

RI to host int'l youth meeting on environment

As part of efforts to engage more young people to participate in addressing environmental issues, the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) is cooperating with the Indonesian government to hold the Tunza International Children and Youth Conference on Sept. 27 through Oct. 1 in Bandung, West Java.

Tunza, a Kiswahili word for "treat with care or affection", is meant to provide knowledge for young people on how to care for Mother Earth and implement actions for a better world.

The conference theme, "Reshaping Our Future through a Green Economy and Sustainable Lifestyle", will involve up to 1,500 children and youth delegates from 120 countries across the globe to discuss efforts to deal with the world's major challenges for the global economy, the sustainability agenda and poverty eradication.

"The conference will nurture concern from children and youth about the environment. As they are growing up, they will hopefully become leaders who will strive for the sustainability of the Earth, because they are our future," Environment Minister Gusti Muhammad Hatta said.

He added that Bandung was chosen to host the biannual event because the city was well known as a place historically known for its youth activism and creativity. "We hope that the event will lift Bandung to a higher quality of living," the minister added.

The Environment Ministry will team up with the Ministry for Youth and Sport, the National Education Ministry, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and Bandung's local government to host the first environmental conference for children and youth.

During the conference, tentatively scheduled for six days, children and youth aged from between the ages of 10 and 25, will be involved in several programs, including workshops, debate, a green concert, education on urban ecotourism and various field trips. "Participants will also plant trees at the Juanda Forest Park in Babakan Siliwangi, Bandung, which will be proclaimed as a World City Forest," Rasio Ridho Sani, head of the environment ministry's planning and international affairs division, told reporters on Thursday.

He said that the World City Forest would be a role model for other cities across Indonesia, as well as for other countries around the world.

"The conference is also expected to result in a declaration stating the participants' support for sustainable world development, which will be presented next year in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil during the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development Rio+20," he added.

The Rio+20 conference will focus on a green economy in the context of sustainable development, poverty eradication and the institutional framework for sustainable development. This year's international conference will be the UNEP's fourth conference on the environment. (msa)