

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE KEY TO ACHIEVING *SDG #15 (LIFE ON LAND)*

Although the majority of the world's population is aware of the situation in which the Earth currently is, not everyone feels obligated to help our planet. Instead of taking care of and protecting it as our cradle and only home, we seem to have an irresistible desire to destroy the entire living world on Earth, not thinking about the consequences.

Walking around the city I often feel as if I were drowning because of the harmful exhaust gases emitted by cars; I often trip over plastic bags, I step onto a chewing gum, listen about the landfill fire in my neighborhood or about the dangers that global warming brings. The above mentioned is but the tip of the iceberg.

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH! WE WANT A CHANGE! WE NEED A BETTER AND SAFER WORLD!

GREENER ENVIRONMENTS, CLEANER RIVERS, NIGHTS WITH STARS, BIRDS WHOSE SONG AWAKENS US...

AS A RESPONSIBLE, CARING PERSON I WANT MY VOICE TO BE HEARD AND MY IDEAS TO BE ENDORSED.

In the first place, we young people would fight for the introduction of comprehensive strict laws and increase of fines, for those who act irresponsibly towards the environment.

Second, such laws once made need to enforce without any exceptions.

We can make it obligatory to plant green gardens on the roofs and to turn the walls into hanging gardens. Apart from aesthetic comfort this would reduce the use of water, enlarge biodiversity and provide better insulation for the people living on the top floors. The construction of smart houses with low-emission glass, thermal insulation needs to be further encouraged. If each of us tried to think more before switching the light on we would all together make sure that natural resources are spent at the same rate at which they regenerate.

We would thus implant a "green" consciousness into a recovering world, endorsing ethics of sustainable actions.

Looking at the beautiful mountains in my country, filled with different types of trees, I'm horrified by the thought that everything could disappear one day. Cutting a tree is like depriving yourself of the breath of pure air. We would forbid and adamantly curb illegal wood logging or legalized deforestation. A person who cuts a single tree would have to plant five new trees.

Also, if people continue to cut trees, a lot of wild animal species will disappear and biodiversity will be reduced. Plus, there will be no greenery left in just the several oncoming decades.

We appeal for the prevention of abuse of animals. Animals don't have the power to speak the pain they go through on a daily basis. But as reasonable and responsible beings, we are here to prevent the suffering of other beings. I am ready to help stop massive animal breeding in farms where the owners use deadly substances to make animals fat. Also, I think it's time to stop testing products on animals, capturing innocent beings into zoos and using animals for entertainment.

In order to implement my ideas, I need to set up a team of people who are willing to help preserve our environment. The organization would function by team members being located all over the world, so we could think and coordinate globally but work locally. I think it's a key thing that we, at first, make people near us, our family and friends aware of the situation we are in, and then encourage them to help. I would name the organization EFP (Environmentally Friendly People).

I hope that the United Nations will support my plan, because this does not concern only me or you as individuals, but all the humanity. We are one big family who have neglected their home and that must change! We are called to be custodians and friends of Earth, not ruthless exploiters of its goods: invaluable and multifarious as they are.

Marija Lubardić

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The Earth is like a gigantic living organism. Forests are its lungs, wetlands kidneys, ozone layer skin and we are its brain. This brain works against itself which isn't good and we need to fix this. Older generations destroyed the Earth and now kids have to step in. Young people can achieve *SDG15* mainly by caring, getting involved and improving technology.

Today's world is the Internet. Many social networks are used inappropriately and often for bullying. They should be used for something useful an eco-social media. This means that it would be used by young people all around the world for posting ideas, sketches and discussions about saving Earth. This network would be supported by big companies. Their job would be to implement kids' ideas.

Deforestation happens because of agriculture. Instead of planting crops horizontally, we could use a small piece of land and make open, multilevel buildings where we would grow crops plant vertically. This way we would get the same amount of food, but happier orangutans. 😊

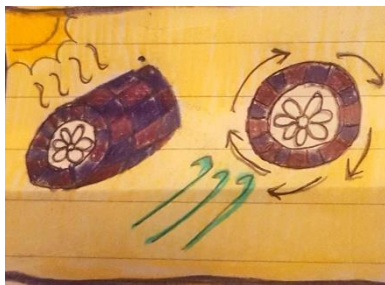


Wildfires are another cause of deforestation. We should make small fire-registering machines that, by moving to and sitting on the fire, extinguish it and send signals to fire stations.



