



Among the five winners of the first-ever Green Star Awards - honored for work in response to environmental emergencies - are a Brazilian scientific support centre and a leading Swiss laboratory, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) announced today. The 2009 inaugural award recipients are Mike Cowing of UNEP; the Center for Scientific Support in Disaster Situations (CENACID) of Paraná Federal University in Brazil; Spiez Laboratory of Switzerland; the Government of the Netherlands; and the Government of Sweden.

"I hope that by improving awareness of the environmental consequences of such emergencies, we can improve response to future disasters by having more actors involved," said John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs.

The Green Star Awards are a joint initiative between UNEP, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and Green Cross International (CGI) to recognize those who have made remarkable efforts to prevent, prepare for, and respond to environmental disasters around the world.

"2009 needs to be a year when the world not only seals the deal on a transformational new climate agreement, but also begins delivering a Green Economy," said UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner.

He underscored the need to accelerate the "fundamental shift to a low carbon and resource efficient future that fosters innovation, decent employment and equity between countries and communities, especially in some of the poorest and most vulnerable parts of the globe."

Source: <http://www.un.org>