

## **Maurice Strong Environmental Debate**

2009 is a key year for our future. The important meeting that will take place in Copenhagen coming December will be remembered by future generations as the place where we either succeeded or failed to tackle climate change, the issue of our time. A few months later we will take a critical look at the state of our ecosystems during the Year of Biodiversity 2010, culminating in a global conference on Nagoya in November 2010.

2009 is also the year when one person who played a major role in making the environment a top-of-mind issue for decision-makers and an ever larger public is turning 80. Our dear friend – and trail-blazing figure of the environmental movement – Maurice Strong is not a man interested in tributes or nostalgic gatherings. But like all of us, he is concerned about getting things moving in the right direction without further delay. Secretary General of both the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, which launched the world environment movement, and the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, and first Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Strong has played a critical role in globalizing the environmental movement

In order to combine our desire to honour Maurice and to influence the current debates on climate change and biodiversity in a profound and lasting way, IUCN is organising a two-day event in its headquarters in Gland, Switzerland on 1-2 July 2009. We have brought together a group of senior government representatives, UN decision makers, NGO leaders, scientists, philanthropists and business people to discuss key environmental issues.

The objective of the meeting is to have participants reflect on how the lessons of the past may contribute to the key elements which need to be addressed in Copenhagen and beyond. The select group of influential

people invited to this event will thus be able to provide guidance to those directly involved in climate and the subsequent biodiversity negotiations. Our aim is to have lively debates in which participants will share their ideas, learn from one another in a combination of formal and informal sessions. A statement from this meeting will be available and posted on our website later in the month.

We also hope to use the event to announce a number of initiatives honouring the future-oriented and very concrete engagement of Maurice Strong to make our world a better place. This will take place on the evening of 1 July, during a reception dinner celebrating Maurice Strong's dedication and contribution to environmental issues.

The meeting will be opened by Dr Ashok Khosla, the founder of Delhi-based Development Alternatives, and current President of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). A former director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), he was awarded the 2002 Sasakawa Environment Prize, and has been named in the UNEP's Global 500 Roll of Honour

The key-note speech - "***The US says it's back: is it?***" - will be given by Jonathan Lash, President of the World Resources Institute.

The morning will end with a panel discussion, moderated by Simon Hobbs from CNBC Europe, involving;

- Nitin Desai - Distinguished Fellow of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) and member of Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change, India
- Paula DiPerna - President, Chicago Climate Exchange International and Executive Vice President, Chicago Climate Exchange;
- Mohamed El Ashry - Senior Fellow with the UN Foundation and former CEO and Chairman of the Global Environment Facility;
- Johan Schaar – Director, Commission on Climate Change and Development, Sweden

- Maurice F. Strong – Honorary Professor and Honorary Chair, Environmental Foundation, Peking University

The afternoon will commence with a presentation by IUCN Deputy Director General Bill Jackson, who will explain how mitigation and adaptation strategies using nature itself can be efficient, economical, protect biodiversity and make ecosystems more resilient to rapid changes

The rest of the afternoon and the following morning will be taken up with four, parallel roundtable discussions, dealing with development assistance, poverty reduction and Climate Change; political will and scientific uncertainty; green economy and energy futures.

We are confident that this will be a great occasion to send a powerful message to the world.