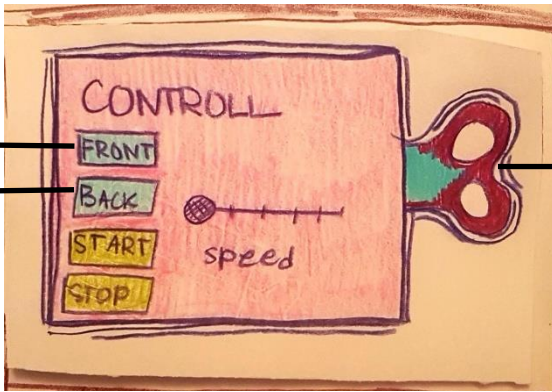
Oxygen can't get in.

Batteries and cars use non-renewable resources. This causes global warming. Solar-wind batteries will solve this. These batteries would look like small tubes.



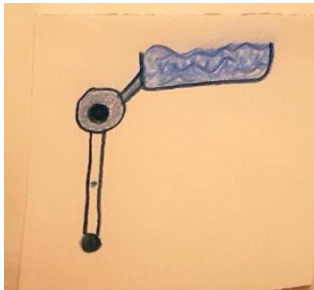
On the outside would be a curved solar panel and inside a small windmill. These batteries would collect solar and mechanical energy, which accumulates by rotating the windmill. People would put these batteries in the sun and if it's windy outside, so that the wind could turn the windmill.

We can make cars with an engine that runs on mechanical energy. This engine would work on any kind of liquid. It would be made out of a pipe, two small balls you can send signals to, choosing forward or backward direction, “balloons” around them and a control board.

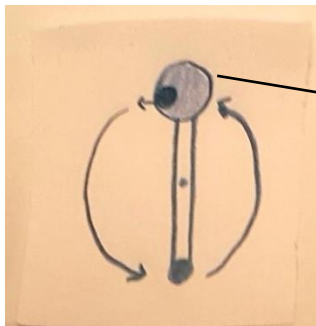


By rotating this lever, we produce mechanical energy, which is transformed into electrical, and allows us to send signals to the balls.

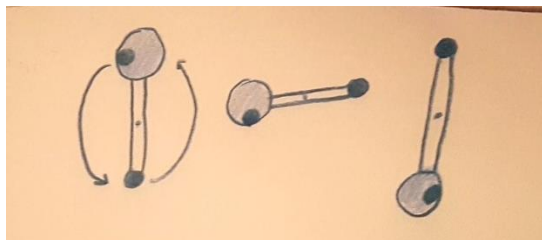
Choose the direction by clicking the buttons. Click **START** to fill the “balloons” with chosen liquid and start moving.



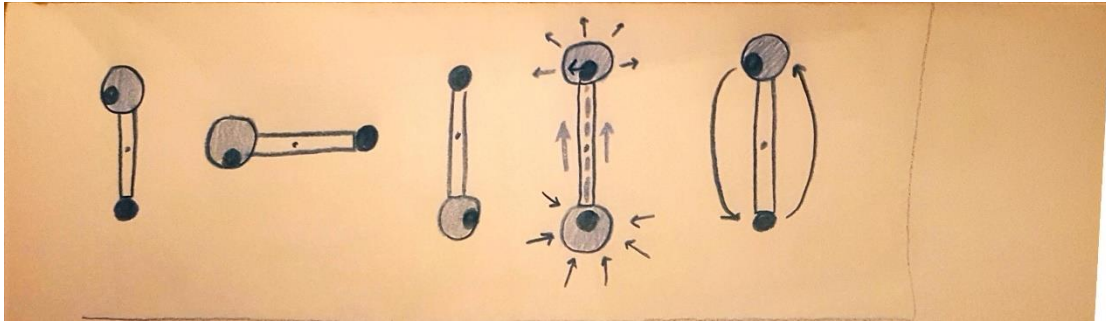
If you clicked **FRONT**, the ball moves to the front of the “balloon”.



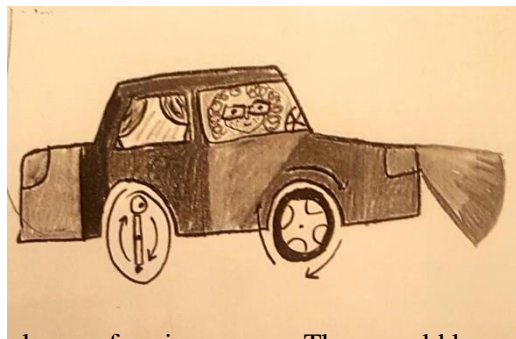
The top ball is heavier than the bottom and the small ball is on the front side of the “balloon” so the lever rotates in that direction.



