



**“Leave the world a little better than you found it”
by Scott Teare**

I heard these words when I first became a Scout years ago, long before anyone heard of the Conference of Parties (COP), long before the impact of CO2 emission was fully understood, or the green agenda was on the table. I heard these words as a young Cub Scout, and was inspired, like many before and since, to take action. These words were spoken by the father of Scouting and Chief Scout of the World, Lord Baden Powell (B-P).

A visionary who started the greatest environmental education movement – Scouting – the world has ever seen, B-P knew that words alone were not enough. He called for actions – not big global campaigns, but small local actions; each small change in “my world” building to a change in “our world”.

Millions of service hours on millions of community projects

Throughout the century the Movement has existed, Scouts the world over have done good deeds and protected the environment – cleaning river beds, picking up litter and “leaving no trace” when they camp in the wilderness – all these are small actions to change “my world”, adding to a significant change to “our world”.

Three years ago in 2012, we launched a global online network on scout.org under the Messengers of Peace initiative, where Scouts tell their stories and log in hours on how they are doing their part to create a better world.

In the 30 months or so that the initiative has been in place, Scouts have contributed more than 636 million hours to over six million local community service projects around the world. And the numbers continue to grow!

The stories these young men and women tell are inspiring – Scouts in Ecuador planting over 800,000 trees in just one day; Scouts in Saudi Arabia running a five-year national environment cleanup to clear plastic from the desert; Scouts in Indonesia and Malaysia replanting mangroves to mitigate the effects of climate-related disasters; Scouts in Kenya planting over 17 million trees in different parts of the country; and Scouts in Sweden working on an annual cleanup of a city park – each example showing small actions to change “my world”, adding to a significant change to “our world”.

An Award for all Scouts

In recognition of their actions, on 6 October 2015, Mikhail Gorbachev’s Green Cross International together with Corinne Lepage, Advisor to French President Francois Hollande on the Rights of Humanity, presented the Youth Leadership Award for the Environment to all 40 million young Scouts across more than 220 countries and

territories. The Award recognises the Scouts' achievements with regard to environmental protection and pays tribute to their recent responses to environmental and humanitarian emergencies.

As an example, following the earthquake hitting Nepal in April 2015, over 2,600 Scouts from Nepal, India, Bangladesh and Indonesia immediately jumped into action to rescue hundreds of people from collapsed buildings, and supported aid agencies such as the International Red Cross/Red Crescent and UNICEF.

We all witnessed their dedication in Tacloban City, the Philippines, one of the worst hit areas of Typhoon Haiyan in November 2013. We saw the massive devastation as well as the incredible restoration work undertaken by Scouts, partnering with local authorities and relief agencies.

During a press conference on a recent visit to Tacloban City, HM King of Sweden and Honorary Chairman of the World Scout Foundation, King Carl Gustaf XVI, said: *"(The) Scout Movement is one of the world's oldest environmental movements; we help to educate people on climate. It is important we teach the young the value of protecting the environment."*

And all of us – individuals, governments, private sectors – need to do our part.

World Scouting at Climate Conference

From 30 November to 11 December 2015, world leaders will meet to decide what today's young people and tomorrow's children will live in. What will be agreed at the Climate Conference in Paris (COP21/CMP11) requires inter-generational and inter-cultural commitment.

Representatives from the Scouting Movement are already contributing to the preparations of the Climate Conference. World Scouting will be represented by six Scouts from different regions of the world at the conference. They will participate in plenary sessions, meetings and working groups, attend and speak at side events, meet with our existing and potential partners, and support the organisation of workshops including Scouts go Solar.

And all these need actions.

#YouCanCountOnUs

It is therefore timely that each of us join with all the 40 million young people – Scouts of all nations, colours and creeds – the world over to change "my world" so that "our world" can change, too.

Whether we talk about CO2 emissions, climate protection or consider any one of a myriad of doomsday scenarios presented by informed scientists today, we can look to "them" – the leaders of governments and global institutions to do something; but at the end of the day, it will be up to us, each individual living on this planet to take actions ourselves.

Let's take the example of the 40 million Scouts, let's add our actions to theirs, and make a difference to our world. Let's tell the world that #YouCanCountOnUs to make it a better place.

The writer, Scott Teare, is the Secretary General of the World Organization of the Scout Movement.

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About the World Organization of the Scout Movement ([WOSM](#))

Scouting is one of the world's leading educational youth movements, engaging millions of young people around the world to be active citizens to create positive changes in the communities they live in. Since 1907! Founded by Lord Baden-Powell, WOSM is a confederation of 161 National Scout Organizations in a network of over 40 million members, including some 7 million volunteers. As it has been doing for more than a century – creating a better world – it will continue to do so, and even better with the many Messengers of Peace across the globe.

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