

June 26, 2007

COMMUNICATING ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS:
MESSAGES and METHODS

Thursday, June 14, 2007, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM
and 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM

1. The panelists in the morning session discussed various approaches to convey environmental concerns. The panelists in the afternoon session helped us to update our interview skills and how to get our message across to the media. This was an interactive session to practice interview skills with professionals.
2. The topics used for the afternoon session interviews were;
 - Environmental degradation and pollution are a hazard to human health.
 - It is important to preserve and protect biodiversity and ecosystems from loss and destruction.
 - Human activities contribute considerably to climate change and environmental destruction.
 - Water resources essential to human life, food security and development have already been adversely affected by climate change and destruction of the environment.
 - Only an integrated approach to the problems of poverty, population pressure and environmental degradation can result in positive and sustainable changes.
 - Environmental degradation has the potential to destabilize already conflict prone areas and threaten the goal of achieving peace. This last topic was taken from the Secretary-General's statement.

Morning Session:

Moderator:
Juan Carlos Brandt, Chief, DPI/NGO

Speakers:
Dr. Ward Stone, Wildlife Pathologist, New York State
Department of Environmental Conservation

Morning Session Speakers (Cont'd):

Ms. Fiona Watt, Chief of Forestry and Horticulture,
New York City Parks and Recreation

Mr. John Seager, President, Population Connection

3. The Moderator of the morning session, Juan Carlos Brandt, welcomed everyone and summarized what were to be covered in the morning session. He then introduced each of the speakers and their backgrounds.

4. The first speaker, Ms. Fiona Watt, has worked with her organization since 1992 and has been the head of the New York City Parks Department for the last ten years. They oversee tree planting, urban forestry and environmental health in New York City.

In her opening she stated that more people now live in cities than in urban areas. Twenty-four percent of New York City are covered by trees and grass. New York City has forty-four thousand acres of trees and grass. There are now 592,130 street trees in New York City. Twenty-four percent of New York City dwellings have tree covers.

The problems have increased because of competing land use and aging trees. Carbon in the air is captured and stored by trees. Trees also capture and filter storm water runoff. Healthy trees also improve human health. In communities with healthy trees property values have increased by nine percent. The New York City urban forest provides carbon emission reduction.

An increased tree canopy can help mitigate the impact of population growth in New York City expected to be about one million people. New York City has already lost nine thousand acres of grass and tree cover between 1984 and 2002. Trees lower temperatures by three and a half degrees.

An increase in tree cover will reduce the ozone formation. Communities with tree cover has seen their property values increase by nine percent. The annual benefits to New York City are \$122,000. This is a ten-year program. Trees are now everywhere. Trees belong to all of us and give us many benefits. Other cities have also recognized the benefit of trees.

The New York City mayor has pledged to fully plant all of New York City's streets. The goal is eight hundred new green streets and to reforest two hundred acres in New York City. He is looking to add 30,000 new street trees each year. The mayor's goal is a greener and greater New York City.

5. The second speaker was Dr. Ward Stone. He has been there for thirty-eight years serving as a pathologist. He indicated that the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation broadcasts their message on conservation across eight states.

Dr. Stone stated that Global Warming was a global problem and that it is impacting all animals in the Arctic. He stated that with global warming you have more carbon dioxide and methane gasses. The resulting water pollution and habitat destruction becomes a world wide problem.

Wetlands are destroyed and there are none or little control of pesticides that impact our environment. Dr. Stone stated that ignorance of these problems are everywhere. Fish are dieing. Many reasons for these problems taking place and are all indicators of the problem. He also stated that the changes resulting from global warming are killing animal everywhere.

In Central Park, Starlings introduced by the global warming have reduced the bluebird population there. New virus,(i.e. West Nile virus, etc) are now being found in New York City and is effecting birds, etc. Asian influenza can be spread by wild bees. Plant diseases has also plagued New York City and the country. As the previous speaker stated, global warming results in more carbon dioxide and methane gases. Water pollution is a world wide problem

Dr. Stone indicated that there is now habitat destruction, wetlands destroyed and little or no control of pesticides that impact our environment. All this from Global Warming but ignorance of this by populations and governments are big. Another indicator of the problem are that many fish are dieing. The changes Resulting from Global Warming are also killing many animals, etc.

Dr. Stone stated that we are not inspecting foods world wide as we should. The problems are immense. There are hundreds of millions of lead jewelry, lead pennies known to exist since Roman times and some of us have died from it. He also stated that lead also comes from paints we use.

Dr. Stone stated that he is looking for a safer and healthy world. For this we must reduce the carbon dioxide and methane gases going into our environment. He indicated that the United States must join the effort for a healthier and happier earth.

6. The third speaker, John Saeger, has been the Chief Executive Officer of the Population Connection since 2005. He was previously with the Environmental Protection Agency of the United States. Population Growth was the original name of the Population Connection. He indicated that we need a passion to communicate this important message. He gave his background and relation to this topic.

His organization, under the name Population Growth, was formed in 1968 to try to control population growth. In 1968, the average family size was three and one-half. The average now is two. In Mexico in 1968 there were seven children per family. The average now is two and one half children per family. It is not the same worldwide.

His organization tries to make population growth with poverty, etc. He stated that the world can change and has changed. The best tools we have are our hearts and our voices. Mr. Saeger stated that each of us has a story to tell about a family and how we want to change the world.

Global Warming is a challenge to the human spirit. Mr. Saeger indicated that unfortunately we will stand by while the damage by Global Warming is done. He indicated that it took seventy years to correct slavery and women's Suffrage. However, we do not have more than five to ten years to solve the Global Warming problem.

