

Summit for youth to engage in building a greener future

The Generation Earth Summit, which takes place in South Africa today (Friday, 2 October) at Sandton Convention Centre, is being enabled by Tsogo Sun in support of the Summit's campaign to give young people a voice in the green space and mobilising them to take the reins to ensure a sustainable future for our planet.

"With this Summit, Generation Earth has created a platform for young people to engage with organisations that are making decisions and taking action that affects their future," says Candy Tothill, Tsogo Sun's General Manager: Corporate Affairs. "We're very proud to be a part of this forward-thinking initiative and have every confidence that the work being done now will have a positive impact for generations to come."

Generation Earth, which was launched in 2011, works with 87 urban-based high school councils around the country, comprising about 1 700 learners, in a structured action plan for the youth to make a difference in the betterment of the environment. The students on the Generation Earth councils are expected to be studying the sciences and to have expressed an interest in a career involving the environment. Generation Earth was founded by Ella Bella Constantinides, a UN Youth Mentor and Ambassador, and is affiliated with UNEP, the UN Environment Programme, and Tunza, the UN environment programme for youth.

Tsogo Sun is the official venue and accommodation partner to Generation Earth in a partnership agreement valued at nearly R200 000. "The Generation Earth programme is an ideal fit for Tsogo Sun as it connects perfectly with our social investment programmes, which target the youth and education," says Tothill. "The focus of Generation Earth is on young people and changing behaviour, and on encouraging thought leadership – all three of which synergise with Tsogo Sun's Citizenship philosophy.

The Summit, with 350 Generation Earth delegates chosen from the participating school councils, is the culmination of a year of environmental work by the students and preparation for the Summit. The main focus of this year's Summit is food security ahead of the critical climate change negotiations in Paris at COP21, taking place in December 2015. COP21 aims to achieve a new

international agreement on the climate, applicable to all countries, with the aim of keeping global warming below 2°C. Constantinides, as a UN Ambassador, will be presenting the innovative concepts developed by the council members at the Generation Earth Summit to COP21 in Paris.

Ella Bella Constantinides is positive about the outcomes from the Summit. “This is our fourth Summit and over the years we have strived to build a generation of leaders who are committed to developing sustainable-minded communities, societies and countries that will be a part of the green cities of the future.” She also commended Generation Earth’s partners – Tsogo Sun, Nedbank, the US Embassy – and local supporters – the Minister of Environmental Affairs, the Department of Basic Education, Lead SA and Brand SA – for contributing so significantly to Generation Earth. “Working alongside partners and organisations that share our vision for a sustainable future and are making a difference to the environment is a critical component to our success,” she says.

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