



# ENVIRONMENT HOUSE

# NEWS

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A periodic update on the Geneva Environment Network and the International Environment House, Geneva

## 2005 – The International Year for Sport and Physical Education

By Wondwosen K. Asnake, Outreach Officer, UNEP/Regional Office for Europe

In November 2003, the fifty-eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 58/5 entitled “Sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace”. The resolution proclaimed 2005 as the International Year of Sport and Physical Education.

Why would the United Nations get involved in sport? The UN Charter emphasizes such fundamental values as human rights, the dignity and worth of all human beings, tolerance, peace, security and the importance of social progress. The principles embodied by sport are consistent with, and supportive of, these values. They include cultural harmony, team spirit, tolerance, fair play and national pride. These principles are absorbed by all those involved in sports and serve as catalysts for the well-being and development of society at large.

Many observers, however, are increasingly concerned that sport and physical education in schools are on the decline in many countries. At the same time, there is an alarming increase in juvenile delinquency and violence.

Today, rather than spending time on the school grounds enjoying and playing sport and physical activities, many children are gradually adopting lifestyles that take them away from physical activity. In some parts of the world young people spend most of their time familiarizing themselves with computer games and other new gadgets. They may also spend hours a day in front of the TV. These passive activities reduce the time available for interacting with their peers.

In many countries and communities, sport and physical education are completely

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## INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT HOUSE



marginalized within the education system. Causes include inadequate teacher-training programmes and insufficient funding. The important values of sport cannot be fully realized where there is not enough time for the academic curriculum.

In some parts of the world playing grounds and sports facilities are simply not available. Some young people are caught up in conflict zones, and their childhoods are marked by fear and hopelessness.

Other problems work against sport and its values. Doping threatens the credibility of sport and puts athletes at risk of physical harm. Another stress is

### ISDN phone for TV/ radio interviews

The Geneva Environment Network has installed an ISDN line and telephone in an office on the ground floor of the International Environment House. If a TV or radio journalist would like to interview you over a high-quality line, you can reserve the phone by contacting Fatma Gordon at 917 8326 or Michael Williams at 917 8242. The journalist can then call you at 022 796 94 07.

the continuous drain of young talent from developing countries to countries that can offer higher rewards. Children who engage in overly intensive sport and early specialization also suffer. It is vital to protect these young talents from exploitation.

This series of concerns convinced the UN member states to organize an International Year for Sport and Physical Education. The International Year will offer an opportunity to raise awareness and promote regular, lifelong physical and sporting activities both inside and outside the education system. It will also offer the opportunity for a public debate on the ethical dilemmas posed by the commercialization of sport and the pressures on young talents.

To spread the word about the International Year, the Geneva Environment Network organized a special briefing for missions and GEN members last September. Michael Kleiner, who serves as both Head of the United Nations Office for the International Year of

Sport and Physical Education 2005 and as Assistant to the Secretary General's Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace, Adolf Ogi, briefed participants on the ongoing preparations. Tatsuo Okada, Executive Director of Global Sports Alliance for Future Generations, based in Tokyo, gave a presentation on the Global Sport Alliance and on the Sport Summit for the Environment, which will be held at World Expo 2005, in Aichi, Japan.

Many of the UN's specialized agencies, programmes and funds will support the International Year through specific activities in their own fields of work. The United Nations Environment Programme's long-term strategy for sport and environment recognizes sport as an important educational tool for mobilizing young people for environmental action. It also promotes the integration of environmental considerations into sport. We look forward to working more closely with our many partners during the course of the International Year and beyond.

## NatureNotes

### Climate change: is it here already?



Have you noticed any strange birds in your garden? Seen violets and spring gentians in October? Admired the flamingos at the Lac de Neuchâtel?

There is a great deal of anecdotal evidence for the apparent effects of global warming.

But what do the scientists say?



## Rotterdam Convention holds first ministerial conference in Geneva

By Michael Williams, UNEP's Information Unit for Conventions

One of this year's most important environmental events took place at the Geneva International Conference Centre from 20 - 24 September. The first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade was attended by some 500 officials from 130 countries. The meeting succeeded in dramatically expanding the "watch list" of chemicals and pesticides subject to the PIC procedure. It also finalized the procedures for the Chemicals Review Committee that is tasked with assessing future candidates for the list.

