Kitty Sweeb, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Suriname to the United Nations, speaks exclusively to World Information Transfer (WIT) about the unique value propositions of Suriname to her neighbours and the World.

Defined by vast swaths of tropical rainforests on one side and the Arctic Ocean on the other, Suriname offers succinct implementation strategies for fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by sharing best practices.
In the Northeast corner of South America lies unassumingly Suriname – a country, nonetheless, blessed to call itself the greenest country on earth.

Suriname is covered with over 90% of green growth of which 60% consists of tropical rainforest. This means we have 29.6 ha. forest per capita. In cherishing this natural endowment, we have dedicated about 11% of the territory, or 16,000 square kilometers of land, as a protected and preserved area — the Central Suriname Nature Reserve, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

“As global water scarcity grows, Suriname has abundant water potential for the wider region”

Its value is due to its large scale and pristine state as an uninhabited and unhunted region. These mountainous and lowland forests contain a high diversity of plant life with more than 5,000 vascular plant species collected to date. The Reserve’s animals are typical of the region and include eight species of primates and 400 bird species. In Rapid Assessment Programs, as recent as 2012, the existence of roughly 60 new species of plants, animals and birds were proven. Much of the property has yet to be inventoried and the true extent of the area’s diversity is not fully known.

Associated with the pristine rainforests, are the vast amounts of fresh water. As water scarcity continues to grow around the world, Suriname’s water has great potential value for use in the wider region in the future. But, as CI Suriname’s executive director puts it, “This will only work if we protect the rainforests and watersheds that make it. If we don’t — if we deplete and pollute — we in Suriname and the rest of the world will have one less major water resource.”

“Suriname has substantial carbon storage and carbon absorption in view of climate change”

Suriname intends to increase the percentage of protected and preserved area to a higher level, recognizing our responsibility to continue delivering ecosystem services to the world as co-guardians of the Amazonian Rainforest. Suriname, we are proud to observe, is also a country providing substantial carbon storage and annual carbon absorption in view of current global effects of climate change.

Next to our forests we have an abundance of aquatic life. Suriname harbors enormous amounts of one of the world’s biggest shrimps in the world, who live next to pink nose fresh water dolphins, four of the seven marine turtle species and no less than six of the thirteen great whales in the world. These whales mate, breed and feed themselves in our oceans before they take off on their journey to the other side of the world. Most of these special creatures have been swimming in the seas for more than a hundred million years, but now are of conservation concern globally.

WWF Guianas maintains a special marine turtles conservation program because, as they state, “[s]everal populations worldwide continue to decline as a result of human-based threats. The relatively undisturbed beaches of the Guianas which host hundreds of nesting turtles annually, are therefore of immense importance to the survival of these species”.

As a developing country in the Amazon region, with a relatively small population and an abundance of natural resources and biodiversity, Suriname, until now, has managed to remain carbon negative. However, the current path that the world is on, continues to undermine the ability to remain carbon negative and maintain healthy ecosystems in the next thirty years.

It should be noted that as a nation, we are largely dependent on the services and goods of our ecosystems, the loss of which we cannot permit. We are, however, increasingly confronted by threats that the ecosystems are exposed to, such as prolonged droughts and changes in the
Rainfall pattern, including its timing. Recent observations in Suriname show an obvious trend which slowly but certainly takes place. These slow onset events have dramatic consequences for the ecosystems and, consequently, a huge impact on our communities and the sustainable development of our nation.

In recent years, Suriname has experienced serious events of climate change such as, inundation of parts of the capital Paramaribo following rising sea-levels; unusual high wind-gusts resulting in severe damages and interruption of energy distribution in the capital, causing for the first time loss of life; and impacts to the biodiversity compelling our tribal and indigenous communities to change their ways of hunting.

This means that, because of the low-lying coastline, the coastal zone where about 80% of Suriname’s population and economy is concentrated, will be hit hardest. As this translates into loss and damage of natural and man-made systems, we are running the risk of having to relocate and rebuild our entire economy. Displacement of people from the interior to urban areas, or away from vulnerable areas located near the low-lying coastline, are necessary actions not only in the hinterland but also in the coastal area.

To avert this tremendous threat, Suriname is willing to mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change by: increasing the percentage of forest and wetlands preservation by law; by further enhancing sustainable management of forests, including our wetlands ecosystems; by avoiding undue increases of our deforestation rate; by minimizing forest degradation; and by enhancing the implementation of renewable energy and energy efficiency.

