Greenpeace Encyclopedia Article

Greenpeace

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Greenpeace

Greenpeace is the largest environmental organization in the world with 2.8 million supporters worldwide and national as well as regional offices in forty-one countries across Europe, the Americas, Asia, and the Pacific. It is a nonprofit organization founded in 1971 and based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Greenpeace is one of the nongovernmental organizations that have consultative status to the United Nations, and is an active participant in international conferences on the environment such as the 1992 Rio Earth Summit and the 2002 Johannesburg Earth Summit and their treaty processes. As a global organization, Greenpeace focuses on what it feels are the most crucial worldwide threats to the planet's **biodiversity** and environment. Using nonviolent means, it campaigns to stop climate change, protect the oceans, stop whaling, stop genetic engineering, stop nuclear threats, eliminate toxic chemicals, and encourage sustainable development. Greenpeace does not accept donations from governments or corporations but relies on contributions from individual supporters and foundation grants.

Greenpeace was founded by a small group of activists in an old fishing boat, the *Phyllis Cormack.* They wanted to stop and "bear witness" to U.S. underground nuclear testing at Amchitka, a tiny island off the west coast of Alaska. Although their boat was intercepted and the bomb was detonated, nuclear testing there ended a year later. Greenpeace's creative communication and media-savvy tactics of bringing vivid images to the public, of individuals confronting huge corporations and governments, and of using specific cases to highlight broader issues sparked worldwide interest and changed the way advocacy groups conduct campaigns. In one of its best-known campaigns, activists placed small inflatable boats called zodiacs between whaling ships and the whales to protest the hunting practice and highlight toxic threats facing oceans. In 1987, Greenpeace's flagship the *Rainbow Warrior* was preparing to lead a peace flotilla of ships from New Zealand to the island of Moruroa to peacefully protest against French nuclear testing. Three days after arrival in Auckland, French agents bombed and sank the *Rainbow Warrior* in the harbor, killing Greenpeace photographer Fernando Pereira. After two years of international arbitration, a panel of three arbitrators awarded a U.S. $8.159 million damage claim settlement in favor of Greenpeace. The money, paid by the French government, was used in part by Greenpeace to support a worldwide fleet of ships and its campaigns for a nuclear- and pollution-free Pacific.

Bibliography

Internet Resources

EnviroLink Network Web site. Available from http://www.envirolink.org.

Greenpeace Web site. Available from http://www.greenpeace.org.