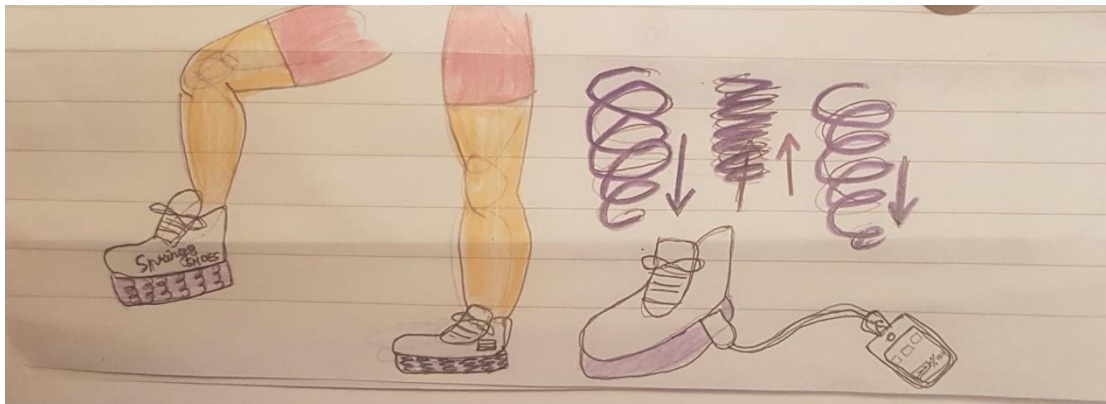
At this moment, the smaller ball is on top. The bigger ball sends the liquid to the smaller ball on top, by contraction, and the cycle goes around again.



If we wanted to go backwards the smaller ball would go to the back of the, “balloon”.
By the rotation of this lever the wheels turn and we get movement.



Energy-shoes are another practical way of saving energy. They would have springs on the bottom and by walking they would contract and produce mechanic energy which would be transformed into electricity we would use for charging phones for example.



Wild landfills filled with plastic are everywhere and nobody cleans them because they don't see any value in it. Young people do! We could make special beads-making machines that every school would have. Kids and teachers would gather somewhere polluted. Than they would let these machines collect and select plastic by color and make beads for playing which could then be sold and the income would go to charity funds all schools would have.

In the end, we are like ants. We are small but when we get together can do incredible things. Young people will achieve SDG15 and save the Planet. When we are together, nothing is impossible. Start now and do whatever you can because everything works like dominoes!

Stefanija Živanović

Making better biodiversity conservation decisions

When I spread my wings they are twice the size of an adult's arm span. My beak is sharp and long, and I use it skillfully to rip the flesh off the carcasses I feed on. I am an attractive bird appealing to the eye with dark feathers on my wing ends and brownish ones on my back and wings, and white feathers on my neck. They call me the Griffon Vulture.

As a bird, I love the freedom of movement and seemingly vast lands, so I live in the open space next to gorges with poor vegetation in mountainous and Mediterranean areas. My Griffon fellows have long inhabited the Iberian and Balkan Peninsulas, parts of North Africa, the Caucasus and South-west Asia.

Griffons mature quickly, so the younglings move towards other territories and the parents stay in the place where they first laid their nest and had their nestlings. I was born in Serbia, where I have many cousins and friends that live in the canyons of the Uvac and the Milesevka rivers. It is exactly at the Uvac that the greatest nestling colony in the Balkans is located.

Our females lay only one egg. Both parents nest on the egg for about 50 days. The nestlings take three months to grow up, gain strength and become fit to fly. They remain near the nest for another month where they feel safe. We silently thank our parents for that and fly away into the wilderness until we reach reproductive maturity.

As all members of my species, once I am hungry, I feed on the carcasses of dead mammals, most commonly ungulates, or sometimes hares or foxes. I seldom attack living prey, only if it is a sick and dying animal. I find soft tissue, muscles and gut the most delicious.

Searching for food, I normally join a larger Griffon group, as it is then easier for us to spot the prey and cover larger areas than most birds. We regularly search areas within 50-60 km from our nests. It is sometimes hard to find food. That is why we are grateful when humans feed us since we are an endangered and protected species.