At the same time, to implement and realize our national sustainable development goals, the exploitation of abundantly available minerals has a strong appeal but must be balanced and executed responsibly, and adhering to respect for our environmental goals.

We thus endeavor to meet the urgent challenge of increasing our economic and thereby our climate resiliency by innovatively deploying both our renewable and non-renewable natural resources, in order to finance the needed transition to a climate compatible society.

To protect the low-lying coastline against the rising sea-level, for example, efforts will be intensified to restore and expand the mangrove forestation and to construct effective and environment-friendly works, as has recently been undertaken in cooperation with the Anton de Kom University of Suriname.

A major rehabilitation project for the effective cleanup after 100 years of bauxite exploitation, is a serious undertaking that is currently being planned through coordination between the Government and the international bauxite corporation involved.

* CCS stands for Carbon Capture & Storage
In addition, policies are in place which aim for the complete ban of the use of mercury in the gold mining industry, among others, by advancing the introduction of environment-friendly equipment and methods in specifically the small scale mining. Preparations are also being executed in order to accede in the near future to the Minamata Convention on Mercury (2013) and participate in its complex and stringent mechanisms.

Together with 197 other parties, Suriname is a signatory to the Paris Climate Change Agreement (2015). Policies are in place to commence the preparatory process which will ready us to be able to fully implement our future commitments, ultimately leading up to ratification.

As many other vulnerable nations around the world, the preliminary conditions to execute our intended policies, such as to increase the application of renewable energy and to limit the emissions of GHG, include direct access to climate finance that would compensate for loss and damage, and would enable large-scale mitigation and adaptation, as well as technology transfer that needs to be accelerated in a transparent and fair manner.

With this latest addition to a range of international environment treaties that Suriname ascribes to, Suriname is indicating its core intentions. As a small nation we refuse to contribute towards climate departure – a point where climate processes may become irreversible and huge losses are inevitable and unforeseeable. We invite global stakeholders to engage with us, as we collectively journey along the path to climate resiliency. Such will only be possible if we – as a global society– commit to innovate our bilateral and multilateral cooperation models and if and when appropriate responsibility is accepted by climate polluters for the loss and damage that is now a reality.

With the establishment of the Central Suriname Nature Reserve in 1998, a courageous step in the only right direction was taken, as almost 11% of the territory to preservation. At the time, it yielded us headlines all around the world as a promise for a new direction. We believe, however, that Suriname, as the greenest country on Earth, has again a unique opportunity to take this position of leadership in protecting ecosystems, further.

Suriname’s President, Desiré D. Bouterse, recently captured this as follows: “In today’s world, we have become aware..."
of the fact that interdependence of nations is not just a noble goal, but an absolute necessity. When we consider environmental concerns, we know that interdependence and cooperation are primordial.

The same applies when we look at the dangers of international health issues and our common struggle against terrorism and international organized crime. We are thus, for example, electing for a scientific approach in international relations to address the issues.

Centers of scientific excellence in Guyana, French Guiana, Brazil and Suriname, who all have in common a maritime border on the Atlantic Ocean, are in a unique position to mutually contribute to joint research, followed by joint action. On the more positive side, international interdependence becomes evident when the natural resources are exploited on the basic principle of comparative advantage. (Joint) investments will create the kind of wealth that will support our mutual goals for sustainable development.

When we talk about sustainable development, we also talk about our 197 communities that still live in, with and from the forest, being indigenous or tribal communities. They have lived in the rainforest forever, and try to, amidst all modern development, preserve their traditions and cultural way of life. In the Government’s new concept of “green growth” we wish to balance the needs and aspirations of nature, economic growth and social development, while taking into account indigenous and tribal communities’ own plan of life.

Due to our history, Suriname is a country comprising of peoples from almost all continents. We have descendants from Indigenous peoples, African peoples, Asian peoples, and Europeans. This not only enriches our society, it made us live the very notion of interdependency for centuries, and it made us unite around one specific topic: nature. Because whatever background one might have, in Suriname, we all know the wisdom of our first inhabitants, our indigenous brothers and sisters: “the earth is not ours, we borrow it from our children”. And, that is why, together, we plan to take care of it.


