louis Palmer, Zhang Yue, Dr. Olga Speranskaya

11 May 2011 –

Mexico's President Felipe Calderon, the renowned singer Angélique Kidjo, and the adventurer Louis Palmer are among this year's five winners of a United Nations [award](#) that honours contributions to the global effort to protect the environment.

The Champions of the Earth accolade, awarded by the UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)), was presented to the winners last night in a ceremony in New York hosted by the model and UNEP Goodwill Ambassador Gisele Bündchen.

In a message to the ceremony, [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon said the Champions of the Earth offered the leadership the world needs to build a sustainable future.

“As the human population continues to grow, and as resources come under ever more pressure, we will increasingly depend on vision and commitment – from political leaders, scientists, entrepreneurs and ordinary men and women everywhere,” he said in a message delivered on his behalf by Angela Kane, the Under-Secretary-General for Management.

UNEP described this year's award winners as "environmental champions whose daily work, leadership and advocacy represent green innovation in action."

Their work ranges from using green technology to reduce air pollution in China, to tackling the impact of toxic chemicals in Eastern Europe, and traversing the globe to promote the use of solar power.

Mr. Calderon was honoured for his commitment to leading international efforts to combat climate change, while Ms. Kidjo, a singer and songwriter from Benin, is also a voice for humanitarian and environmental change.

Mr. Palmer, a Swiss national, successfully led a fleet of electric vehicles around the world in 80 days last year, highlighting need for more sustainable transport and cleaner energy supplies.

Olga Speranskaya, a Russian scientist, was honoured for her work to reduce the harmful impact of toxic chemicals in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

BROAD Group of China and its chairman and founder Zhang Xue were recognized for the manufacture of central air-conditioning systems that use diesel or natural gas instead of electricity to cool office buildings, shopping malls and factories.

Meanwhile, 10 more countries today signed the UN treaty on the equitable sharing of the planet's wealth of genetic resources, bringing to 23 the number of States that have initialled the protocol since it opened for signature on 2 February.

Ahmed Djoghlaif, the Executive Secretary of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), told a news conference at UN Headquarters that said he was encouraged by the fast pace of the signing of the Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from Their Utilization.

"The fact that it has been open for signature for less than three months after its adaptation in Nagoya in Japan [... and] we have, until now, 13 countries that have signed, and in less than half an hour 10 other countries [will sign], is of major political significance," said Mr. Djoghlaif.

The protocol stipulates the basic rules on how nations will cooperate in obtaining genetic resources. It was adopted by the Conference of Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Nagoya in October last year.

News Tracker: past stories on this issue

[Renewable sources can meet most global energy demands – UN-backed report](#)