As a young Griffon, I wish to ask you, young people, to help us survive. As an animal species with a very scarce population and a low reproductive potential, we need to be provided with the basic survival conditions.

Thus overlook our nests, as it makes monitoring our population in particular areas easier. *Monitoring* is essential for the protection of our species.

Whenever possible, volunteer and help the employees of the national parks where we live by providing food on the feeding grounds in our vicinity. *Feeding* is important for our well-being. A constant food supply makes us fit in hard times and mating seasons. *Building feeding* grounds reduces the chances of our poisoning by poisonous baits that are, unfortunately, still in wide use. Constant food flow also helps reproductively immature younglings stay in the colony, which attracts single birds, thus increasing the chances of its growth.

Please, help ornithologists ring us as we do not mind that; on the contrary, it helps monitor our movement and participate in projects of the protection of our species and the environment.

Dear young people, your help with these measures will certainly help the stabilization and enlargement of our population in our reservations. Please, participate in projects of our reintroduction to the areas where we used to live as much as you can. We are an important part of the food chain. Our potential extinction would be harmful for all.

Enjoy watching us fly freely, enjoy the beauty of our feathers and elegance of our wings by helping us survive sharing the natural resources of our Mother Earth.

Ivan Filip Kovačević

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The education of today's youth is the solution for this issue, for more than one reason.

In 30 years from now, the nowadays youth will be in charge. The youngsters should work now to create the best conditions for their own living in the future. That is why it is important that young people get aware why nature is important and why it is to be loved. Children should be guided towards this attitude from early childhood, e.g. as three-year-olds. That is why my generation seems already too old for this. The youth is usually not interested in nature and that makes them somehow blind.

If the youngsters would have some obligatory education about the importance of LIVING nature, the humanity could evolve as much as 60% up to year 2050 in this area and become more reasonable. Yet, we know, there will be always someone not fitting this frame. And that can only be solved via laws, no other way.

The Project "ROOTS" is an educational system that explains children why it is important to be in close relation to nature. It is a completely new topic in life and education, should be run as a national project and it incorporates all activities for children ages from 3 to 18. It also means that national school curriculum should be changed thus bringing nature to children and children to nature.

If the Project "ROOTS" grows big enough, and becomes international, we should work on managing that all the woods in the countries participating in the project are protected and taken care of.

This Project needs to become a global one, to have the maximum effect possible, as it does not require advanced technology, rather an implementation on local levels with the global "ROOTS" umbrella covering and ensuring proper activities.

It all comes down to this – Either we grow, or perish. Simple, right?

Andjela Babović

Young people are key to achieving *SDG #15 (Life on Land)*

We live in a time when everything has become internet. People do not see each other in the way they used to, they don't have time to waste on going out if all they need to do is send a tweet, wave at someone, like their page... We forgot how hugging looks like, what a tap on the back by a good friend means, a deep look into somebody's eyes that says more than a thousand words could ever do... We became numb, a little bit lazy and dumb to realize that the world of our fathers and grandfathers is disappearing at an alarming rate. Wrapped up in our little

microcosmos mainly formed of unimportant, visual things which are making us become oblivious to our surroundings.

And as all big things, the good and the bad ones, even the end begins with apparently insignificant details... We were too lazy to wash the dishes, even put them in the dishwasher so we began using everything plastic. Slowly we began to live in a plastic world, sit on the plastic chairs, eat on plastic tables, put everything in plastic bags... And when we didn't need it any more, guess where it ended up? In our oceans, lakes, rivers, on our land, eaten by the animals choking them while they were trying to figure out what was happening to them.

We need to stop this era of dumb and dumber. Someone has to blow the initial whistle and give a wakeup call.

We should start from small things, make the difference in our home, raise awareness in our class, talk about it with our friends. We need to understand that it's not cool to throw garbage wherever you feel like to...

We should do everything in our power to protect our Mother Earth because it's one of a kind. She adopted us as her own children but we are now treating her like ungrateful teenagers, doing things without thinking of the consequences.

So whether you are a rocket scientist or someone who only has elementary education, please try to do something that is in your power to prevent further damage of our planet. Choose cotton bags for your groceries, recycle, stop using plastic as much as possible... Start educating even the kids in the kindergarten, make presentations at school, organize pop-up competitions in parks where the first prize could be planting a tree in that very park. In the old days, when a child was born, father would plant a tree and charge his son/daughter to look after it. This way, if we had done so, we would have seven billion new trees on our planet.