“Joint Investments [on the Atlantic Ocean] will create the kind of wealth that support mutual goals”

“Feeding a planet with over 9 billion people will require at least 50 percent more water in 2050 than we use today. It is hard to see where that water will come from”
- Population Connection (2015), Vol.[47]

Water scarcity is the lack of sufficient available water resources to meet water needs within a region. It affects every continent and around 2.8 billion people around the world at least one month out of every year. More than 1.2 billion people lack access to clean drinking water.

Through the last hundred years, more than half of the Earth’s wetlands have been destroyed and have disappeared.[3] These wetlands are important not only because they are the habitats of numerous inhabitants such as mammals, birds, fish, amphibians, and invertebrates, but they support the growing of rice and other food crops as well as provide water filtration and protection from storms and flooding. Freshwater lakes such as the Aral Sea in central Asia have also suffered. Once the fourth largest freshwater lake, it has lost more than 58,000 square km of area and vastly increased in salt concentration over the span of three decades.

Water scarcity is both a natural and a human-made phenomenon. Freshwater is currently distributed unevenly and too much of it is wasted, polluted and unsustainably managed.

Source: WWF Threats Report and UNDP
This article indicates that the fragile arctic ecosystems may be more at risk from mercury pollution than any other ecosystems in the world. Additionally, arctic food webs may be slower to respond to current efforts to reduce mercury pollution.

A new international review of mercury in freshwater and marine food webs has helped elucidate why many large predators in the Arctic have high mercury concentrations. A study led by Queen’s University has shown that mercury bio-magnification rates in aquatic ecosystems in the Arctic are higher than those in warmer climates. Bio-magnification is the process in all ecosystems which leads to increased concentration of substances like mercury in organisms at increasingly higher levels of the food chain. However, what sets this new research study apart is that it demonstrates colder temperatures increases the rate of bio-magnification. This means that as large predators ingest smaller prey or other aquatic plants, they take with them the concentration of Hg and other toxins. While that is good news for warm, tropical regions, colder regions remain vulnerable even if inputs from the atmosphere are relatively low.

Mercury is naturally produced by volcanoes and forest fires, however mercury production has increased significantly worldwide due to human activities that include coal burning and artisanal gold extraction, where toxic materials are used in the recovery process. Humans have altered the natural cycling of the toxic metal mercury, with coal combustion and gold mining accounting for the majority of atmospheric emissions, during the past 150 years. Bio-magnification of Hg through aquatic food webs results in Hg concentrations in predator species which can be millions of times higher than those observed in surface waters. Bio-magnification of Hg can lead to toxic concentrations in fish, fish-eating wildlife and eventually, humans.

The most toxic methyl form of mercury increases by a factor of 8 with each step in the food web; however, there is a large amount of variation from system to system due to growth rates, primary productivity and other environmental factors. However, Matt Chumchal, associate professor of biology at Texas Christian University, states that “some of this variation is explained by latitude, with arctic ecosystems experiencing the highest bio-magnification.” Arctic biodiversity is hit the hardest by mercury build-ups across food webs, especially during seasonal changes when larger aquatic animals migrate.

Studies indicate that the High Arctic ecosystems are most affected by global changes. Contaminants from human activity that reach the Arctic stay there. Additionally, as the growth rate of marine life in this ecosystem is reduced, their bodies subsequently contain higher concentrations of mercury compared to organisms in warmer temperatures - where growth rate is rampant.
The risk of elevated mercury concentrations in fish to human and wildlife health is well known with government advisories issued worldwide. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Minamata Convention on October 10, 2013 to limit mercury emissions was adopted by 139 countries.

The conference banned mercury mines and made plans to phase out mercury release in the air, on land, and in the oceans. Additionally issues related to mercury contaminated waste and disposal plans were discussed. The decisions made in the convention become even more important to understand variable patterns in mercury transfer through food webs. Led by Raphael Lavoie, the team was supervised by Dr. Linda Campbell of St. Mary’s University and co-authors of the paper included Dr. Timothy D. Jardine (University of Saskatchewan), Dr. Matthew M. Chumchal (Texas Christian University) and Dr. Karen A. Kidd (University of New Brunswick). The researchers collected 7000 tissue samples in 205 aquatic food webs from 31 countries and oceans. In addition, data from 69 other studies were collected and incorporated to produce the first comprehensive study of mercury bio-magnification trends.

Source: St. Mary’s University & University of New Brunswick

Fish Categorised by Mercury Levels

The researchers collected 7000 tissue samples in 205 aquatic food webs from 31 countries and oceans. In addition, data from 69 other studies were collected and incorporated to produce the first comprehensive study of mercury bio-magnification trends.

