



## GREEN CROSS INTERNATIONAL



## MEDIA INFORMATION KIT

## Green Cross International Contact

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### ✓ Thematic focal points (Please contact first Someshwar Singh or Michelle Laug) :

General issues, security issues: Alexander Likhotal, GCI President

Water: David Alix, International Water Programme Director

Energy and climate change: Matt Petersen, President and CEO of Global Green USA

Legacy of the Cold War and Disarmament: Paul Walker, Legacy Programme Director, and Stephan Robinson, International Programme Director

Consequences of Chernobyl and Agent Orange (Vietnam): Christina Bigler, Director of the Social and Medical care Programme

Environmental education and awareness: Xavier Guijarro, Environmental Education Programme Director

The Earth Charter: Tonia Moya, Green Cross Sweden President

The Earth Dialogues: Xavier Guijarro, Earth Dialogues Director

## The foundation of Green Cross International

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In 1989 President Gorbachev said, addressing a major international conference: "Now that we have achieved visible progress in nuclear disarmament, the biggest threat to our common future will be increasingly associated with environmental challenges" - thus duly laying the ground for the creation of Green Cross International (GCI) several years later. GCI was founded in 1993 by its Chairman, Mikhail Gorbachev, to shape environmental policy at the highest level. It focuses attention on the crucial links between security, poverty and the environment, and promotes action both internationally and among the people most affected. Green Cross National Organisations are established today in 31 countries.

## Green Cross General Messages

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Green Cross International (GCI):

- ✓ is an international non-governmental organisation that unites the efforts of 30 National Organisations to promote a just, sustainable and secure future.
- ✓ works to demonstrate the crucial nexus between poverty, security and the environment and the impact each of these have on humanity.

- ✓ aims to prevent conflicts over scarce natural resources, assist those affected by the environmental effects of wars, and promote a genuine value and behavior shift globally with regards to the environment and sustainability.
- ✓ provides unbiased environmental analysis and expertise, information dissemination, education, objective evaluations for public debate, scientific studies, and social and medical support.
- ✓ strives to ensure a new perspective is available which works on the premise that global solidarity and understanding are essential to a sustainable future.

## Green Cross Key Messages

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### ✓ ***Access to water is not a privilege, it is a right!***

Water is not a resource that should be treated as an economic commodity, instead it is a communal resource that must be protected and distributed equitably around the world. For this reason Green Cross International has been at the forefront of the Right to Water campaign and Water for Peace which both aim to make water that promotes cooperation instead of conflict. The Right to Water campaign has been influential in convincing several states - including France and the UK - to officially recognise the right to water for the first time, and has raised the profile of this crisis, and the amount of finance available to combat it, across the world.

### ✓ ***Water can divide people or be a catalyst for peace and development: the choice is ours***

A growing number of states are experiencing permanent water stress, yet in most cases, mechanisms and institutions to manage disputes over water resources are either absent or inadequate. Competition over water could increasingly become a source of tension if no action is taken. The "Water For Peace" programme initiated by Green Cross - developed with the input of civil society in several international basins - aims to enhance the awareness and participation of local authorities and the public in water conflict resolution and integrated management by facilitating more effective dialogue between all stakeholders.

### ✓ ***Energy must not only be sustainable but affordable***

The Earth has provided with humanity with many things including sources of clean sustainable energy. However, it is not enough to find energy that is sustainable the energy must also be affordable, which is why Green Cross International is working on the Global Solar Fund, which aims to create sufficient funding for solar photovoltaic systems.

### ✓ ***Wars end, but people continue suffering from the consequences***

Once a conflict has ended the media and world community seem to believe that the suffering has concluded because the guns are silent. This assumption is wholly mistaken, as many innocent civilians must live with the long-term effects that occur after a conflict. Green Cross International provides assistance to the innocent victims of old conflicts. With the Social and Medical Care programme (SocMed), it is dedicated to bringing necessary medical and educational attention to the forgotten victims of history, whether they suffer from the scars of poor handling and storage of chemical weapons, Chernobyl, Agent Orange in Vietnam, SocMed is there to help.

### ✓ ***Security in the 21<sup>st</sup> century must be thought of in comprehensive terms.***

Most of today's crises and conflicts have driving forces that cannot be placed in the categories of classic military security between states. The differences between the terms war and peace, domestic and foreign policy, military and civilian, state and non-state actors, politics and economics are becoming more and more blurred. Now that the Cold War is over stockpiles of Weapons of Mass Destruction just like theory of mutual destruction have become obsolete and a liability due to the fact that many of the storage facilities are near populated areas. In light of this threat Green Cross International has taken the initiative to create the Legacy programme, which focuses on the destruction of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons primarily within the United States and Russia.

### ✓ ***A sustainable future can only be achieved with a major shift in the mindset of people over the world.***

In order to be able to fulfill a future of sustainability and positive impact on the environment there must be a change in the behaviors of governments and the international community while also a shift in the value system that is general accepted. Green Cross International recognises the importance of changing the behavior of governments and individuals The Earth Charter is a document has been spearheaded by

Green Cross International and embodies fundamental principals that are meant to act as guide for people worldwide of how to conduct themselves in order to ensure a sustainable future.

