



United Nations Decade on Biodiversity



## PRESS RELEASE

### Winners of the MIDORI Prize for Biodiversity 2020

**26 August 2020** – The AEON Environmental Foundation and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) are pleased to announce the winners of the MIDORI Prize for Biodiversity 2020:

- **Dr. Paul Hebert**, Professor, Department of Integrative Biology, University of Guelph, Canada,
- **Ms. Melina Sakiyama**, Co-founder, Global Youth Biodiversity Network; and
- **Mr. Wirsy Emmanuel Binyuy**, Founder, Cameroon Gender and Environment Watch.

The MIDORI Prize for Biodiversity is a prestigious biennial international prize organized by the AEON Environmental Foundation and the CBD Secretariat. It honours individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. Each of the prize winners is awarded a monetary prize of USD 100,000 to support their work in addition to a commemorative gift and a plaque.

“Climate change, and the frequent occurrence of disasters due to climate change, is causing rapid changes in biodiversity and having an immense impact on the global environment,” said Mr. Takuya Okada, Chairman of the AEON Environmental Foundation. “Efforts to conserve the global environment will become even more important. In addition to honouring the achievements of the Prize winners in 2020, we will continue to actively promote environmental activities in order to pass on the beautiful and healthy planet Earth to the next generation.”

“At a time when the world is facing an interlinked crisis of health, climate and biodiversity, it is crucial to work together to find solutions and ways to live in harmony with nature. Each of this year’s winners are contributing to these objectives and inspiring positive change for people and planet” said Ms. Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and CBD Executive Secretary. “I would like to express my deepest appreciation for their commitment and achievements and my wholehearted congratulations.”

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in lieu of an in-person award ceremony and events, the winners and their work will be celebrated in a series of online activities in the coming months.



## Notes for editors

### (1) The 2020 MIDORI Prize Winners (in alphabetical order)



**Paul Hebert (Canada)**

**Professor, Department of Integrative Biology, University of Guelph**

Dr. Paul Hebert holds a Canada Research Chair in Molecular Biodiversity at the University of Guelph where he is the Director of its Centre for Biodiversity Genomics. For the past 20 years, his research has focused on the development of an innovative technique termed DNA barcoding which can almost instantly assign any organism to its proper species. The resulting biodiversity data represent a “global public library” which now contains information on more than 10 million specimens. By establishing the International Barcode of Life Consortium, he created a research alliance which is revolutionizing our understanding of planetary biodiversity. Dr. Hebert’s work is reinforcing our appreciation for the value of nature, aiding its protection, facilitating biodiversity monitoring, and providing everyone with easy access to biodiversity knowledge.



**Melina Sakiyama (Brazil)**

**Co-founder, Global Youth Biodiversity Network**

In the context of her participation in the 10th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2010, Ms. Melina Sakiyama met other young people who shared her vision. Together with Mr. Christian Schwarzer, she co-founded the Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN), with the aim to create a global coalition of empowered youth and youth organizations to build a shared future in harmony with nature. As part of the team, Ms. Sakiyama led efforts to design capacity-building and youth empowerment programmes that supported hundreds of young leaders and youth-led biodiversity conservation initiatives, thus contributing to the implementation of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the objectives of the Convention. The Network comprises 551 youth groups, organizations and movements from 145 countries who participate and collaborate with each other on project implementation, policy-making and awareness-raising on biodiversity, and continues to expand across borders and issue areas.



**Wirsiy Emmanuel Binyuy (Cameroon)**

**Founder, Cameroon Gender and Environment Watch (CAMGEW)**

In 2007, Mr. Wirsiy founded the Cameroon Gender and Environment Watch, which focus on solutions to environmental and gender issues. The initiative works with the slogan "think globally, act locally"; it involves local communities in forest conservation and regeneration efforts to collect forest

seeds and seedlings, develop tree nurseries, plant forest trees and do forest patrols. Mr. Wirsy's apiculture initiatives provided micro-financing opportunities for women, brought sustainable sources of income to communities and reduced bushfires drastically in the regions. He has been leading environmental educational campaign to raise the awareness of hundreds of thousands of forest people and has contributed largely in the regeneration of biodiversity hotspots. Mr. Wirsy has empowered bee farmers and organized them to honey cooperatives to increase honey quality and quantity for a better market.

## **(2) The MIDORI Prize for Biodiversity**

The MIDORI Prize for Biodiversity aims to raise public awareness of the importance of biodiversity to human wellbeing and global issues, such as climate change, and to contribute to the objectives of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity 2011-2020. It aims to support action for biodiversity and to inspire others by honouring individuals who have made major contributions to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and by bringing attention to their achievements. The MIDORI Prize for Biodiversity was established by the AEON Environmental Foundation in commemoration of its 20th anniversary in 2010, which coincided with the United Nations International Year of Biodiversity and the 10th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 10), held in Nagoya, Japan. The MIDORI Prize for Biodiversity is an international biennial prize and this year marks its sixth edition. Sixteen Prize winners from fifteen countries have been selected so far and their work is relevant around the world. For more information visit: <https://www.aeon.info/ef/en/prize/>

## **(3) AEON Environmental Foundation**

Established in 1990, the AEON Environmental Foundation continues to implement activities that respond to environmental issues in a changing world. Currently, the Foundation is promoting activities with stakeholders in four areas: Development of Forest, Funding, Environmental Education, and Partnership. A representative activity of AEON Environmental Foundation is tree-planting activities which have been carried out with volunteers all over the world, with a total number of trees planted exceeding 12.12 million.

Website: <https://www.aeon.info/ef/en/>

## **(4) Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**

Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and entering into force in December 1993, the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty for the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of the components of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits derived from the use of genetic resources. With 196 Parties, the Convention has near universal participation among countries. The Convention seeks to address all threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services, including threats from climate change, through scientific assessments, the development of tools, incentives and processes, the transfer of technologies and good practices and

the full and active involvement of relevant stakeholders including indigenous and local communities, youth, NGOs, women and the business community. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing are supplementary agreements to the Convention. The Cartagena Protocol, which entered into force on 11 September 2003, seeks to protect biological diversity from the potential risks posed by living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology. To date, 173 Parties have ratified the Cartagena Protocol. The Nagoya Protocol aims at sharing the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources in a fair and equitable way, including by appropriate access to genetic resources and by appropriate transfer of relevant technologies. It entered into force on 12 October 2014 and to date has been ratified by 128 Parties.

For more information visit: [www.cbd.int](http://www.cbd.int). For additional information, please contact: David Ainsworth on +1 514 287 7025 or at [david.ainsworth@cbd.int](mailto:david.ainsworth@cbd.int); or Johan Hedlund on +1 514 287 6670 or at [johan.hedlund@cbd.int](mailto:johan.hedlund@cbd.int)

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