

Embargoed until 00:01 GMT, April 6, 2009

connect2earth now links young people directly with world's top experts to debate green issues

Gland, Switzerland, 6 April 2009 (IUCN, WWF & Nokia) – The popular online community connect2earth.org has launched a new service that links young people directly with the world's top environmental experts to talk about headline-grabbing topics that they care about such as climate change, the energy crisis, and species loss.

IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), WWF and Nokia launched www.connect2earth.org in 2008 as an online community for young people to have their say on the environment by uploading videos, pictures and comments.

The website drew three million visitors from 190 countries in its first year, and it has now entered an exciting new phase of development that enables users to debate, learn and share information directly with top environmentalists from around the world.

In 2009, young people will be able to connect with friends from around the world and experts to discuss specific topics such as renewable energy, the species extinction crisis, climate change and sustainable living.

Community members can debate by posting text, images, audio, video and then follow the discussion live as it plays out on the web or on their mobile phone. connect2earth community members, together with a jury of green experts, will then pick a winning contribution, giving the winner an opportunity to take even more action.

The winner could snag a trip to be part of an official delegation to the United Nations climate negotiations in Copenhagen later this year, or even get hands-on experience in a real on-the-ground conservation project somewhere in the world.

"connect2earth lets you talk directly with people all over the world and some of the world's top experts. Participate in the community and you may even get to be part of the global UN climate change negotiations, or take part in a real conservation project!" says **Skandar Keynes, star of Hollywood hits *The Chronicles of Narnia: "The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe"* and *"Prince Caspian"***.

"connect2earth is a great way for young people to engage with environmentalists, but also for us to learn from young people. They are the future of our planet and they need a voice in the global debate – in both the corridors of power and on the ground," says **Julia Marton-Lefèvre, IUCN Director General**.

"connect2earth fosters a real dialogue among young people and leading environmentalists, and it gives them an opportunity to take real action on pressing environmental issues by speaking their minds," says **James Leape, Director General, WWF International**.

"More and more communities are going mobile," says **Kirsi Sormunen, Vice President of Environmental Affairs at Nokia**. *"Therefore, we are also launching a mobile version of the refreshed site. We are proud to continue supporting this exciting community and be part of an initiative that creates a way for young people to express and share their ideas and connect with top environmentalists as well as with their peers in a new way."*

More information: www.connect2earth.org

B-roll footage for this press release can be accessed at <http://www.divshare.com/folder/519205-917>

For more information or to set up interviews, please contact:

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INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE

About IUCN

IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges by supporting scientific research; managing field projects all over the world; and bringing governments, NGOs, the UN, international conventions and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice.

The world's oldest and largest global environmental network, IUCN is a democratic membership union with more than 1,000 government and NGO member organizations, and almost 11,000 volunteer scientists and experts in some 160 countries. IUCN's work is supported by over 1,000 professional staff in 60 offices and hundreds of partners in public, NGO and private sectors around the world. IUCN's headquarters are located in Gland, near Geneva, in Switzerland..

www.iucn.org

About WWF

WWF is one of the world's largest and most respected independent conservation organizations, with almost 5 million supporters and a global network active in over 100 countries. WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the earth's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by conserving the world's biological diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable, and promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.

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About Nokia

Nokia is the world's number one manufacturer of mobile devices by market share and a leader in the converging Internet and communications industries. We make a wide range of devices for all major consumer segments and offer Internet services that enable people to experience music, maps, media, messaging and games. We also provide comprehensive digital map information through NAVTEQ and equipment, solutions and services for communications networks through Nokia Siemens Networks.

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