## Some of our Success Stories

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### ✓ **New Orleans: Green Rebuilding**

Immediately after Hurricane Katrina struck in 2005, Global Green USA (GCI's US affiliate) was on the ground in New Orleans, evaluating disaster response and exploring ways to effectively respond to the incredible needs of the city. Within months of the disaster, an aggressive plan for rebuilding neighbourhoods in New Orleans had taken shape across three distinct programmes: political action, education, and the creation of model green building projects that could be replicated throughout New Orleans and ultimately in cities around the world. Ongoing projects include the Green Schools initiative and a high profile Sustainable Design Competition.

### ✓ **Bolivia: Rainwater Harvesting and Ecological Latrines**

Water is short and health is poor in the Bolivian municipality of San Antonio de Lomerio. Simple, low-cost methods can quickly improve the health of local people, and empower them to improve their own and their children's lives. Green Cross Bolivia's Rainwater Harvesting and Ecological Latrines Project, supported by Green Cross Japan, has helped to provide local families with 13 ecological latrines and 14 rainwater tanks, with funding for 25 more tanks. Indigenous people have been trained to build and maintain the new facilities, and families are offered basic sanitation guidance. So far, 18 people have been fully trained to build rainwater tanks and ecological latrines, and 37 families have been educated in water purification.

### ✓ **Gaza: Water Management and Training**

Living conditions in the Palestinian territories have worsened in recent years, and may get worse still as the region's acute shortage of water is aggravated by conflict. Gaza's local bodies lack the resources and expertise to plan and implement effective water projects in this challenging environment, and the quality of water services varies greatly from town to town. Green Cross recognises the need for trained water professionals to plan, build and manage the necessary facilities. Alongside local partners, Green Cross France helps to rehabilitate water supplies and to improve planning, management and technical expertise. It equips and trains staff from municipalities and village councils in techniques for using water sustainably, improving its quality and reducing pollution. Trained local staff can become reliable counterparts for neighbouring authorities, and the outcome is a useful, practical, co-operative endeavour that offers hope for peace in the region one day.

### ✓ **Uruguay and Argentina: Resolution of a conflict over paper mills**

The Uruguayan government's decision to allow the installation of two paper mills (one from the Finnish company Botnia, and the second from the Spanish company Ence), with an investment of USD 1 billion in the area of Fray Bentos near the city of Gualeguaychú (Argentina), has generated significant worry amongst the local Argentine population. They are concerned about the possibility of water and air pollution that could threaten human health and destroy the environment. In the first place, Green Cross International, with its partners in Argentina and Uruguay, has been addressing this conflict by conducting a technical, social and environmental assessment study, independent from the two governments and the various stakeholders involved, in order to clarify the positive and negative impacts of the Paper Mills Implantation Project. The study's objective was to help the communities understand the magnitude and composition of any potential consequences of these paper mills, whilst at the same time educating them on how to avoid and decrease their own exposure to these risks. In the beginning of 2007, the second phase of the project began: establishing a process of dialogue and information exchange within a multi-stakeholder approach, involving both sides of the border in a constructive dialogue to find sustainable and peaceful solutions to the conflict.

### ✓ **Burkina Faso: Access to drinking water and basic sanitation in the Yatenga Province**

In an effort to combat desertification and provide rural villagers with a clean and reliable water source, Green Cross Italy has collaborated with the Italian non-profit organisation, MediaFriends, to provide 11 different villages in the Yatenga Province with a safe and secure water infrastructure. The project, which is

a joint venture with Green Cross Burkina Faso, began in the summer of 2007 with a proposed timeframe of two years. Funding a comprehensive hydrological study, the Green Cross team is designating the best places in the area for drilling wells. Eventually wells will be combined with hydraulic systems to move the water to where it is most needed, for consumption, sanitation and agricultural irrigation. Involving the local population in the building and maintenance of wells will promote a transfer of skills, helping to generate further water projects and improvements.

### **✓ *Worldwide: Promoting the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention***

A four-year campaign by Green Cross International, from 2000 to 2004, raised awareness among governments, legislators and the public of the dangers of chemical weapons and the need for their swift destruction. The campaign supported full implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which entered into force in April 1997. Chemical and biological weapons are relatively simple and cheap to produce, but their effects are tremendous. Even the smallest quantities are sufficient to kill thousands of people, making their safe destruction a key concern when it comes to preserving peace.

### **✓ *Facilitating Russian chemical weapons destruction through Public Outreach Offices***

Located near chemical weapons stockpiles or nuclear destruction facilities, these offices inform, educate and support communities affected by the Cold War's legacy. In the last ten years the public outreach offices have built strong relationships with the communities, averaging 500 visitors monthly or 30 daily. The offices are centrally located either in the stockpile communities themselves or in their regional capitals. They are open every day and provide citizens with answers on all questions related to the neighbouring chemical weapons stockpile, plans for its destruction, legal frameworks, destruction technologies, impacts on health and the environment, and more. The offices also support emergency preparedness services in training the population in the use of gas masks and related procedures in case of an accident at the stockpile or the future destruction facility. And outreach office staff provide regular training for key groups including schoolteachers, administrators, librarians and journalists on chemical weapons related questions. In Kambarka, the emergency sirens could not communicate accident details across the region. One of two emergency preparedness initiatives begun in 2007 distributed 2,000 radios in the region to complement the existing emergency sirens. Currently, most of the Kambarka region's population, thanks to Green Cross, has access to emergency response communication.

