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A tiger's appeal to save the planet

A Malaysian girl wins the 36th Universal Postal Union International Letter-Writing Competition for Young People

Berne (Switzerland), 28 August 2007

Sze Ee Lee, a 14-year-old Malaysian girl, has won the 36th Universal Postal Union International Letter-Writing Competition. It is the first time that Malaysia wins the international competition, which has been held since 1972.

The young Malaysian girl was among over three million youngsters from all parts of the world who joined the debate on climate change by taking part in the UPU's 36th International Letter-Writing Competition. Invited to put themselves in the position of a wild animal whose habitat is threatened by environmental or climate change, the budding writers from 61 countries addressed the inhabitants of the planet to explain what mankind could do to help them survive. Through their letters, the competition entrants were able to express their concerns about issues such as climate change, river pollution, deforestation or poaching, to name but a few.

Taking on the role of a tiger cub living in the rainforest, Sze Ee Lee recounts her life in the jungle – a life now threatened by the destruction unleashed by man. *"I want to congratulate you all. Many of you have good education and live in your so-called world of modernization. Does this mean that humans are civilized? Yet, why do humans still need to invade our jungle besides hunting us like in those primitive days? Dear people of the World, don't burn our homes and occupy the area, our natural habitat. We have no other place to go."*

The tiger ends its letter with a call for the world to be made aware of this threat: *"It is said 'The pen is mightier than the sword'. So please publish more books, magazines, pamphlets. I believe many people of the world are still ignorant or lack information about wildlife. There is a Malay saying 'Tak kenal maka tak cinta', which means 'to know you is to love you'. So please get as many people to know us and consequently to love us. We are helpless. We depend on you – the People of the World to save us."* This composition – well written and moving, and above all positive – won unanimous praise from the UNESCO jury. With her sensitivity and imagination, the young Malaysian successfully conveyed the urgency of the situation and sent us a message: we must unite to save our planet, said the jury.

The second prize is shared by two authors: Margaret Ayieko Grace from Kenya, and Wara Sofia Facio Flores from Bolivia. Both of these girls' letters sought to show that we each have individual responsibility for our planet, and to propose concrete solutions: two very mature compositions which showed a real global consciousness, said the jury.

The third prize goes to Mariana Köster of Estonia. The main focus of her letter was the incredible destruction being wrought by man on the biosphere. The jury identified with its message: let's

CONTACTS

Universal Postal Union

Laurent Widmer

Telephone: +41 31 350 3595

Mobile: +41 79 773 0426

E-mail: laurent.widmer@upu.int

Internet: www.upu.int



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change our ways! It said that “her criticism was constructive, like that which comes from a friend; her writing surprising, lively and pertinent.”

Finally, special commendations were awarded to Justin Ward (Barbados), Lorena Catalano Gómez (Venezuela), Aleksei Gavrilik (Belarus), Edgard Eduardo Calderón Paredes (Peru), and Soe Pyi Kay Thinzali (Myanmar).

The winners will receive their prizes on 9 October, as part of World Post Day celebrations in their respective countries.

Theme for 2008

For the 37th competition, the UPU is inviting youngsters to write a letter explaining why the world needs more tolerance – a particularly relevant theme in an age of globalization, migration and other trends bringing ever more people from different cultures into contact with each other. Creating a world in which all people live in harmony is a noble goal to which each of us can aspire. Youngsters wishing to take part in the next competition should contact the postal operator or ministry which runs the competition in their country. Member countries will then have until **30 April 2008** to select the best letter from their country and forward it to the UPU International Bureau.

The full text of the three winning letters is available on the UPU website:

www.upu.int/letter_writing/en/

Some facts and figures from the first 35 years:

- Entries from the People's Republic of China have won the competition four times (1981, 1983, 1994 and 1999).
- A letter from Brazil won the very first competition in 1972. Brazilian entries came top again in 1988 and 2006.
- Malta, Jordan, Ethiopia and Mexico have each been home to two top prize-winners.
- Entries from Ireland won the competition two years running in 1986 and 1987.

About the Universal Postal Union

The UPU, a United Nations specialized agency based in Berne (Switzerland), is the primary forum for cooperation between Posts. In addition to maintaining a genuinely universal network that provides modern products and services, it establishes the rules for international mail exchanges among its 191 members and makes recommendations to stimulate mail volume growth and to improve the quality of service for customers. Each year, more than five million employees process and deliver 431 billion domestic letter-post items, some 5.6 billion international items and 6 billion ordinary parcels.

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Laurent Widmer

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Internet: www.upu.int