On the final day the conference voted to maintain the Convention's Secretariat, which is provided jointly by the UN Environment Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization, at UNEP's Geneva offices at the International Environment House and at FAO headquarters in Rome. Germany had also offered to host the Secretariat in Bonn. A decision will be taken next May in Montevideo, Uruguay, on whether to accept Switzerland's offer to host the permanent Secretariat of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants in Geneva.



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The Rotterdam Convention is a vital part of the global regime for managing hazardous chemicals and pesticides more effectively. It enables member countries to alert each other to possible risks; whenever a government anywhere in the world takes an action to ban or severely restrict any chemical for health or environmental reasons, this action is reported to all member countries. In addition, whenever a country bans or restricts a chemical or pesticide domestically but makes it available for export to another country,

it must provide the importer with an export notification containing practical and detailed information about the chemical and the shipment.

But the heart of the Convention is the legally binding Prior Informed Consent (PIC) procedure. Any trade in a list of 41 pesticides and industrial chemicals - the September meeting added 14 new substances to the initial list of 27 - must first be agreed by the importing country. This gives developing countries in particular the power to decide which potentially hazardous chemicals or pesticides they want to receive and exclude those they cannot manage safely. When trade is permitted, requirements for labelling and providing information on potential health and environmental effects will promote the safer use of chemicals and pesticides.

Some 70,000 different chemicals are available on the market today and around 1,500 new ones are introduced every year. This can pose a major challenge to many governments that must attempt to monitor and manage these potentially dangerous substances. Clearly, the Rotterdam Convention's role in global environmental policy-making can only grow in importance. The presence here at the International Environment House of the permanent secretariat will also contribute to the international environmental importance of the Geneva area.

### NatureNotes

Several observations confirm that European birds are expanding their distribution northward.

Moreover, a study by the Swiss Ornithological Institute at the Col de Bretolet (21 km from Monthey) from 1955 to 1998 determined that many birds are resetting their nesting and migration calendars.



Moving north: the European bee-eater  
*Merops apiaster*





## What's new at the International Environment House

By Ardeshir Zamani, Coordinator, Geneva Environment Network (GEN)

If you have visited the International Environment House lately, you may have noticed that the library and cybercafé have a new look. The library furniture can now accommodate the growing number of people who visit to read the morning newspapers. A small relaxation area surrounded by green plants has been created. Across the hallway the cybercafé has received new computer desks. It also boasts a new relaxation and discussion area and three individual computer stands for answering email. Just outside the door a glass showcase has been installed featuring a range of gifts that can be purchased from UNEP, including watches, radios, stationary, bathing robes and windbreakers, mugs and much more.

The website of the House – [www.environmenthouse.ch](http://www.environmenthouse.ch) – has also undergone a facelift. The new version is more “user-friendly” and dynamic. We invite you to take some time to browse through it and provide us with your feedback.

Another important change is that the cafeteria is now non-smoking. The heads and staff of all offices located in the building were consulted and gave their green light. At the same time, the right of smokers to smoke will soon be facilitated by the creation of a new smoking area with large ashtrays just outside the front entrance.

Seeking further improvements, GEN has recently initiated an independent “eco-audit” of the Environment



The new look of the cybercafé (top) and library at IEH.

### NatureNotes

The Swiss study showed that long-distance migrants are migrating earlier than usual. For example, the European pied flycatcher migrates south almost a week before normal and is starting to breed earlier as well.



European pied flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*

House. The audit will evaluate the environmental performance and best environmental practices of the offices located in the building. A report containing specific recommendations will be produced and disseminated to every office in the House by the end of this year.

Across the street, the International Environment House 2 (IEH 2) was inaugurated on 4 June to coincide with World Environment Day. The ceremony was headlined by Philippe Roch, Director of the Swiss Agency for the Environment, Forests and Landscape; Frits Schlingemann, UNEP's Regional Director for Europe; and Pierre Gilliot, Director of the Building Foundation for International Organizations (FIPOI built and manages IEH 2), along with other senior Swiss and UN officials. The IEH 2 shelters both well known and newly created UN offices and NGOs – see details at the GEN website.

Finally, on 4 November the GEN held a consultative meeting with its members in order to prepare its work programme for the 2005-2006 biennium. The 30 participating colleagues agreed that GEN should continue or strengthen its existing portfolio of activities. They also suggested a wide range of new services and activities that could help make the Network more useful to its members. The GEN team is confident that by building on past strengths while pursuing innovative new approaches it can ensure that the Network remains dynamic and productive over the next two years.