Source: St. Mary’s University & University of New Brunswick
DO WE EVER LEARN FROM PAST MISTAKES?

1989: DETERGENTS CAUSE RESPIRATORY COMPROMISE

Because of the environmental hazard posed by phosphates in detergents, many brands now contain sodium carbonate, a highly alkaline substance with the potential of seriously damaging the respiratory system. In a study of eight children, seven developed respiratory symptoms (predominantly drooling and stridor) within two hours of exposure, and four children required endotracheal intubation. The children received diverse therapies, but all were asymptomatic within 72 hours.

Sodium carbonate is a potential emetic. Its pH of 11.0 to 11.5 is not alkaline enough to cause serious gastrointestinal damage, but even mild erythema and edema of the epiglottis and vocal cords can lead to significant airway compromise, as observed in the several children. The authors were not able to offer specific recommendations for therapy or indications for endoscopy, but advocate product warning labels and preventive health education.

2016: LAUNDRY DETERGENT PACKETS MORE TOXIC THAN OTHER DETERGENTS

Laundry detergent packets are more dangerous to children than other types and forms of detergents. Health care providers should counsel parents and caregivers about the dangers associated with detergent exposure and recommend safe storage and use of these products.

Researchers from the National Poison Data System found that 43.5% of 62,254 reported paediatric exposures to dishwasher and laundry detergents had at least one clinical effect, most commonly vomiting. Children exposed to the brightly coloured laundry detergent packets were 3.9 to 8.2 times more likely to use them in playing, and therefore experience these effects of exposure.

In addition, two children died and both deaths were associated with laundry detergent packets. The laundry packets also were the only product tied to coma, respiratory arrest and pulmonary edema. The differences in chemical composition and concentration between laundry detergent packets and other types of detergents may account for the higher toxicity observed for laundry detergent packets. Most exposures occurred through ingestion.

“The total exposures to any detergent increased 14.3% from 2013 to 2014...”

The high proportion of exposures among this age group is most likely (a) due to the large amount of time they spend in the home, (b) their newfound mobility, and (c) their curiosity leading to exploratory and mouthing behaviour. The total exposures to any detergent increased 14.3% from 2013 to 2014 with the biggest jump seen in laundry detergent packets. Last year, ASTM International, a voluntary standards development organization, adopted new safety standards for laundry detergent packets. However, authors of the study said the standards don't mandate individually wrapped packets and don't address the attractive design or the chemical composition of the packets. While this voluntary standard is a good first step, it needs to be strengthened.

“Unless this unacceptably high number of exposures declines dramatically, manufacturers need to continue to find ways to make this product and its packaging safer for children”, said Dr. Gary Smith, Director of the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children’s Hospital.
FOOD FOR THOUGHT
COOKING MAKES US HUMAN!

Human brain evolution is often considered synonymous with cortical expansion, in particular of the prefrontal cortex, a cortical region required for our remarkable cognitive abilities such as personality, expression, planning, and decision making. However, this popular notion has recently been challenged. A scientific study led by Dr. Suzana Herculano-Houzel, deduced that the prefrontal region of both human and nonhuman primates holds about 8% of cortical neurons - with no clear difference in the distribution of cortical neurons or white matter cells along the anteroposterior axis; determining that the prefrontal region of the brain which orchestrates abstract thinking, complex planning and decision making contains the same proportion of neurons and fills the same relative volume in non-human primates as it does in humans.

However, the study further finds, that the most distinctive feature of the human prefrontal cortex is its absolute number of neurons, not its relative volume. “People need to drop the idea that the human brain is exceptional,” said Vanderbilt University neuroscientist Suzana Herculano-Houzel. “Our brain is basically a primate brain. Because it is the largest primate brain, it does have one distinctive feature: the sheer number of neurons.” Humans have 16 billion neurons compared to the 9 billion in gorillas and orangutans and six-to-seven billion in chimpanzees. Our brain is “remarkable,” she emphasizes throughout the study, “not exceptional”.

But what triggered the human brain to increase in size and subsequently contain a larger number of neurons? Dr. Herculano-Houzel credits this eventuality to one simple phenomenon: the invention of cooking.