He asks the question, what can we do. His answer use fluorescent lights and use our voices to tell politicians and others our story. Passions in our voices stirs people.

7. Questions/Answers:

7.1 Dr. Ward Stone; Carbon Dioxide gasses are increasing causing mosquitoes To grow impacts all of us. Cutting down on lead pollutions are very important.

7.2 Ms. Fiona Watt; Urban forestry began in parts of Europe after World War 2. Each group in the world communicates on their problems. This has been a collaborative effort of eastern cities by the Atlantic.

7.3 Mr. John Saeger; He indicated that a Dr. Saeger (his father) of the University of Pennsylvania stated that we can not speak our way out of this problem. We have to look at the kinds of things that will move behavior. We must cover and picture the most important things that impacts people.

7.4 Ms. Fiona Watt; The way to have people care about trees is to give them a voice. Put labels on trees. This has seemed to work in New York City.

7.5 Dr. Ward Stone; In the Mohawks in the St. Lawrence River, they found that turtles there had massive amounts of pollution. Because of this they have pushed efforts to stop polluting the St. Lawrence River.

7.6 Dr. Ward Stone; He stated that we have to start at home for the environmental message for children before school. We then need to have teachers educated on this. All, parents, adults, teachers and children, should participate in this effort. We must enjoy and protect nature.

7.7 Ms. Fiona Watt; We must plant trees. There is a long way to go but the New York City Mayor's plan for this is excellent. The growth of New York City is a problem but we must deal and work with it. We should use public spaces only recreational purposes. Call 311 if you want to get involved and volunteer in public parks.

7.8 Mr. John Saeger; Chicago is now starting to clean up Chicago and plant trees there.

Afternoon Session

Moderator:
Joyce Braak, DPI/NGO

Opening Speaker:
Ms. Evelyn Leopold, Chief, Reuters Bureau, United Nations

Interviewers:
Ms. Diane Bailey, United Nations Radio

Ms. Geraldine Adams, United Nations Radio

Media Consultants:

Dr. Elizabeth Carll, United Nations Representative for ISTSS,
Former President of the Media Division of APA

Ms. Rita Henley Jensen, Editor in Chief, Women's News

1. The Moderator of the afternoon session, Joyce Braack, welcomed every one and updated the purpose of this session. She then introduced the opening speaker, the interviewers and the media consultants with their backgrounds.

2. The opening speaker, Ms. Evelyn Leopold has a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Science. She has been Chief of the Reuters Bureau since 1990. She received a fellowship in 1990.

3. Ms. Leopold stated that we must be brief when interviewed and positive of our facts. Facts are important. She gave examples of incorrect messages and statements.

4. In giving your statement she again stated that we must be brief. The message must be clear. There must be no gender mainstreams, no abbreviations and spell it out.

5. In making our presentation we must give some statistics on what we are presenting but not a lot. Tell the story but keep it simple.

6. Questions/Answers Ms. Evelyn Leopold:

6.1 The United Nations as a whole consists of many parts. She claimed that the United Nations is covered by reporters from Los Angeles, Cleveland, etc.

6.2 When being interviewed, give your background that you're an expert on.

6.3 Do not use phone calls they can drive them out of their mind. You should use E-Mails for communicating.

6.4 Genocide is known and does not need to be explained or expanded. She also recommended that we must be careful as to how we make a press release.

6.5 Everything we say must be said again and again so it is not misquoted.

6.6 She indicated that there is no one rule on how one must present a subject. You cannot have one general subject.

7. Ms. Diane Bailey the first interviewer joined the United Nations in 1975. She interviewed an NGO from the audience who volunteered. The message that he selected was “Environmental Degradation and Pollution are a Hazard to Human Health”.

He then asked the question as to why are problem factories left abandoned. Statement then made that cancer rates are higher in areas where problem factories are abandoned. Waterbury, Connecticut was indicated as one such site.

The interviewer then ask the NGO on what and whom in government and the state legislator did he tie in with. The interviewer then asked questions of the NGO to show how responses should be made. In other words keep it simple and to the point. Show how his group is seeking to work on climate change. You must be coherent. Show how studies were made from more than one source.

8. The second interviewer, Ms. Geraldine Adams, also participated with a second volunteer NGO in a similar fashion. She reiterated how responses should be made. Do not speak too much before hand to the interviewer and speak specifically on the subject. Your language must be simple.

9. Media consultant Dr. Elizabeth Carll is a clinical psychologist quoted by all broadcasters and newspapers. She stated that the reader interview must be direct with specific points made. Radio interviews can be more general but still need to be specific. During the interview you must keep control of your body language in a radio interview.

In a television interview much more control of your body language is required. You must direct your questions to each speaker or interviewer. Do not be General. Start with very simple questions to each speaker and ask follow Through questions only after they respond to you.

Also important is how you dress and look. She asked questions of the NGO as to how he felt and indicated that he had presented himself excellent. Dr. Carll indicated that he had started off too general in the interview and gave specific examples. Your interview was too vague. You must be concise.

You must always be prepared. She recommended that you prepare before the interview in front of a mirror or with a friend. Put a dollar amount on the item being proposed or saved.

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10. The second media consultant, Ms. Rita Henley Jensen, has twenty years experience in journalism and has received many awards. She holds degrees from both Columbia University and Ohio State.

She stated that you present your expected outcome first. Do not be hesitant in your presentation. Be specific and to the point. Your thought process is important and needed to be expressed.

PDC George Weinstein
National UN Chairman