

Big responsibility

'It all depends on me!'

...concluded the 45 envoys at the most recent Bayer Young Environmental Envoy (BYEE) conference on environmental protection and sustainable development. The annual conference – sponsored by the UNEP and Bayer Group partnership, and taking place in mid-November 2005 at the company's headquarters in Leverkusen, Germany – supports young people in their commitment to the environment.

The envoys – aged 15 to 26, and from

agricultural science, and the control and monitoring of air and water quality.

They heard experts in biochemistry and attended workshops on Bayer's chemical and pharmaceutical work. And they learned about UNEP from Cecilia Kibare, Communication and Public Information officer, who described how its Tunza programme motivates children and young people to address environmental issues.

Yazmin Lucero Cobos Becerra, from Colombia, said she had most enjoyed visiting Bayer's wastewater and solid-

vidual projects, the best part for Oliver Goh, from Singapore, because 'it provided us with a platform to present our ideas and generate more solutions to different questions'.

Envoys were also able to build networks. Rahima Indria said one of her goals was to meet fellow Indonesians in other cities and on other islands so as to work together on common projects and aims.

But it wasn't just work. Envoys were taken on tours of nearby historic sites – including Cologne Cathedral,

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'This programme is a very interesting initiative; it can help improve the life of our countries.' Tatiane Guimarães, Brazil

'On returning home, I am committed to passing on my experience to other young people in my community.' Priyank Gupta, India



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'Bayer has the power to spread ideas about sustainable development.' Aleksandra Tomkiewicz, Poland

14 countries in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America – were chosen from 800 applicants, after submitting environmental projects and essays and undergoing interviews to determine their knowledge, communication skills and leadership qualities. Bayer gave them a week-long study tour at their global headquarters.

Dr Udo Oels, a Bayer AG Board Member, told them of the important role of sustainable development in environmental protection. 'The main reason for your field trip to Germany is to find out how politics, industry and private households interact in environmental protection and sustainable development,' he said.

The envoys toured Bayer's facilities to see cutting-edge technology and learn how environmental concerns can be translated into practical applications in, for example, crop production,

waste treatment facilities, saying she had learned a lot about methods and technology to help her in her work at home.

The envoy programme began in 1995 in Thailand and has expanded to include more countries ever since. This conference was the first to include Africa, represented by two young Kenyans, Yvonne Beatrice Masilingi Maingey and George Muchina Nguri. 'It's amazing for us Africans to be here,' said Yvonne. 'It's a big responsibility but really exciting.'

Priyank Gupta, from India, added: 'This was a fantastic opportunity to meet other like-minded young people from around the world and an opportunity to learn from the Bayer Group's contribution to sustainable development and global challenges.'

The participants also discussed environmental issues and their indi-

a World Heritage Site, and the Rhine river – another chance to get to know each other.

'I have made lots of good friends. We can all learn from each other, communicate and discuss similar issues with enthusiasm,' said Ding Chen, from China.

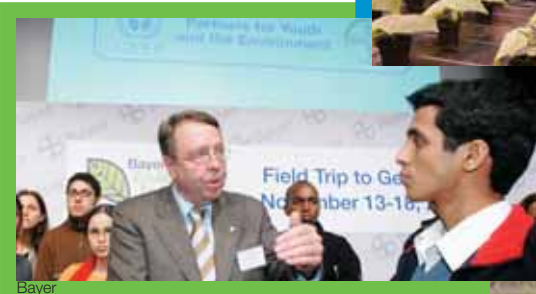
Added Lester Louis L. López, from the Philippines, 'I hope many more people experience BYEE, because it is empowering and encouraging – and much more.'

Michael Schade, Head of Corporate Policy and Media Relations at Bayer, said he is always impressed by the envoys because they take their work seriously. The little changes they bring about, he commented, add up to big differences.

Said Rosidah Hardiani, of Indonesia: 'We came together because we want to make the Earth better.'



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‘Environmental protection is always an investment in the future.’

Dr Udo Oels, Bayer AG Board Member



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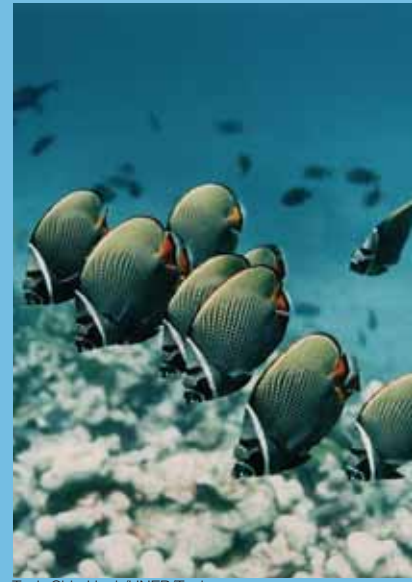
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‘It’s a really wonderful thing to participate on behalf of Africans. For me, this is an extraordinary opportunity to tap into environmental work.’ George Muchina Nguri, Kenya



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Raising sights



Teoh Chin Hock/UNEP/Topham

When Columbus reached the Cayman Islands his boats had to row through densely packed turtles in the shallow waters. Even in the 20th century, sharks were once regular company on almost every dive in the Caribbean, yet many reef divers today thrill to catch just the briefest glimpse of a fleeing shark. And everywhere, youngsters laugh as old men describe the size of the fish they used to catch.

Every generation establishes a sense of what is normal based on what they remember having seen, and we tend to set our goals for conservation in much the same way. We think we must work to keep things as they are – or, at most, hope to see a few slightly bigger creatures and a few more corals.

But we are much too low in our expectations, and thankfully there are still some places that remind us to raise our sights. On the Silver Banks north of the Dominican Republic, it’s still possible to sit in a boat surrounded by humpback whales. Divers can be followed about by enormous jewfish and continuously buzzed by sharks in southeast Cuba. There are beaches in Central America where over 10,000 turtles still come up to breed each year. Snappers gather to spawn off the coast of Belize in such numbers that whale sharks – the world’s largest fish – come in schools to feed on the eggs in the plankton.

This is the environment we should be aiming towards restoring everywhere.



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