

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Young people call for Cameron to put planet before protocol and attend Rio+20 Earth Summit

Young people from around the world have called today for David Cameron and other Commonwealth leaders to commit to attend the Rio+20 Earth Summit in June. This critical summit will seek new momentum for sustainable development, taking action to ensure the wellbeing of future generations. The original Earth Summit saw the UN's Framework Convention on Climate Change opened for signature, as well as the Convention on Biological Diversity. It set the international sustainability agenda and Rio+20 will be essential for making progress in areas where the United Nations have stalled in recent years.

The summit occurs the same week as the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations, causing Mr Cameron's earlier announcement that he would not be attending the summit. The attendance of the world's most powerful individuals will be key to the summit's success, so young people are calling for Commonwealth leaders to leave the celebrations early to attend.

People across the globe are already mobilising in the run-up to the summit. On Thursday a global campaign was launched to see thousands of submissions to the United Nations by young people in the run-up to the Summit. Alongside this, online 'taskforces' of young people have been working late into the night on detailed submissions about issues critical to their future.

All over the world, meetings have taken place among young people to ensure a difference can be made at the summit. In September an International Youth Strategy Meeting took place in Mollina, Spain, seeing six days of in depth discussion on how young people will mobilise around the summit. Since the beginning of October youth declarations have been released from similar meetings in Argentina, Kenya and China.

Tom Youngman, 18, a British sustainability activist, said: "For Cameron and other Commonwealth leaders to snub the Summit could mean our work is wasted - and our chances of a future which we can be optimistic about wasted with it. Now is the time for them to show their commitment to the wellbeing of future generations and commit to attend this summit."

Jake Leeper, co-director of the UK Youth Climate Coalition, said: "This is about making sure we act now so we can leave a safe world for future generations. Mr Cameron does not have to let the jubilee prevent him attending the Rio+20 Earth Summit. Mr Cameron needs to take the opportunity of Rio+20 to ensure a stable climate and good global standards of living when Prince William celebrates his Diamond Jubilee."

Aswinkarthik Ramachandran Venkatapathy, from India, said: "The Commonwealth's 54 countries account for almost a third of the global population. The four biggest members alone (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nigeria) already account for over 1.25 billion people living on less than \$2/day. For them not to be represented by their leaders at the Rio summit would seriously undermine its credibility."

All this week young people will be taking action on this campaign. They will be asking the Queen to personally excuse David Cameron and other Commonwealth leaders from the latter two days of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations so that they can attend the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.

Titled “Planet Before Protocol”, the campaign will ask people across the world to sign a short letter to Queen Elizabeth II, asking her to excuse Commonwealth leaders from the latter days of the jubilee celebrations. The campaign will begin this weekend at the meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of Governments in Perth, Australia. More information on the website can be found on the website at planetbeforeprotocol.org.

Notes to editors

1. The Rio+20 Earth Summit takes place on 4 - 6 June 2011, 20 years after the first Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, calling on world leaders to take action to create a sustainable future and safeguard the planet for our children. Topics up for discussion include sustainable development and the green economy.
2. The 54 Commonwealth leaders are expected to attend Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee celebrations in London. On October 26th, UK Prime Minister David Cameron announced he will snub Rio+20. We fear his colleagues will follow his example, which would critically endanger a successful outcome of Rio+20.
3. It is critical for the leaders of the Commonwealth to take part in the summit: **30%** of the global population live in the Commonwealth. **1.25bn** people in the Commonwealth Big 4 live on less than \$2 per day. **140m** Bangladeshi live in the Ganges-delta, under the constant threat of deadly floods - which is increasing due to climate change. **1bn** people go hungry every day, 70% of them are farmers. All of these people deserve representation at Rio+20.
4. The campaign's website is here: planetbeforeprotocol.org
5. The Facebook page is here: facebook.com/planetbeforeprotocol and the twitter feed is @PlanetB4
6. The Twitter hashtag '#planetbeforeprotocol' is being used for the campaign

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