



Press release

For immediate release

Sunday 6 June 2010

Swiss Business Community to turn UAE students green

World environmental day provides ideal platform to launch Swiss environmental initiative aimed at educating UAE teenagers

Members of the Swiss Business Council in the UAE and the Swiss Business Hub GCC have launched a new environmental initiative aimed at teenagers and university students throughout the UAE.

Coinciding with World Environmental Day, the not-for-profit project was launched yesterday (Saturday 5 June), at the Kempinski Hotel, Mall of the Emirates, Dubai, with the key objective of raising awareness of how resource-saving can help protect the environment.

Commenting on the initiative, guest of honour, Gerhard Brügger, Consul General, Consulate General of Switzerland said, “The initiative is a continuous educational programme, which aims to tackle environmental issues under the headline ‘How can I be resource efficient?’ Three topics will be addressed separately covering water, energy and materials.”

“In Switzerland we went through a long process of creating commitment towards environmental conservation. With several decades of experience we now want to transfer this know-how of being resource-efficient to the UAE,” he added.

Hard and soft copies of three booklets will be made available in Arabic and English and distributed to educational establishments throughout the UAE.

“Considering that the school term is about to finish for the summer break, the booklets will be ready for distribution after the new school term starts in September,” said Dr. Till Stoll, Chairman of the Swiss Business Council’s Environmental Committee.

The content of the booklets is being developed by students in Switzerland specifically for students in the UAE, which will identify the potential savings with regards to consumption, resource life-cycle and today’s ‘clean-tech’ solutions for resource-saving. Interestingly, there will not be any behavioural change recommendations.

Dr. Stoll explained, “We tested the content of the water booklet on a focus group earlier this year. We found that behavioural change occurred once the participants realised how much water they use during their daily routine and the potential for saving water.”

To provide a focus for the campaign and an ongoing point of reference, two pilot schools will be selected in Dubai, one English speaking school and one Arabic speaking school.

Markus Oberlin, General Manager of Farnek Avireal, a leading UAE-based sustainable facilities management company, said, “As a company committed to environmental conservation, we have decided to fully engage in this initiative. We will install the latest energy-saving equipment and regularly monitor the amount of electricity used to calculate savings made and the estimated reduction in carbon emissions. In addition we will install pool coverings to diminish water evaporation, as well as host of other hi-tech applications which can reduce resource-wastage.”

The results will be posted on the project website to highlight the amount of savings attained and to provide factual feedback for everybody participating in the programme.

“We will also encourage schools to register and each month we will feature any innovative resource-saving projects undertaken,” said Dr. Stoll. “Practical projects that get students actively involved will undoubtedly be successful driving the ecological message home,” he added.

The initiative has currently attracted some key supporters such as, Switzerland Trade & Investment Promotion, Switzerland Tourism, Green Destinations, myclimate and Swiss International Air Lines.

To follow the progress of the Swiss Environment Initiative please log on to our website www.swiss-environment.org

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Photo caption: Dr. Till Stoll, Chairman of the Swiss Business Council's Environmental Committee (left) is congratulated by Gerhard Brügger, Consul General, Consulate General of Switzerland (right).

About Swiss Environmental Initiative:

The Swiss Environment Initiative (SEI) is a continuous education programme that provides facts about pressing environmental topics of today. The initiative is devoted to protecting the environment through means of education and community involvement. A key objective of the initiative is to make benefit the UAE from Switzerland's long tradition as a country environmental conservation and leading cleantech know-how regarding resource efficiency.

SEI is actively encouraged and supported by UAE and Swiss government agencies and companies, including Osec (Switzerland Trade & Investment Promotion), Cleantech Switzerland, Swiss Tourism, Swiss Business Council, Swiss Business Hub GCC, myClimate, Swiss International Air Lines, Green Destinations, Farnek Avireal, Orient Irrigation Services and Kempinski Hotel Mall of the Emirates Dubai.

About World Environmental Day:

World Environment Day was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1972 at the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. Another resolution, adopted by the General Assembly the same day, led to the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

World Environment Day is one of the principal vehicles through which the United Nations stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment and enhances political attention and action. With thousands of events in UNEP's six global regions, namely, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and the Pacific, West Asia and Europe, World Environment Day is considered one of the largest environmental events of its kind.

Since 1972, 36 World Environment Day celebrations have been held around the globe. World Environment Day 2010 in Pittsburgh will mark the 37th annual celebration. Last year's celebration took place in Omaha, Nebraska.

World Environment Day is designed to:

- Give a human face to environmental issues;
- Empower people to become active agents of sustainable and equitable development;

•Promote an understanding that communities are pivotal to changing attitudes towards environmental issues; and

•Advocate partnership which will ensure all nations and peoples enjoy a safer and more prosperous future.

Media enquiries:

Nathalie Visele

Director

Shamal Marketing Communications

Dubai Media City

Tel: +9714 365 2711

Cell: +971 50 457 6525

Email: nathalie@smc-pr.com