## Engaging with indigenous peoples

By Sébastien Ziegler, Director, Mandat International

Year after year, indigenous peoples' representatives come to Geneva to attend UN meetings. Their biggest annual conference is undoubtedly the UN Working Group on Indigenous Peoples, held every summer by the High Commissioner on Human Rights. This conference brings together some one thousand indigenous peoples' representatives. Mandat International, a Geneva Environment Network member, has been supporting these representatives for many years.

The role of Mandat International is to welcome, inform and assist non-governmental representatives – particularly those from developing countries – who are attending international meetings in Geneva. Through its Welcome Centre for Non-Governmental Organizations and Delegations, it provides affordable accommodation, work facilities and a documentation centre.

Several trilingual information websites complete this support; they include a calendar of international conferences, several information guides for NGOs, a portal with over a thousand links, a library of conventions, an information platform and more (see [www.mandint.org](http://www.mandint.org)).

### A cultural day

Last July, Mandat International and its Welcome Centre hosted an Indigenous Peoples' Cultural Day. This enabled representatives attending the UN Working Group on Indigenous Peoples to introduce their cultures and to meet

with the local population. Visitors had the opportunity to make a journey around the world, through dance music, food, videos and a handcraft market.

All the continents were represented, thus illustrating the increasing participation of indigenous peoples in the work of the UN. This first Cultural Day was a great success. It gathered together families, children, NGOs, UN civil servants and indigenous peoples and generated strong feelings of belonging to the same humankind, even while stressing diversity. Besides the richness of their cultures, indigenous peoples also emphasized the vital role they are playing in promoting sustainable development, as well as their expectations at the international level.

The year 2004 marks the end of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People. This offers a good opportunity to assess the work developed by the UN. The majority of indigenous peoples are taking action at the international level to gain more autonomy and recognition at the national level. They eager to solve practical problems and protect their environment.

Most indigenous peoples' representatives have mixed feelings: On one hand, recent years have been marked by several successes. A Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues has been created at the level of ECOSOC. Some countries have recognized indigenous languages and adapted their educa-



tional systems accordingly. On the other hand, the project on the International Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which was approved by the Sub-Commission on Human Rights several years ago, still faces difficulty in being adopted by governments.

However, the potential for cooperation with indigenous peoples is vast. They have developed a unique knowledge in areas such as sustainable use of natural resources, medicinal plants and community management. As recognized by Agenda 21, they are key stakeholders for the future of our natural environment and humankind. Indeed, they can be our best partners to watch and protect the world's natural sanctuaries and its biodiversity. It would be a good opportunity for officials of international organizations to meet and discuss with them while they are in Geneva. Mandat International would be pleased to facilitate these contacts.

*For further information please email the author at: [sziegler@mandint.org](mailto:sziegler@mandint.org)*

### NatureNotes

Conversely, the Swiss study showed that short-distance migrants are migrating later than usual.

The skylark *Alauda arvensis* migrates south seven days later than usual or not at all. There has also been a general decline in the distribution and abundance of this species, but changing agricultural practices may be a factor.



Skylark *Alauda arvensis*



## Introducing the International Environmental Law Research Centre

The International Environmental Law Research Centre (IELRC) is an independent, non-profit, research organisation established in 1995. It has offices at the International Environment House 2 as well as in Nairobi and New Delhi. IELRC provides a unique forum for collaborative research between researchers in the North and South. Its aim is to contribute to the establishment of legal and institutional frameworks which foster sustainable environmental management in an equitable international context, notably by undertaking policy-related academic research relating to the environment in a North-South context.

IELRC works on a number of environmental issues such as biodiversity, biosafety and climate change. It puts special emphasis on the interlinkages between environmental issues and other issues such as agriculture, biotechnology and human rights. Specific links, which are the focus of IELRC's work, include biosafety and intellectual property rights. IELRC focuses a significant part of its efforts on issues related to the implementation of international obligations at the national level. This is undertaken mostly in the context of the two countries where IELRC has research capacity, namely India and Kenya.

The output of IELRC's research is multi-faceted. IELRC researchers have been publishing ground-breaking academic books, articles and working papers. Recent books include "Key Materials in International Environmental Law" (Aldershot: Ashgate, forthcoming December 2004) and "Differential Treatment in International Environmental Law" (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

IELRC researchers offer their services to international organisations, governments and civil society groups for policy-related inputs. In 2004, this has included the Development Bank of Southern Africa, the European Patent Office, the Government of Kenya, the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute and the World Health Organization.

