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“The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it” --- these are the words of one of the greatest explorers and environmentalists of our time, Robert Swan O.B.E., the only man to walk to both the poles. In one sentence, he has summarized the apathy and the lack of general awareness within civil society, which is the root cause of the environmental state that the world finds itself in today.

I was born on 5<sup>th</sup> June , which is coincidentally also World Environment Day and when I came to know of this , I realized that it was probably pre-ordained that I should grow up to be an eco-warrior. Robert Swan’s words are the source of my motivation - to be the change and lead my peers in the fight for environmental conservation so that future generations are able to enjoy the same pristine natural resources that we inherited from our forefathers. I am 13 years old now and my journey started six years ago when I used my pocket money to plant a tree on my 8<sup>th</sup> birthday . Since then, I have engaged with other like-minded children and youth within the community to work on projects such as waste management , water and energy conservation , stopping land degradation through tree planting , biodiversity conservation and conducting workshops for schools on sustainable consumption and production.

I was privileged to be the youngest international participating delegate at Rio+20 in Brazil and thereafter at COP18 in Qatar. Participating at these international summits made me realize the immense opportunities open to children and youth to get involved in the global sustainable dialogue. My age is sometimes my greatest barrier in this world run by adults but for every closed door there have been numerous opportunities. Notable amongst these, have been the tremendous engagement opportunities provided by the ESCWA office to the children and youth of the region. The Regional Implementation Meetings , of

which I was privileged to be a part, helped me to widen my horizons and engage and contribute to the development of the outcomes of Rio+20 within my region from a children and youth perspective. It also brought me in touch with other youth activists from different Arab countries and we continue to learn from each other.

My youth group, Green Hope UAE , which has been spreading awareness amongst school students about sustainable consumption mainly through practising resource efficiency and waste management , has been felicitated by Dubai Municipality and they awarded me with the distinction of being the First Ambassador of Sustainability for 2014. I firmly believe that time is not on our side and the clock of environmental degradation is ticking very fast. We have to act now! We , children and youth, are the Future Generations and the onus is on us to determine the future of our planet.