

Six UN-backed green awards handed out for work in disasters

18 May 2011 –An organization tackling health-threatening pollution in developing countries and a renowned academic working to make houses safer during earthquakes are among the recipients of awards [announced](#) today by the United Nations and the environmental group founded by the former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

One of six [Green Star Awards](#) was given to the Blacksmith Institute for its dedication to solving pollution problems in low- and middle-income countries, where human health is at risk.

Dionysia-Theodora Avgerinopoulou, a Greek lawmaker, was honoured for her support of reconstruction efforts following environmental emergencies, such as the wildfire that devastated part of the Peloponnese region in Greece in 2007.



Dr. Mary C. Comerio



Ms. Dionysia-
Theodora
Avgerinopoulou



Ms. Linda Norgrove

Mary Catherine Comerio, professor of architecture at the University of California, was garlanded for her contribution to post-disaster reconstruction after quakes in China and in Haiti. The late Linda Norgrove was recognized posthumously for her outstanding leadership and commitment to responding to the severe environmental challenges in Afghanistan.

Terragraphics Environmental Engineering won one of the awards for its promotion of environmental clean-up methodologies in developing regions, while Artsen Zonder Grenzen (Médecins Sans Frontières-Holland) was recognized for its ongoing contribution to environmental emergency response efforts, specifically with regard to lead poisoning in Nigeria.

The awards ceremony was held in Bern, Switzerland, on the sidelines of the ninth meeting of the Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies.

Valerie Amos, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, said:

"Recent events in Japan, the forest fires in Israel and Russia, as well as the toxic lead pollution in Nigeria underscore the relevance of the work undertaken by the 2011 Green Star Awards winners."

Achim Steiner, the Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), also paid tribute to the winners. "They make our work possible, they make our work meaningful and very often they make the difference between life and death," he said.

The awards are an initiative of Green Cross International, an environmental organization founded by Mr. Gorbachev in 1993.