IELRC also organises academic and policy-relevant events. Recent activities include the organisation of side-events at COP/MOP 1 of the Biosafety Protocol on liability issues. Further details can be found at [www.ielrc.org/kl](http://www.ielrc.org/kl).

IELRC is currently editing, jointly with the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), a new environmental law journal published in New Delhi by Butterworths-Lexis/Nexis entitled "Law, Environment and Development" (LEAD). Please visit [www.lead-journal.org](http://www.lead-journal.org) for further details on the journal and the forthcoming first issue.

*For further information please contact the International Environmental Law Research Centre (IELRC), International Environment House 2, Chemin de Balexert 7, 1219 Châtelineau-Geneva, Switzerland, Tel/fax: +41 (0)22 797 26 23, Email: [info@ielrc.org](mailto:info@ielrc.org), [geneva@ielrc.org](mailto:geneva@ielrc.org).*

### NatureNotes

Global warming has meant that the growing season for Europe's plants has lengthened by 10.8 days. Flowers such as the snowdrop are blooming earlier in the spring.



Common snowdrop *Galanthus nivalis*

## "Every cloud has a silver lining"

By Darren Hart, International Rainwater Harvesting Alliance

The staff members of the International Rainwater Harvesting Alliance (IRHA) secretariat do not have a top floor penthouse in the International Environment House 2, but they can occasionally be seen picnicking in the sunshine by the rain-fed garden on the first floor.

IRHA has just celebrated its second birthday and was one of the first NGOs to move into IEH 2. Its vision is safe freshwater for sustainable livelihoods and ecosystem conservation in all regions of the world. Its mission is to promote rainwater harvesting (RWH) within the context of integrated water resources management, also linking local social and economic development. IRHA's main work is policy dialogue, networking, advocacy, lobbying to promote RWH in development agendas and capacity building for project managers and decision makers. To these ends, the Alliance collaborates with many partners in India, Kenya, Ethiopia, Bulgaria, Columbia, Mexico, Vietnam and other countries.





In September 2004, together with the Watershed Organisation Trust, in Maharashtra, IRHA held an exposure and dialogue programme for 23 participants from 14 countries on "Rainwater harvesting, watershed development and food security". This was a capacity-building exercise for the Alliance's partners from around the world. IRHA is also working with UN-Habitat to review a RWH manual on Best Practices.

IRHA is a founding member of the Rainwater Partnership recently set up under the auspices of UNEP's Division of

## *Rain is the celestial aqueduct*

– a Caribbean islanders' saying.

Environmental Policy Implementation to push for the inclusion of rainwater harvesting in the documents of the 13<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) in New York next April.

IRHA is also in discussions with UNEP's Finance Initiative concerning future micro-finance initiatives aimed at developing sustainable RWH. The organisation's latest initiative is developing a global network of parliamentarians who have a particular interest in RWH, as well as continually expanding the number of local partners and national RWH associations.

For any further information please email the author at: [darren@irha-h2o.org](mailto:darren@irha-h2o.org).

## NatureNotes

Butterflies are extremely sensitive to environmental change and are considered useful indicator species. One study showed that of 35 non-migratory European butterflies, 22 have shifted their range northward by 35-240 km during the last 50 years. The speckled wood butterfly *Parage aegeria* is extending its range northwards.

The danger from global warming to butterflies is indirect – loss and fragmentation of their habitats due to drought, and the fact that early-emerging caterpillars may lack sufficient food.



Speckled wood butterfly *Parage aegeria*

## Geneva Environment Network members as of November 2004

Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN)  
Association Ecologie Economie pour un Développement Durable (AEE+DD)  
Canton of Geneva, Department of Interior, Agriculture, Environment & Energy (DIAE)  
Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL) (Geneva)  
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) secretariat  
City of Geneva  
Earth Focus Magazine  
Etat de la planète magazine  
Friends of the Earth International (Geneva)  
Graduate Institute of Development Studies (IUED)  
Green Cross International  
Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) secretariat  
International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD)  
International Emissions Trading Association (IETA)  
International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), European Office  
Ramsar Convention on Wetlands  
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)  
United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Liaison Office  
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (Geneva)  
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Emergency Response Division (ERD)  
Secretariat of the Basel Convention (SBC)  
Secretariat (perm.) of the Rotterdam Convention (PIC)  
Secretariat (interim) of the Stockholm Convention (POPs)  
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE)