Cooking allowed early humans to overcome the energetic barrier that limits the size of the brains of other primates. Compared to the brains of seven non-human primates of varying sizes: pig-tailed and crab-eating macaques, baboons, marmosets, galagos, owl monkeys and capuchins, the human brain only uses roughly 25% of all energy the body needs each day. In the case of the gorilla, it must spend at least eight hours per day foraging and eating to support its body and brain, the size of which is three times smaller than the human brain. If a gorilla had the brain size of a human, it would have to spend an additional one and a half hours a day finding food. Likewise, if humans ate like any other primates, we would have to spend nine and a half hours per day eating - every single day.
It is at this intersection of time and energy that cooking begins to have an impact on the evolution of our brain. In this context the term cooking, includes not only the introduction of heat to edible items that changes its molecular structure, but also the mechanical processes such as chopping and grinding. To further recognise the remarkable benefits, let’s take the example of a single carrot. If you eat it raw, it will take an average human 10 to 15 minutes of vigorous chewing, and the digestive system will only capture about one third of the calorie intake.

“Our brain is ‘remarkable,’ she emphasizes throughout the study, ‘not exceptional!”

However, if one cuts the carrot and cooks it, it only takes only a few minutes to consume and your body receives 100% of the calories! Cooking breaks down collagen, the connective tissue in meat, and softens the cell walls of plants to release their stores of starch and fat.

The origin of cooking, dates back to about 2.5 million years with the development of the first stone tools. Among other things, these stone tools were man’s first food processors, allowing our ancestors to slice and dice and mash their food. Additionally, evidence of the controlled use of fire appears to go back to about 400,000 years. Even though the brains of early tool makers was about the same size as that of a gorilla, the simple practice of heating food steadily began to grow the brains of our ancestors - tripling in size over the next 1.5 million years.

In addition to recognising the evolutionary dynamics of cooking on the human brain, one must also question if this preference for cooked food developed in humans as an innate mammalian preference, or just as a human adoption? Harold McGee, author of the definitive On Food and Cooking, thinks there’s an inherent appeal in the taste of cooked food, especially because of the so-called Maillard compounds. These are the aromatic products of the reaction of amino acids and carbohydrates in the presence of heat - those responsible for the tastes of coffee and bread and the tasty brown crust on a roast. “Cooking makes its chemical composition more complex,” McGee says. “What’s the most complex natural, uncooked food? Fruit, which is produced by plants specifically to appeal to animals. I used to think it would be interesting to know if humans are the only animals that prefer cooked food, and now we’re finding out it’s a very basic preference.”

“It’s amazing that something we now take for granted, was such a transformational technology which gave us the big brains that have made us the only species to study ourselves and to generate knowledge that transcends what was observed.

Author:  
Dr. Suzana Herculano-Houzel, PhD  
Department of Psychology and Biological Sciences  
Vanderbilt University  

Sources:  

Brain Size and Neuron Count: Cerebral Cortex Mass and Neuron Count for Various Animals

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“BRAIN SIZE AND NEURON COUNT: CEREBRAL CORTEX MASS AND NEURON COUNT FOR VARIOUS ANIMALS

Sources: www.scielo.br
BLUE WHALE EARWAX REVEALS POLLUTION OVER LIFETIME

Several species of baleen whales accumulate wax in their ear canals as a protection mechanism. Unlike humans, the wax is not self cleaning, and does not affect the whales' hearing. Over time the wax hardens, and depending on conditions under which the whale was exposed, the wax hardens light or dark. Once the wax is extracted, traces of hormone levels and chemical contaminants are the most notable evidence. The wax essentially provides a mapped timeline for chemicals and hormones experienced in the whale's internal world from birth onwards.

In the 10 inch piece of hardened ear wax extracted from a dead whale, traces of stress hormones, testosterone, agricultural pesticides, DDT, and flame retardants were found to have entered the whale's system sometime throughout its life. Researchers believe that the higher levels of stress hormone throughout life indicate homeostatic stress from the internalized contaminants. They were the highest at the end of the whale's life, meaning pollutants were steadily accumulated over 12 years.

DDT was deposited on the whale around 1 year of age, even though DDT has been illegal in the US since 1972. Additionally, agricultural PCBs were found not only within its first 12 months, but throughout its life. DDT and PCBs were probably transferred to the baby whale through its mother's milk, as blue whales do not feed on their own until one year. Scientists noted that PCBs are transferred through females' bodily fluids in milk, while males do not secrete the contaminants in their bodies.

On land, DDT remains troublesome as it leaks into crops and runoff from landfills. It can eventually find its way to the ocean, which may be a cause for why whales and other marine life are still exposed to the toxic substance. PCBs are still widely used as pesticides in farming, and similarly through runoff can contaminate ocean biodiversity.

