

## **PRESS RELEASE**

# **UAE research team attends international workshop on Ecological Footprint**

**Abu Dhabi, 27 May 2008:** A UAE research team representing the Al Basama Al Beeiya (Ecological Footprint) Initiative has attended an international workshop on the Ecological Footprint at the Global Footprint Network office in Oakland, California. The three-day workshop which commenced on May 19 was designed to help enhance understanding of the philosophy, methodology and calculation of the Ecological Footprint so it can be used as a decision-making tool.

"As Global Footprint Network's research partner in the UAE and as a new national initiative striving to incorporate resource accounting in national policy formulation and planning, we want to be up-to-date with international knowledge, methodology and applications. This workshop has strengthened our knowledge base, helped us learn from the international experience of implementing footprint-related projects and opened possibilities of forging new relationships with others engaged in similar work," said Razan Al Mubarak, Director of the Emirates Wildlife Society – World Wide Fund for Nature (EWS-WWF) and an Al Basama Al Beeiya spokesperson.

Workshop attendees received training in Footprint methodology, calculation and interpretation and on the application of the Footprint concept to businesses, organisations, projects, regions and cities.

Besides the Al Basama Al Beeiya team from the UAE, the 14 other participants at the workshop included delegates from WWF offices in Canada, Belgium and the Netherlands, environmental consultancies from Belgium, Spain and the US, research institutions from Peru and Canada, the World Business Council on Sustainable Development and several Global Footprint Network representatives from Ecuador, Japan and the US engaged in Footprint projects, consulting and / or research.

The UAE Ministry of Environment and Water (MoEW), the Abu Dhabi Global Environmental Data Initiative (AGEDI), Global Footprint Network and EWS-WWF are the project partners in the Al Basama Al Beeiya (Ecological Footprint) Initiative. Global Footprint Network, a non-profit organization based in Oakland, compiles the Ecological Footprint of over 150 nations for the Living Planet Report published biennially in cooperation with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). The focus of Al Basama Al Beeiya's initial phase of activity has been on collecting and verifying data that are used by Global Footprint Network to estimate the UAE's Ecological Footprint.

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### **Editors' Notes:**

#### **Al Basama Al Beeiya**

The Al Basama Al Beeiya (Ecological Footprint) Initiative is the UAE's national effort to ensure a sustainable future by measuring and understanding the impact of our way of living on planet earth. It is a

historic initiative to collect vital national data according to uniform and proven standards. Al Basama Al Beeiya will be a major tool for the government to make informed policy decisions and to uphold Sheikh Zayed's environmental legacy. The national partners in the Al Basama Al Beeiya believe that the initiative is the UAE's need of the hour, considering the country's rising consumption levels and the rapid pace of development.

## **Background**

The Ecological Footprint is a sustainability indicator that measures the use of natural resources by the population of a country and is expressed by a unit of bio-productive land called 'global hectare' (gha). According to the Living Planet Report 2006, the UAE has the highest ecological footprint in the world with UAE residents averaging 11.9 gha (global hectares) per person. This translates to each UAE resident requiring 7 planets to support his / her current lifestyle.

However, a review and analysis of the sources of the data used to calculate the UAE's ecological footprint has indicated that there is a considerable gap between the knowledge and data that existed in the international records and the ground data collected by local organizations. The Al Basama Al Beeiya initiative will not only close that gap, but will provide the country's leadership and government with reliable and much needed *information* that will then be used as a policy-guiding tool.

## **Partners**

**MoEW:** The Ministry of Environment and Water in the UAE is part of the federal government and oversees the country's environmental policies and programmes. The ministry's mission is to achieve balanced and sustainable development in the country.

**AGEDI:** AGEDI was launched in 2002, as the UAE's response to a direly felt need for a formal body in Abu Dhabi to provide comprehensive and relevant data that would improve environmental policies and their role in the decision-making process. AGEDI's efforts led to the publication of the first State of Environment (SoE) report for the Emirate of Abu Dhabi in March this year.

**EWS – WWF:** The Emirates Wildlife Society (EWS) was established as a public interest society in February 2001 by a ministerial resolution under the Societies of Public Interest Law of 1974. The environmental NGO is registered with the Ministry of Social Affairs. Its mission is to conserve biodiversity and promote sustainable living through education and conservation initiatives in the UAE. EWS works in partnership with the WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature), one of the world's most well-known global conservation organizations.

**GLOBAL FOOTPRINT NETWORK:** Global Footprint Network is a charitable social-benefit organization with the mission of making ecological limits central to decision-making everywhere. Together with over 70 partner organizations around the world, Global Footprint Network coordinates research, develops methodological standards, and promotes innovative applications to provide decision makers with tools that will help the human economy operate within the Earth's ecological limits. Global Footprint Network serves as the steward for the National Footprint Accounts, which calculate the Ecological Footprint and bio-capacity of 150 nations from 1961 through the present. These accounts have helped the Ecological Footprint become one of the most globally successful and widely applied sustainability communication and education tools.

## **For further information:**

Brian Carvalho /Doha Hamad  
ASDA'A Public Relations  
Tel: 009712 6334133  
Fax: 009712 6334233  
Email: [b.carvalho@asdaa.com](mailto:b.carvalho@asdaa.com), [d.hamad@asdaa.com](mailto:d.hamad@asdaa.com)