UNEP Chemicals  
UNEP Coral Reef Unit  
UNEP Economics and Trade Branch (UNEP/ETB)  
UNEP/GEF Project on the Development of National Biosafety Frameworks  
UNEP Global Resources Information Database (UNEP/GRID)  
UNEP Information Unit for Conventions (UNEP/IUC)  
UNEP/OCHA Environmental Emergencies Section  
UNEP Post-Conflict Assessment Unit  
UNEP Regional Office for Europe (UNEP/ROE)  
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)  
United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) (Geneva)  
United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)  
United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR)  
United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS)  
United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) (Geneva)  
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (Geneva)  
United Nations System-wide Earthwatch  
United Nations Volunteers (UNV) (Geneva)  
University for Peace (Geneva)  
University of Geneva, Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences  
World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)  
World Conservation Union (IUCN)  
World Food Programme (WFP) (Geneva)  
World Health Organization (WHO)  
World Meteorological Organization (WMO)  
World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)  
WSP International



**Upcoming environment-related events in the Geneva area - 2005**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Organizer/event/contact</b>
17-19 Jan	UNCTAD: Expert Meeting on Trade and Development aspects of professional services and regulatory frameworks, Tel: +41 22 917 1234, meetings@unctad.org, www.unctad.org
11-14 Jan	UNECE: Working Party on Pollution and Energy. Inland transport Committee. Tel: +41 22 917 4444, Info.ece@unece.org, www.unece.org/env/pp
24-26 Jan	UNCTAD: Expert Meeting on the Impact of FDI on development, Tel: +41 22 917 1234, meetings@unctad.org, www.unctad.org
24-28 Jan	UNECE: Joint Meeting of Experts on the Regulations annexed to the European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Inland Waterways (ADN), Tel: +41 22 917 1234, meetings@unctad.org, www.unctad.org
25-26 Jan	UNECE: Working Party on Gas, Committee on Sustainable Energy, Tel: +41 22 917 4444, www.unece.org/meetings/meetgen.htm
27 Jan	UNECE: Ad Hoc Group of Experts on the Supply and Use of Gas. Committee on Sustainable Energy, Tel: +41 22 917 4444, www.unece.org/meetings/meetgen.htm
1-4 Feb	UNECE: Working Group of Parties to the Convention, on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters. Tel: +41 22 917 4444, www.unece.org/meetings/meetgen.htm
1-4 Feb	RAMSAR: Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), 12th meeting, Tel. +41 22 999 0170, ramsar@ramsar.org, www.ramsar.org/meetings.htm
7-9 Feb	UNCTAD: Expert Meeting on New and Dynamic Sectors, Tel: +41 22 917 5809/1234, info@unctad.org, www.unctad.org
14-18 Feb	UNCTAD: Conference on International Tropical Timber, Tel: +41 22 917 5809/1234, info@unctad.org, www.unctad.org
22-24 Feb	UNECE: Working Party on Noise, Inland Transport Committee, Tel: +41 22 917 4444, www.unece.org/meetings/meetgen.htm
7-10 March	UNECE: Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables, Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development, Tel: +41 22 917 4444, www.unece.org/meetings/meetgen.htm
14-18 March	UNCTAD: Commission on Trade in Goods and Services and Commodities, Ninth session Tel: +41 22 917 5809/1234. info@unctad.org - www.unctad.org
11-12 April	IATA, ITAG and ACI: The Aviation & Environment Summit, Crowne Plaza, Geneva, Tel: Anna Patient at +4122 770 2097, www.environment.aero/00_summit_dev1/modules/contentarea
11-12 April	UNECE: Steering Committee for Transport, Environment and Health Pan European Programme (THE PEP), Tel: +41 22 917 4444, www.unece.org/meetings/meetgen.htm
13-15 April	UNECE: Working Group on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers, Meeting of Parties to the Convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters, Tel: +41 22 917 4444, www.unece.org/meetings/meetgen.htm
25-27 April	UNECE: Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment, Meeting of Parties to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, Tel: +41 22 917 4444, www.unece.org/meetings/meetgen.htm
28-29 April	UNECE: Meeting of Signatories to the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment, Meeting of Parties to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, Tel: +41 22 917 4444, www.unece.org/meetings/meetgen.htm
9-13 May	UNCTAD: Conference on International Tropical Timber, Tel: +41 22 917 5809/1234, info@unctad.org, www.unctad.org

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