More research is needed to conclude if high levels of stress hormones mapped throughout baleen whales lives in their earwax are indicators of exposure to toxic chemical pollutants. Hardened earwax reveals that whales internalize contamination which imprints on them for the remainder of their lives. It is an unprecedented study showing that harmful chemicals and outlawed pesticides still have on endangered blue whales.


PSYCHEDELIC DRUGS MAY PROVIDE MEDICAL TREATMENT

When used recreationally by humans, psychedelic drugs can manifest behavioral effects or produce personal experiences that may resemble states of certain mental illnesses. However, new research provides evidence that the drugs, which alter 5% of the human brain, may also provide treatments for those who live with depression, anxiety, PTSD, and other illnesses. The drugs alter communication between small numbers of cells in specific parts of the brain.

Dr. Charles Nichols of Louisiana State University (LSU) School of Medicine, administered rats with the psychedelic drug, 2.5-Dimethoxy-4-Iodoamphetamine (R-DOI), and looked at the molecular and cellular configurations and communications among different regions of the brain. He found that serotonin 5-HT receptors were highly activated. Only 5% of brain cells are affected by a set of drugs that create vastly different conscious experiences for the user, thus these specific locations in the brain that are affected must be extremely vital to human behavior and wellness. Dr. Nichols further observed that the psychedelic drugs prevented asthma in the subjects and can be an effective anti-inflammatory agent.

Source: LSU Health New Orleans Research Finds Psychedelic Drug Prevents Asthma Development in Mice.” Charles Nichols, PhD. EurekAlert. 9 Feb 2015
FAMILY PLANNING AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The UN sustainable development goals (SDGs) articulate seventeen goals for the world to meet by 2030. The SDG document organizes the goals into five themes: (a) people, (b) planet, (c) prosperity, (d) peace, and (e) partnership. However, only finding linchpins that connect these themes to the 17 goals will be important to their success. Family planning, thus, is one such linchpin as global population growth not only severely affects the chances of success of the SDGs but, curbing and stabilising population (specially in developing countries) can prove to be the most effective methods of achieving these goals by 2030.

Family planning not only helps reduce global population, but also helps women time and space their pregnancies, so they can bear a maximum of one or two healthy children. This lowers the number of unintended and high-risk pregnancies, and reduces women's exposure to pregnancy-related health risks. More importantly, it keeps global population under control.

Source: UNDP

PARIS AGREEMENT ENTERS INTO FORCE WITH REDUCED HFC AND AVIATION EMISSIONS

The total global population is expected to reach 9.6 billion by 2050; 70% living in towns and cities. These trends of population growth married with rapid urbanization and rising living standards are placing increasingly competitive demands upon finite natural resources for agriculture, energy and industrial production.

STATUS OF RENEWABLE ENERGY AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY IN EAST AFRICA

REN21 released its latest regional report on the status of renewable energy and energy efficiency covering five East African countries: The Republics of Burundi, Kenya and Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. The East African Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Status Report reveals that the off-grid market is firmly established in the region and is helping to meet energy access needs. The mini/micro-grid sector also attracted significant investment. The report was presented at the International Off-grid Renewable Energy Conference (IOREC) in Nairobi, Kenya on October 1, 2016 and highlights, among various policy recommendations on renewable legislation, best practices employed in East Africa.

Source: http://www.ren21.net/eac

Source: UNDP and UNDESA

Population, Average annual increment and growth rate, for the world, development groups and major areas, selected years and periods (medium variant)

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Source: UNDP and UNDESA
Voices

Antonio Guterres to be next UN Secretary-General

The former Prime Minister of Portugal and current chief of UNHCR, Antonio Guterres will succeed Ban Ki-Moon in January 2017. At the crucial sixth straw poll on October 5, 2016, every candidate except Guterres was vetoed by one or more of the permanent Security Council members. Danilo Turk of Slovenia, who at one point seemed to be Guterres closest competition, was vetoed by four of the five permanent members.

WIT’s New Regional China Representative

Mr. Zhong Ming Liu has been appointed as a regional representative of World Information Transfer in China. He will lead WIT’s efforts in raising awareness on issues of health and environment to the Chinese government.

COP 22 - United Nations Climate Conference

The 22nd annual session of the Conference of the Parties to the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) will be held in Marrakesh, Morocco from the 7 - 18 November, 2016.

