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Young Champions of the Earth: UN

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Why in News

A 29-year-old Indian entrepreneur is among the **seven winners** of the prestigious “**Young Champions of the Earth**” 2020 prize given by the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)** to global change-makers using innovative ideas and ambitious action to help solve some of the world’s most pressing environmental challenges.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - Introduced in **2017**, **Young Champions of the Earth** aims to celebrate and support individuals aged between **18 and 30** who have outstanding **potential to create a positive environmental impact**.
 - In 2020, seven Young Champions of the Earth will be selected from **each global region:** Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, West Asia and two from Asia and the Pacific.
 - Each winner will receive:
 - USD 10,000 in seed funding,
 - Attendance at a high-level **UN** meeting,
 - An introduction to dignitaries at the **Champions of the Earth award** ceremony,
 - Publicity and recognition through interviews and online and global media.

- **7 Winners of 2020:**

- **Fatemah Alzelzela, Kuwait: (Eco Star - Trees for waste).** A non-profit recycling initiative that exchanges trees and plants for waste from homes, schools and businesses.
- **Lefteris Arapakis, Greece: (Mediterranean CleanUp).** Trains, empowers and incentivises the local fishing community to collect plastic from the sea, allowing both fish stocks and the ecosystem to recover.
- **Max Hidalgo Quinto, Peru: (YAWA).** Sustainable technology for access to water building portable wind turbines that harvest up to 300 litres of water per day from atmospheric humidity and mist.
- **Niria Alicia Garcia, United States of America: (Run4Salmon).** An indigenous-lead conservation uses virtual reality to bring to life the historical journey of the Sacramento chinook salmon along California's largest watershed, raising awareness of this invaluable ecosystem, the species and people it supports.
- **Nzambi Matee, Kenya: (Building a Greener Kenya).** Produces sustainable low-cost construction materials made of recycled plastic waste and sand.
- **Xiaoyuan Ren, China: (MyH₂O).** A data platform for clean water that tests and records the quality of groundwater across a thousand villages in rural China into an app so residents know where to find clean water.
- **Vidyut Mohan, India: (Takachar).** Harvesting value from agricultural waste.

Takachar: Harvesting Value from Agricultural Waste

- **About:**

- Takachar is a **social enterprise** founded by **Vidyut Mohan** in 2018.
- It enables farmers to prevent open burning of their waste farm residues and earn extra income by converting them into **value-added chemicals**.
- It is a meaningful and immediate solution to the **triple planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution**.

- **Procedure:**

Takachar buys rice husks, straw and coconut shells from farmers and turns them into charcoal, saving the debris from the fires, which are also a driver of climate change.

- **Benefits:**
 - Open burning of agricultural residues is a big source of air pollution in many parts of the world and this innovative technology can help farmers turn what is currently thought of as waste into a valuable resource while helping clean up our environment.
 - Enables **rural farmers to earn 40%** more by converting their crop residues into fuels, fertilisers and value-added chemicals like activated carbon (AC) on-site.
- **Potential:**

By 2030, Takachar will impact 300 million farmers affected by this problem, create USD 4 billion/year equivalent in additional rural income and jobs, and mitigate one gigaton/year of CO₂ equivalent.

United Nation Environment Program

- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), was **established in 1972** to guide and coordinate **environmental activities** within the United Nations (UN) system.
- UNEP promotes international cooperation on environmental issues, provides guidance to UN organizations.
- Through its scientific advisory groups, UNEP encourages the international scientific community to participate in formulating policy for many of the UN's environmental projects.
- UNEP is **headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya.**
- The organization also encourages **participation by the private sector** to promote the sustainable use of the world's natural resources.
- **Major Reports:** Emission Gap Report, **Global Environment Outlook**, Frontiers, Invest into Healthy Planet.
- **Major Campaigns:** Beat Pollution, UN75, World Environment Day, Wild for Life.

Source: IE