

## ENVIRONMENT: FROM GLOBAL WARNINGS TO MEDIA ALERT

**Press Release** – October 11, 2008

### **Journalists and Environmental Experts Urge More Specialized Reporting on Global Climate Change**

Journalists and news executives from 29 countries representing six continents met under the auspices of the World Political Forum (WPF) in Venice, Italy, Oct. 10 and 11, and challenged the international media to improve public understanding of the impact of climate change.

The two-day conference, chaired by WPF President Mikhail Gorbachev, was entitled “Environment: From Global Warnings to Media Alert.” Participants reached a consensus that the problem of climate change is urgent.

“Time is running out,” Mr. Gorbachev said in his closing remarks. “The most efficient way to tackle the urgent environmental problems facing our planet is transparency, in which the media have a vital role to play. This means global glasnost.”

Climate experts and media delegates approved a declaration calling for higher standards of reporting on strategic options to avert irreversible damage to the Earth’s ecosystems. Stressing the importance of well-informed public opinion, the declaration set out the following main recommendations:

- The media have the central role in ensuring that politicians, corporations, non-governmental organisations and scientists keep the general public informed about the latest facts and policy options regarding climate change. Civil society formation and action are essential components in deliberation on this issue.
- Journalists have a responsibility to improve their knowledge and skills in order to be able effectively to question government policy-makers, to distinguish facts from opinion or advocacy, and to evaluate scientific arguments from an independent viewpoint.
- Journalists and civil society should redouble their efforts to combat restrictive measures by governments on journalists reporting on their deficiencies in fighting environmental degradation or in informing the public about the dangers of climate change.
- Journalists should avail themselves of existing international databanks of validated statistics and scientific research on climate change.
- Scientists need to acquire improved communications skills to explain their findings in accessible terms and to build relationships of trust with the media.

-- Media proprietors should be prepared to invest more resources in investigative reporting to allow specialist journalists to carry out serious and objective coverage of complex issues, based on a thorough understanding of good science.

-- Editors should provide more space for in-depth treatment of environmental issues, not just on-line but in print and on air, and encourage innovative approaches that will grab the attention of the audience in a responsible, independent and non-sensational manner.

-- Journalism training organisations should develop ever more sophisticated exercises to improve reporters' skills in explaining complex scientific arguments. An international network should be created to share information about the availability of training courses and the development of new training models.

The Conference concluded on a positive note, declaring: *"There is, however, cause for optimism if we act now. Numerous positive solutions to the global environmental change proposed by science and made possible by innovations in technology, the potential inherent in global civil society organization and by citizens' groups everywhere in the world; and contributions from socially responsible business leaders can make it possible for us to provide for a decent and full life for all, and for generations to come, within the limits of our planet's resources."*