Short-Lived Climate Pollutants at UNFCCC

The 18th Working Group (WG) meeting of the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) to Reduce Short-Lived Climate Pollutants (SLCPs) convened to prepare for the High-Level Assembly (HLA) that will meet at the 22nd session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 22) to the UNFCCC in Marrakesh, Morocco.

Source: http://energy-liisd.org

International Chemicals Management (SAICM) First Intercessional Meeting

The fourth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM4) held in September 2015 decided to initiate an intercessional process to prepare recommendations regarding the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020 for consideration by ICCM5, expected to be held in 2020.

Source: http://chemicals-liisd.org/events/first-meeting-of-the-saicm-intersessional-process/

World Information Transfer’s Annual International Conference cosponsored by the Government of Ukraine is scheduled to be held on 13 April 2017* at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The theme of the conference, “Health of our Seas and Oceans” is inspired by SDG Goal 14: Life Below Water. The conference will present scientific evidence on the deteriorating condition of our water bodies and its effect on human health.

Online Registration: witconferences@worldinfo.org
Phone Registration: (212) 686-1996

NEW BOOK

The Water, Food, Energy and Climate Nexus: Challenges and an Agenda for Action
by Felix Dodds and Jamie Bartram

Global trends of population growth, rising living standards and the rapidly increasing urbanised world are increasing the demand on water, food and energy. Added to this, is the growing threat of climate change. This book introduces the powerful concept of a ‘nexus’ - interlinking solutions and providing resources for policy-making.

Dr. Christine K. Durbak (left) with Mr. Zhong Ming Liu (right) and his wife, Mrs. Liu (center)
Obama Protects an Area Of Canyons and Peaks In the Warming Atlantic

President Obama announced the designation of the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument in the Atlantic at an ocean conservation meeting in Washington on September 15. His announcement was shortly after he issued a proclamation to protect an area roughly the size of Connecticut, 130 miles off the coast of Cape Cod. The designation bans oil and gas exploration. Additionally, it prohibits most commercial fishing within the monument’s boundary, drawing oppositions from Republicans and New England’s fishing industry. The President will use his executive powers before he leaves office to protect marine resources from threats such as climate change and ocean acidification.

Important Developments in Mercury Lights

Due to the toxic element used in various lights like Compact Fluorescent Lamps (CFLs) and Tubular Fluorescent Lamps (TFLs), NGT directed Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) to consider the upgrade of mercury treatment, storage and disposal facilities (TSDF) in the country. A plea was filed by the NGO “Toxic Links”, to the Green Panel against unregulated and unrestricted disposal of CFL leading to contamination of environment and human health. In accordance with international norms, a bench headed by Justice U.D Salvi framed standards for the Minamata Convention; a global treaty to protect human health and the environment from the adverse effects of mercury.

Source: “Regulate Disposal of CFLs, TFLs to Prevent Mercury From Spreading Out.” The Pioneer. 15 Sep 2016

Launch of USAID Carribean Clean Energy Program (CARCEP)

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Caribbean Clean Energy Program (CARCEP) signed a collaboration agreement with the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA). The landmark move will enhance energy efficiency in the Caribbean’s hotel sector, the largest electricity consumer. Through regional partnerships, USAID CARCEP assists Caribbean countries in establishing effective policy, legislative and regulatory environments as well as incentives for energy efficiency and low-emission growth in the energy sector. The agreement, signed in Puerto Rico, defines the joint actions to be taken to effectively address the sector’s needs.

Source: Hoyos, C. “USAID Carribean Clean Energy Program and CHTA Forge Collaborative Partnership to Bolster Energy Efficiency In the Carribean’s Hotel Sector.” Carribean 360

Firsts in Renewable Technology

Called the “Solar Impulse of the Seas,” the world’s first boat made entirely from renewable material is set to circle the globe. Using only environmentally responsible energy sources, the excursion is similar to Solar Impulse 2’s first solar powered flight. Stopping in 50 countries and 101 ports, the boat will sail for six years and be showed as an exhibit and a testament to the power of renewable energy.

World Information Transfer

Mission Statement

World Information Transfer, Inc. (WIT) is a not-for-profit, non-governmental organization in General Consultative Status with the United Nations, promoting environmental health and literacy. In 1987, inspired by the Chernobyl (Ukrainian spelling) nuclear tragedy in Ukraine, WIT was formed in recognition of the pressing need to provide accurate actionable information about our deteriorating global environment and its effect on human health. WIT exercises its mandate through:

• World Ecology Report (WER). Published since 1989, the World Ecology Report is a quarterly digest of critical issues in health and environment, produced in four languages and distributed to thousands of citizens throughout the developing and developed world.

