



## Volunteers' action makes 'ultimate' statement

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**Copenhagen, Denmark:** "Volunteers do. Volunteers act. They are doing something about climate change; making things happen and improving lives," said UN Volunteers Executive Coordinator Flavia Pansieri at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP15) yesterday. "Millions of people are taking action for the environment as volunteers. Their actions are more powerful than any statement about solving climate change and they deserve recognition and support. Governments need to take note and include volunteers in their solutions to climate change."

Ms Pansieri announced at a COP15 press conference that volunteers around the world had registered 1.5 million hours of environmental activity over the past two months, in the UNV campaign 'Volunteering for our Planet'.

Joining UN Volunteers in the press conference was volunteer leader Sena Alouka of Togo who is showing politicians at the UN conference that actions speak louder than words. Mr. Alouka is the director of the non-governmental organization 'Jeunes Volontaires Pour L'Environnement' (Young Volunteers for the Environment) which has involved dozens of local volunteers in activities ranging from empowering rural women to become self-sufficient, to conserving biodiversity and promoting solar energy. "Volunteers are a catalyst in communities and can help them to live sustainably," he said. Volunteers also benefit, he said: "being a volunteer brings rewards that stay with you the rest of your life."

Anne Whiteford, head of education, research and development for the World Organization of the Scout Movement, also told the press conference that volunteerism is a powerful force that needs greater recognition. "Millions of Scout leaders carry the message of volunteerism to communities around the world. We are partnering in projects for sustainable development and helping to protect the natural environment. We think governments should recognize the benefits of volunteers and work with us to tackle climate change," she said.

The press conference heard how volunteers around the world are taking action against climate change and forming a valuable part of the solution. Ms Pansieri said that 'Volunteering for our Planet', the UNV campaign for International Volunteer Day on 5 December, had drawn a massive response from volunteers in developing countries such as India, Pakistan, Kenya, Nigeria and the Philippines. "Volunteers are a huge, under-used source of renewable energy.

Their efforts are bringing benefits where they are needed the most; at the community level, in developing countries. 1.5 million hours is a large response but it is the tip of the iceberg: an iceberg that is growing."

Ms Pansieri told the press conference that volunteers were making a clear difference by helping communities to adapt to climate change and to explore ways to innovate in order to mitigate the causes of climate change.

"Across the world, and especially in developing countries, volunteers continue to do wonderful work, conserving biodiversity, exploring alternatives to fossil fuels and charcoal, educating others and developing clean water and sanitation.

Every action is worth a thousand statements," she said. "The negotiators in Copenhagen need to realize that volunteerism is a powerful, renewable form of energy that should be included in the solutions being debated here."

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## More Information:

<http://www.unv.org/.../volunteers-action-makes-ultimate.html>