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ENVISION 2012: Stories for a Sustainable Future

April 16 and 17 - New York City

Don Cheadle, Alexandra Cousteau to Speak at Two-Day Conference

NEW YORK--April 10, 2012--A two-day conference to be held in New York City later this month, **ENVISION 2012: Stories for a Sustainable Future** will focus on developing a better global future with opportunity for all, building on three key issues: just and sustainable cities, clean water and green energy. The conference, a unique partnership between the Independent Filmmaker Project (IFP), the United Nations Department of Public Information and the Ford Foundation, was founded on the shared belief that storytelling and documentary film can be powerful tools in building a better future for all people.

Now in its fourth year, the gathering on April 16 and 17 connects UN experts and NGOs with some of the most creative minds in filmmaking and new media, and enables them to work together to find new and compelling ways to create momentum for social change. Anchored by the UN Millennium Development Goals and held at the Ford Foundation's New York headquarters, the event will help build momentum for the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development being held in Brazil from June 20 - 22.

Highlights of the event (which will be hosted by **Scott Tong**, sustainability correspondent for the popular NPR program Marketplace) include a keynote address by **Don Cheadle**, Academy Award-nominated actor and goodwill ambassador for the United Nations Environment Programme; a conversation with **Alexandra Cousteau**, founder of Blue Legacy; and an opening night screening of "Last Call at the Oasis," with its Academy Award-winning director, **Jessica Yu**, in attendance.

Mr. Cheadle heads a stellar cast of keynote speakers and performers that also includes **Jason Clay** of the World Wide Fund, and singer and social activist **Bernice Johnson Reagon**, founder of Sweet Honey and the Rock.

"We are honored to present this year's Envision with the Ford Foundation and the United Nations," said Joana Vicente, executive director of IFP. "Our global community faces ever-present challenges in addressing the issue of sustainability, and our organization is in the unique position of being able to deliver very impactful storytellers who inspire creative solutions and tools with the real potential for change."

"The Future We Want [a campaign to promote Rio+20] can only be sustainable if our children have the same opportunities that we and previous generations have enjoyed," said Maher Nasser, acting head of the United Nations Department of Public Information. "As the Rio+20 Conference approaches, let us ensure that this message and Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's critical emphasis on sustainability is communicated successfully."

Envision 2012 is an excellent opportunity to realize this by engaging filmmakers in the challenge of bringing these issues to life in a compelling way.”

“Storytelling, in documentaries and all forms of visualization, is a powerful tool in winning hearts and minds and driving change,” said Orlando Bagwell, director of the Ford Foundation’s JustFilms initiative. “We see this gathering as a wonderful opportunity for filmmakers and producers to forge new creative partnerships with the people who have knowledge and information, and who know where the real stories are.”

Program details of the two-day event include:

- “Last Call at the Oasis,” a powerful documentary by Academy Award-winner Jessica Yu, which pays tribute to the life-giving force of clean, abundant and regulated water.
- Excerpts from “Last Train Home” by Lixin Fan; “Detropia” by Academy Award-nominees Rachel Grady and Heidi Ewing; and “One Day on Earth” by Brandon Litman.
- Explorer, filmmaker and advocate Alexandra Cousteau dives into the details of her documentary “Blue Legacy” and the founding of her international environmental organization of the same name.
- Social entrepreneur Leila Janah, urban sustainability expert Gary Lawrence and Aisa Kirabo Kacyira, the former mayor of Kigali, get tactical in a conversation about the power cities have to drive our environmental future.
- Champions of highly innovative projects pitch ideas to filmmakers and producers who, in turn, offer their thoughts on how to bring the work to life through film and media.
- Digital guru Ethan Zuckerman (of Harvard University’s Berkman Center for Internet and Society) demonstrates technology’s power and potential to map the earth’s stories, with Rebecca Moore of Google Earth and Dave Cole of MapBox.
- A special performance by Michael Franti.

Envision is pleased to have RBC as a major supporter and The New York Times as a media sponsor of this year’s event.

On Tuesday, April 17th from 9:30 am – 6:00 pm EDT, Envision will be streamed live at envisionfilm.org. Full details of the program are now available online.

About the partners:

The United Nations

As the public voice of the United Nations, the department of public information is dedicated to communicating the ideals and work of the United Nations to the world; to interacting and partnering with diverse audiences; and to building support for peace, development and human rights for all. The department promotes global awareness and understanding of the work and ideals of the United Nations, maximizing its global impact. Launched in 2009, the United Nations Creative Community Outreach Initiative was designed to collaborate with the creative community in order to achieve our mutual goals of promoting peace and raising awareness of critical global issues. We believe that awareness is a powerful tool in the face of injustice because it inspires compassionate action. Through creative media, we can bring honor, empathy and compassion to our stories, and, ultimately, to the people who live them.

<http://www.un.org/en/creative>

Independent Filmmaker Project

The Independent Filmmaker Project (IFP) is the nation's oldest and largest not-for-profit advocacy organization for independent filmmakers. Since its debut at the 1979 New York Film Festival, IFP has supported the production of over 7,000 films and offered resources to more than 20,000 filmmakers, providing an opportunity for many diverse voices to be heard. IFP believes that independent films enrich the universal language of cinema, seeding the global culture with new ideas, kindling awareness and fostering activism. The organization championed the early work of pioneering independent filmmakers Charles Burnett, Todd Haynes, Mira Nair, Michael Moore, Joel and Ethan Coen, Kevin Smith and Todd Solondz. IFP continues to play a vital role in launching the first films of many of today's rising stars on the independent scene, including Debra Granik ("Down to the Bone"), Miranda July ("Me, You and Everyone We Know"), and Ryan Fleck & Anna Boden ("Half Nelson"). www.ifp.org.

Ford Foundation

The Ford Foundation is an independent, nonprofit grant-making organization with headquarters in New York. For 75 years it has worked with courageous people on the frontlines of social change worldwide, guided by its mission to strengthen democratic values, reduce poverty and injustice, promote international cooperation and advance human achievement. The foundation's JustFilms initiative, launched in 2011, builds on Ford's longtime support for documentaries and acknowledges the importance of visual narratives in creating social change. Leveraging the foundation's global network of regional offices in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia, JustFilms seeks to identify new talent from around the world and to strengthen emerging communities of documentary filmmakers.

www.fordfoundation.org

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