This planet doesn't belong to us, we are only guests along with the other creatures living on it. We should acknowledge the importance of plants and animals and try not to ruin them completely. Everything is changing because of our reckless behavior. This could be the first time that a species has destroyed or drastically changed the planet all by itself without the help of a meteor, volcanic eruption or a similar event.

Sometimes I watch sci-fi movies with my friends and every time I'm affected by the images of our planet in the future, all grey and lifeless, without even a leaf or a flower and animals as a long extinct category. This is not where I want to live! Do you?

Andrej Radovanović

Young people are key to achieving SDG# 15 (Life on land) - Personalized trees

I know that most of us are very well-informed about the problems in environment like disappearing biodiversity, desertification or deforestation and that we could talk about it for a few days or even months. Therefore, I would like to focus on one problem – deforestation, and why are young people the key for solving it in the future. With our wide-angle of thinking, via a

social networks, and good media connections we can promote inspiration and motivation for our ideas to come true!

The most important thing is to raise awareness of forests protection. We could not make goals with punishments, so I suggest making a world where every tree will have a name.

How we can do this?

First of all, to allow those of us who love trees to get our personal tree for just one cent.

Then we could make families of trees. Or we could “buy” a tree for every family member. Also we could buy a tree for every deceased relative, but also for our friends.

Can you imagine a better birthday gift, than getting a tree along the routes that you’re constantly passing?

The money we can earn this way could help us fund other activities which will in addition help us save the forests even more. There would be a different price for any particular tree. The price would primarily depend on the location and the size of the tree. If/when this idea takes root we would create a big central budget which we can use for advertising, protection of trees, raising awareness about environmental issues. For a small additional amount of money, we can give people the opportunity to set up cameras, because some could maybe want to constantly watch their trees, or to make sure that nobody harms their own, personal tree.

At the same time, this model would turn more attention to the increasing problem we all have but only some are fully aware of the size of it - deforestation. This way, it would be more difficult to imagine anyone harming a particular and personalized tree, with a specific name. Even criminals would think twice if cutting or harming someone’s tree would entail serious consequences as it would now be treated as a personal property with limited rights of possession.

Also, during Christmas and New Year season, people can decorate and spend time with their closest ones, in front of their own trees. That is definitely better than to cut off the fir or the purchase of artificial Christmas tree.

Trees could also be planted in our favorite cities all around the world, although we do not even live there, but that could remind us to visit them during the holidays.

Studies have shown that a person should plant three trees which will create enough oxygen for 60 years for him/her. On the other hand, if people continue to behave to the nature irresponsibly as they have done so far, our civilization doesn’t have a chance to survive for much longer.

Most people do not understand what is happening to our planet right now, and I think that this idea could shed some light on how we could preserve the forests and expand them further.

Nika Lalić

Life on land

For a long time people pollute the Planet. It’s time to end it. If people cut all trees and destroy the forest ecosystems all around the world, it will destroy all the living world and us in the end. So we must save the world before it is too late.

A lot of people think about this, but only some of them are ready to take part.

Only 29% of the Earth surface area is arable land. Forests occupy 30%, of this area, from the equator to the cold regions as Siberia. Before they began to cut down trees for the development of cities, the forests occupied about 60% of the planet. Today, more than 2 billion people use wood for heating and cooking.

Trees are the main source of oxygen for respiration. They are lungs of our planet. One pine or oak tree has a total surface of leaves that can cover about 80 acres of land with oxygen. Each tree from rainforests has total surface of leaves that can cover about 16 acres. Over a large leaf surface trees literally take carbon dioxide after we consume it as biological waste, and produce oxygen as its biological byproduct. Without trees our atmosphere would become poisonous to all life.

My idea is that people should start growing trees in an artificial way. This could be done by taking plant cells and by artificial means we would cultivate them much faster than in natural conditions.

In this way, we will prevent the forests overcutting, leaving enough space to meet the needs of human society. The factories would work on bio-renewable energy so we could solve the planet's pollution and save the natural resources. The factories would be built close to big cities, the largest plant mass consumers. In this way we would reduce the consumption of natural wood that grows far from the cities. In addition, we would reduce the cost of transport and air pollution, as the use of the trucks and other means of transport would have to be minimized.

I hope someone will hear, understand and apply my idea thus making our future better and brighter.

Aleksandar Markovic Ćorac

Every young man who wants to change the world must start with himself

We are used to taking everything that we need from the Earth, but do we ever give anything in return? No, we don't and that is not sustainable long-term behavior. We disturb the balance and in that way, we inflict irreparable damage.