### **✓ *Vietnam: Addressing the humanitarian impact of Agent Orange***

Every year some 3,500 babies are born with physical handicaps caused by the use of the defoliant Agent Orange during the Vietnam War. These handicapped children rarely have access to orthopaedic care or appropriate education and training. They face marginalisation in society. The Green Cross Social and Medical Care Programme focuses on orthopaedic care for children, to help them gain the use of their limbs and live fuller, happier, more productive lives. The programme also trains local specialists to ensure the sustainability of children's treatment, and has instituted a micro-credit programme to help address the extreme poverty that further complicates medical and social care in Vietnam. Over the next four years, hundreds of children and young adults will receive life-changing treatment including operations, physiotherapy and prosthetics.

### **✓ *Japan, Sri Lanka: Teaching schoolchildren environmental awareness through a daily diary***

The Environmental Diary programme is an annual project organised by Green Cross Japan. Now in its eighth year, over 400,000 children have completed the Environmental Diary programme and it has now been expanded to schools in Sri Lanka. By reporting their day's environmental impact, each child learns about his or her place in the ecosystem and also establishes positive behaviour regarding such matters as water conservation or rubbish recycling. To recognise their efforts, GC Japan hosts an awards ceremony for the children who produce exceptional diaries. In 2006, GC Japan honoured 200 individuals, who received certificates and a chance to participate in the Asian Children's Ecology Symposium. Two children who participated in the diary programme from Sri Lanka were also honoured in the ceremony.

## Quotes from the Green Cross Network

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"We desperately need to recognize that we are the guests not the masters of nature and adopt a new paradigm for development, based on the costs and benefits to all people, and bound by the limits of nature herself rather than the limits of technology and consumerism." **Mikhail Gorbachev, GCI Founding President and Member of the Board of Directors**

"Governments are still not doing enough to protect the environment, countries should adhere to environmental principles to avoid irreparable damage to the planet - it's five minutes to midnight." **Mikhail Gorbachev, GCI Founding President and Member of the Board of Directors**

"That military conflicts in our time can cause both a human and an environmental catastrophe makes the task of preventing them even more urgent and important. Prevention must be foremost in our thinking and our actions. But, if hostilities break out despite all our efforts, they must be constrained by certain legal limits. Such constraints have been laid down by the Geneva conventions and their protocols. It is now clear that they should be supplemented by provisions to limit the environmental damage caused by warfare." **Mikhail Gorbachev, GCI Founding President and Member of the Board of Directors**

"It's about building a sustainable peace. A peace we can all enjoy. Construction of that peace is most certainly dependant on our ability to prevent conflicts over the limited natural resources of our planet." **Shimon Peres, Former Member of GCI Board of Directors of Directors**

"Global warming is threatening us all. Fortunately, there are many simple things we can all do such as driving greener cars or changing to compact fluorescent light bulbs, which can dramatically save energy and reduce global warming pollution." **GCI supporter Penelope Cruz**

"I am proud to support Global Green (the American affiliate of Green Cross International) and help them educate the public about climate change. It's urgent that we all take steps to reduce our impact on the environment." **Global Green Board Member Leonardo DiCaprio**

"As the world struggles to combat poverty and global warming, Global Green USA is proving we can find solutions that benefit our communities and reduce global warming." **GCI supporter Salma Hayek**

"Green Cross International's willingness to tackle conflict, poverty and unsustainable development simultaneously illustrates their unique understanding of these interconnected and critical issues." **Michel Rocard, Former Member of GCI Board of Directors**

"I don't only think that the biosphere is in trouble, I know it is. I just have to look around in the environment, in which I live. In my own part of the world, I keep telling people, let us not cut trees irresponsibly. Let us not destroy especially the forested mountains. Because if we destroy the forests on these mountains, the rivers will stop flowing, the rains will become irregular, the crops will fail and people will die of hunger and starvation. Before these tragedies, there will be conflicts and wars over the diminishing resources. The work the Green Belt Movement and Green Cross do is intended to help people understand these linkages and be moved to take positive action." **Wangari Maathai Member of GCI Honorary Board**

"Traditional threats emanating from an adversary no longer exist, instead the new threats are problems without passports, therefore every member of the international community have vested interest in dealing with crucial nexus between poverty, security and the environment." **GCI President Alexander Likhotal**

"Test scores improve by 20% to 22% in green schools, can lead to fewer absences due to improved indoor air quality and reduce energy and water costs by up to 40%. Across the country we have seen

high performance schools create a better learning environment for students.” **Matt Peterson,**  
**President and CEO of Global Green**