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UN conference to highlight green job opportunities for young people



Accessing green jobs will be critical for achieving sustainable development goals

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Providing training and education for young people so they can fully participate in the emerging ‘green economy’ will be the focus of a United Nations conference which kicks off today in the Indonesian city of Bandung.

The [event](#), hosted by the UN Environmental Programme ([UNEP](#)), brings together about 1,400 young people from around the world who were selected based on their environmental projects and activism on green issues.

“From Asia to the Middle East and Europe, and from North America to Latin America and the small island developing States (SIDS), the issue of youth employment is emerging as a challenge to the global economy and to social stability in countries and communities,” said Achim Steiner, UNEP’s Executive Director.

During the one-week conference, participants will compile their requests and appeals to world leaders through the Bandung Declaration, a document that will be delivered at next year's Rio +20, the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, which will be held in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012.

“The Bandung Declaration at this week's conference offers a moment and a vehicle for the children and youth to send a clear and unequivocal message to world leaders meeting 20 years after the Rio Earth Summit that this is what they want and the future they deserve,” Mr. Steiner said.

According to a news release by UNEP, nearly 40 percent of the world's unemployed – or over 80 million people – are between the ages of 15 and 24, and more than 36 million of them live in Asia and the Pacific. However, the green sector is rapidly growing, making it essential for countries to provide the necessary skills to their younger citizens to successfully make the transition to a green economy.

“Some governments are now factoring youth into green employment and green development strategies and launching the vital green entrepreneurial initiative as well as education and skills initiatives to support this,” Mr. Steiner said.

During the conference, a prize will be awarded for the International Children's Painting Competition on the Environment, which invites children to paint their fears of a damaged environment as well as their hopes and solutions to tackling environmental problems.

This year's award will go to 13-year old Trisha Co Reyes of the Philippines, who beat more than 600,000 other contestants with her depiction of a young girl pulling back a grey curtain covered in images of dying trees in a polluted landscape, to reveal a colourful forest filled with wildlife.

“My painting shows two sides; a good and sustainable forest and the cause of forest destruction,” Trisha said.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the contest, which is organized by UNEP, the Foundation for Global Peace and Environment, Bayer, and the Nikon Corporation.

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