

Climate Champions to mark Arab Environment Day

October 13, 2009

DOHA: The first 25 International Climate Champions (ICCs) of the British Council from the Arab world are marking Arab Environment day tomorrow putting in practice new skills they learned during a 'Communicating Climate Change' Workshop at Retaj AlRayyan Hotel.

The workshop, which began yesterday, was aimed to provide ICCs with the communications skills necessary to raise awareness of climate change amongst their peers and in their communities, influence people's behaviour to limit the impact of climate change and reduce their carbon footprint.

The workshop brought together ICCs from Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, UAE and Libya with regional partners and environmental experts, such as Qatar Scientific Club, Retaj AlRayyan Hotel and Qatar Debates.

During the workshop, the ICCs had the opportunity to share their ambitious projects which each other including campaigns to replace incandescent light bulbs at mosques with luminescent paint, banning plastic bags, planting trees and date palms, recycling schemes, car pooling initiatives, campaigns to encourage citizens to monitor and reduce their carbon footprint with each other and plans to build a green energy plant.

The ICCs learned about communications planning and the media, presentation skills and cultural considerations, and core communications skills such as questioning, listening, observing and body language. They also developed an action plan to help publicise the 350 Global Day of Action to tackle climate change on October 24.

They will then have the opportunity to use these skills during Arab Environment Day in a programme of activities with ICC partner organisations in the region. These include participation in Al Jazeera Children's Channel programme, debate with students at Qatar University, Weill Cornell Medical College, Virginia Commonwealth University, Lectures from experts in the field followed by a tour of the clean energy exhibition at the Qatar Scientific Club, media interviews, and much more.

These 25 ICCs, who were announced in June, are part of the British Council's Global ICCs network. They joined more than 1,300 other ICCs from 60 countries worldwide to exchange ideas and experience and effect change.

The ICCs improved their knowledge and understanding about the challenge of climate change in the run-up to the COP15 United Nations Climate Change Conference Copenhagen in December. Some of them will be selected to represent the group at this major international event.

Dr Sarah May, Regional ICC Manager for the British Council, said: "Arab Environment Day reminds us that climate change affects everyone, but young

people the most. It requires collective understanding and changes to the way we all live and relate to our environment and each other.

This is particularly the case here in the Middle East where some countries have among the world's highest carbon footprints and where water scarcity, waste management, desertification, food supplies and national security are the areas where climate change is most keenly felt."

By CHRIS V PANGANIBAN
(The Peninsula)