We know that the world is in serious trouble because of the pollution. What we don't know is that there are many stories that show us a significant number of environmental policies that have actually worked out successfully.

In my opinion, solving environmental problems wouldn't even be so hard, but only if we could try hard enough. On the other hand, I think there are a lot of people who don't even understand what environmental problems are. So I think that first, we need to focus on a public awareness issue. We see a lot of celebrities that have a big influence on people. I think we should try to solve this problem involving them more, asking their help. As well, we could establish organizations that will be supported by geologists, geoengineers, biologist and us, young people, who would and should be extremely happy to get involved in solving environmental problems as it is our future and our very existence that we are talking about.

We know that there are a lot of domestic animals, but do we stop to think about where those animals are living? They need land, and acquire that land through deforestation. I think it is

time to stop it. Here is the solution – it “just” involves eating fewer eggs, eating less meat and eating less dairy. Why don’t we decide to, instead of steak, for dinner eat something else? If someone has a family of four and if they give up those steaks they have, by doing so, saved enough fossil fuel for 3 months of driving a car. That is a huge impact from a relatively small and simple decision. That is where the power of choice really lies. If we unify we could have a lot of power, but unfortunately people don’t realize the strength of the power of union.

We need to work together to divert attention of people and governments and world organizations as UN and get them to involve even further and make a commitment. We can do all these things – together.

We have a few more problems, such as desertification. Desertification in China has forced hundreds of thousands of people to leave their homes. The questions are how to end deforestation and how to restore degraded land? The answers to these questions are simple plant more trees, save and reintroduce endangered species, enrich the soil with nutrients and invest more into sustainable science. Thus, we would encourage all of the young scientists out there to make some new inventions which could help solving at least some of the environmental problems we have at present. For example, some of them could find a way to produce substances which have no negative impact on soil. And that by itself would be very a great step forward.

And last, but not the least, we must stop illegal hunting of protected species and their trade. Punishing the ones who are responsible for it and helping them find other ways of earning money and sustaining their families.

For those kinds of things, people and children need you. When I think about my generation, I can clearly see that we can’t afford to live in a world that has already been destroyed by others. Thus, I am urging you, all young people of the world to work together to turn those goals into reality.

Boginja Vukajlović Nikolić

Young people can make a difference

I love nature. It’s amazing, colorful, and bright, and we need it in order to live. Every time I am in touch with it I feel good and free. But it’s not going to last for many more years. People are polluting seas, oceans, rivers, forests, ruining the ozone layer, air and soil even though they don’t know how to fix it.

I watched a video of a girl talking about Earth problems and she inspired me to want to make some changes, too. We have to start with ourselves, not just criticized the others. We should start with something that seems small, something that surrounds us. Grownups can do a lot, but I think that young people and children can and should do even more.

I have a few ideas how to do that, working alongside with my friends – other young people from all parts of the world.

We could ask actors or some kids to do a play. In that play they would show how people ruin nature, what happens to it and how to do things better so we can help save the Earth. The play would be held in a square or on a pedestrian street which people visit often. Maybe upon seeing people would understand what they are doing and make fewer mistakes. The play can show what would happen if people did something more environmentally friendly. For example if

they recycled. We can also make some short films about environmental problems. We would play them in cinemas or on the television before the main program or as a commercial.

Another idea is on how to decrease air pollution in cities, minimize tree cutting and increase plantation of trees. We could put sensors onto trees. The sensor would have a connection with all the trees in its range. When the tree falls down (when someone cuts it) the sensor would send a signal to a station. The station would be placed in green areas and forests near the city. When a man working at a station sees that someone has cut down the tree his responsibility would be to notify the authorities and plant the double amount of the trees that are cut down. People working in those stations would be homeless people who would thus become useful members of our society.

One more suggestion is for people who burn wood for cooking or heating. They can go to the forest and collect bigger branches that were broken off by wind or lightning. A national ecological organization can cooperate with a popular company or a company that makes environmentally friendly toys. So if one buys an environmentally friendly toy, a small percentage of the price would go to the ecological organization. On the other hand if one buys an environmentally unfriendly toy, a bigger percentage of the price would go to the ecological organization, enough to help the organization fight the negative effects of the existence of such a toy.

I hope we all want to do and will do something to help save our only home. I think that it is not that hard. We may be the last generation that can do something before everything falls apart. So start helping today, not next Monday because the future begins now.

Dea Grbović