

I would like to offer a warm welcome to all Bio Olympiad participants, honored dignitaries, friends in academia and foreign guests. It is truly a pleasure to be at such an unique event. As the President&CEO of User Corp, I would like to extend the blessing of the organization for such a gathering, it truly is in the spirit of applying the Kyoto Protocol as well as bolstering the Copenhagen Accord.

While many of you perhaps do not know me, I can say that unequivocally I know who you are; you *ARE* the future leaders of the planet. You *ARE* the individuals that will change the world when it comes to global environmental policy and you *ARE* the generation that will be most affected by climate change. When I look out among this sea of faces I am struck by one thing, the youthful ages of the participants. I see school aged children all the way up to university students, all of whom have come together today for the purpose of creating solutions to the environmental challenges that face us. While I know your task is not easy, the youthful aspect of the conference gives me hope, to know that all of you are working to tackle perhaps one of the most serious threats humans will ever have to face, global climate change.

What I also find remarkable about this event is the sheer size of it, students from all over the world congregate so as to compete as well as learn from each other about new and exciting developments. The number of participants and the range is also heartwarming, because I know that each one of you represents the

interests of perhaps another five, ten or twenty people who were unable to attend. Also you represent the interests of your families, friends, your fellow citizens of the world. As we already know on a biological level all people share the common bond of humanity yet the meeting of all of us here today affirms how the links between us go beyond shared gene sequences and chromosomes and penetrate to much deeper levels.

To close, I would like to briefly mention the events of this past summer that greatly affected Russia. I remember reading the Boston Globe online edition in early August of this year. There were devastating photos which demonstrated the charred acres of land, the burnt metallic remains of former schools and business and the incredible loss of life. Lamentably, Russian citizens have seen first hand what devastating atmospheric events such as heat waves and wildfires can do to the beautiful landscape of this country. While reading the article, I was saddened by the event because it truly was a national emergency of extreme proportion; it also was indicative of perhaps the events that all countries, even my own will inadvertently see in the future. As I was scrolling down the page, I stopped at a picture of a soldier walking by birch trees in the city of Voronezh. The trees were burned along their trunks yet had not succumbed to the fire itself. They were wounded but managed to persevere in the midst of such a disaster. As I think about the Bio Olympiad in my mind, I see a bit of all BIO participants in this picture. It is true that we have been slightly scared by the present effects of climate change but our strength, perseverance and desire to combat these

changes will show how just like the trees of Voronezh we are resilient and will meet this challenge!

I thank you all for your participation and wish you a successful BIO Olympiad.