



PRESS RELEASE

All about dolphins

UNESCO, UNEP Convention on Migratory Species, the private sector and civil society join forces and launch an educational campaign and manual for young readers promoting conservation of dolphins and their habitats.

Paris, 2 May: A multilingual booklet entitled ‘All about dolphins’ was launched today at UNESCO headquarters. The initiative, supported by the Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences of UNESCO, is also part of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. “There cannot be a sustainable future without awareness amongst young generations about the threats that our environment is facing. This manual is a fun way to learn about serious problems affecting not only a charismatic group of species like dolphins, but also their habitats and the marine environment in general. It will help to increase awareness of the fragility of the planet amongst youngsters and, who knows, perhaps inspire some future environmentalists!” commented Mr. Natarajan Ishwaran, Director of Ecological and Earth Science at UNESCO.

UNESCO actively promotes positive interactions between biological and cultural diversity; the coastal marine biosphere reserves under UNESCO (more than 70 sites in more than 30 countries) can provide useful laboratories for promoting appropriate management practices in favour of dolphins.

Dolphins worldwide face several threats to their survival. They are threatened by by-catch, pollution, habitat destruction, over-fishing and climate change. Other human activities that may frighten displace or harm these species such as underwater noise pollution from sources such as shipping traffic, seismic surveys and military sonar.

In order to increase awareness of the threats and challenges for cetacean conservation, UNEP/CMS initiated a campaign to last throughout 2007: the Year of the Dolphin (www.yod2007.org). Within this initiative a number of activities focus on education and public awareness, and are meant to reach the young readers.

UNEP CMS Executive Secretary, Mr. Robert Hepworth, stressed how the booklet was the result of a unique partnership, between the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society and TUI, the largest tourism group in Europe and the two UN bodies. He believes that a major result was the “involvement of the private sector not only for the financing of the project but also for distribution and outreach in key tourism destinations in coastal areas and adjacent local villages”. Dr. Michael

Iwand, Executive Director, Group Corporate Environment Management, TUI-AG, added that: “At TUI, we see ourselves as ambassadors of this important educational message from the United Nations, and are glad to be able to offer our destination network to reach out to tourists as well as local communities, both experiencing, from different angles, marine life and the need to protect the sea.”

The Dolphin Manual is a tool kit for primary school children (age 6 to 14) and their teachers. It explains more about these marine mammals and indicates different ways to protect them. The study booklet with exercises and action ideas to learn all about dolphins is a major component of the educational activities during the Year of the Dolphin. It has been produced in several languages and is available in two editions (English, German, Italian, French, Spanish) and (English, German, Turkish, Greek , Arabic). The publication will be distributed through the UNESCO network of schools, UNEP channels, and in major tourist destinations thus reaching a wide audience worldwide. The booklet is available on the dedicated website www.yod2007.org, published by UNEP/CMS 2007, 64 pages.

Talking about the importance of the manual, Mr. Niki Entrup CEO of WDCS Germany, stressed that as an expert organisation for the protection of cetaceans WDCS is happy to see that science and education can go hand in hand and such important messages can be delivered in an effective manner to a large audience. “Dolphins are a living treasure of our blue planet, but this treasure can be lost if we don’t act on what we know. Wild dolphins need clean and quiet oceans, protected areas and people who care. This manual can better equip the next generation; to empower them to become aware and responsive to the challenges their world is facing”, he added.

The partners of this project invited other organisations to join the project by printing more copies of the booklet and distributing it through channels available to them. The call is addressed to institutions, governments, other non-governmental organisations as well other private businesses.

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