• Health and environment conferences: Since 1992, WIT has convened annual conferences, held at United Nations headquarters on the growing clinical evidence supporting the link between environmental degradation and its effect on human health. The Conferences have been co-sponsored by UN member states and its organizations and has been convened as a parallel event to the annual meetings of the Commission on Sustainable Development. The scientific papers from the Conferences are available on our website.

• Internship. World Information Transfer (WIT) offers internships in New York City. Our goal is to encourage future leaders of health and environment issues. Our interns spend the majority of their time at the United Nations Headquarters. There are 3 sessions, fall, spring and summer - all require applications.

• Health and Development CD ROM Library. This project consists of a library of CDs each of which focuses on a subject within the overall topic of Development and Health information. CD ROM Library consists of CD’s developed by our partners HumanInfoNGO which address the digital divide. The project is continuous with future topics being developed.

• Health and Development CD ROM Library for Ukraine. WIT developed a country specific library disk for distribution in schools and centers in Ukraine.

• Humanitarian Aid. In conjunction with the K.Kovshevych Foundation, WIT provides humanitarian aid to schools, and orphanages in areas devastated by environmental degradation.

• Scholarship Program. WIT assists the K.Kovshevych Foundation, in finding intellectually gifted university students in need of financial assistance to continue their studies in areas related to health and environment.

• www.worldinfo.org WIT provides, through its website, science based information on the relationship between human health and the natural environment, including the papers from the WIT’s annual conferences, the archived World Ecology Reports, and our new Speaker’s Series.

World Ecology Report

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POINT OF VIEW
HOW SOCIAL MEDIA CAN HELP SAVE THE PLANET

In an age where young people have easy access to operate some of the most advanced technology in the world with relative ease and comfort, we need to underscore their role and importance in helping protect our planet. Through platforms such as social media, blogs and video distribution services, young people can utilize technology such as smartphone, tablets and personal computers to help (a) further understand the challenges that lay before our planet and (b) petition governments to ultimately move towards more environmentally sustainable communities.

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat are some of the websites most young people use as platforms to share ideas and maintain friendships. However, these same platforms can also be effectively used to share scientific and factual information about issues of health and environment. These platforms boast subscriptions and user databases in the billions – as of 2016, there are 2.3 billion active social media users, with 1 billion accounting to Facebook alone. Every second, 4 new individual accounts are opened on social media platforms. Additionally, with increasing globalization, transnational and cross-continental information and commerce is spreading rapidly.

Never before have cultures been able to share their triumphs, strife and ways of life with each other in such an accessible and comprehensible fashion. Nearly all major publications and news sources have social media presences, and young people below the age of 30 (who comprise 50% of the world’s population) use social media to learn and share current events and trends. Article sharing, blogging, and other socially driven forms of information transfer are extremely popular ways that bring new ideas to the internet table. The comment section further adds the facility to initiate constructive discussion.

Obtaining information about a cause is the first step in doing something about it and technology certainly provides this for billions of people worldwide. Actions as simple as ‘liking’, ‘subscribing’, ‘following’ or ‘sharing’ an an environmentally geared page is instantaneously seen by millions of users around the globe. This is the power of the 21st century.

Furthermore, as companies become more social media savvy – shifting their traditional marketing investments onto social media platforms – young people can begin to play an even greater role. They can research products before shopping online and share environmentally sustainable brands with the world online community.

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Additionally, as social media slowly transforms into a major news outlet platform, young people can tailor-make their ‘home feeds’ and ‘Facebook walls’ about latest issues on health and environment. Sharing new information on climate legislation, carbon pricing, international regulations or grave environmental atrocities to fame or shame government practices.

The global political paradigm is changing – world leaders, diplomats and politicians can no longer veil their ill-decisions from the world. Through social media not only are government leaders within reach to contact but they are also expected to respond. While social media can, first and foremost, be used to access latest information, it can also be used to petition governments to change unsustainable practices and highlight priority issues such as family planning and curbing population growth.

Leveraging these global networks to increase awareness about environmental issues and its detrimental effect on human health can begin to change behaviors and attitudes. Young people can and should use social media to delve deeper into its power to educate and act on the multiple challenges that afflict our world - and change it!

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