

- PLANTING 24,000 TREES WITH HIGH ATLAS FOUNDATION

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Freiburg, March 2, 2020 – Robert Bosch College, the Freiburg based United World College, started to officially cooperate with the Moroccan High Atlas Foundation on February 27, 2020: by the end of the year, 24,000 fruit and nut trees are to be planted in the Altas Mountains and in other regions of Morocco – in cooperation with local farmers and village communities. The project is part of the school’s “Climate Crisis Response Strategy”; Robert Bosch College wants to be climate-neutral by the end of 2020. “Of

course, the ecological footprint of a school project, whose core activity is bringing people from all over the world together, is not small,” says sustainability coordinator Tobi Kellner. “Planting trees cannot simply undo our emissions; ultimately we have to change our behavior. We cannot and do not want to ‘buy ourselves free’ from this obligation – this is how we pass it on to our students. Still, the reforestation project is something we can do while expanding the other elements of our climate strategy”.

The compensation of the school’s energy consumption by the reforestation project is one part of the strategy; the school also endeavors to reduce emissions internally: by reducing the number of students traveling during the winter holidays, and by making lifestyle at the College more sustainable in terms of clothing, nutrition, and paper consumption. Since the focus day on sustainability in January 2020, when the entire school concentrated on one topic and the lessons were canceled for one day, our students have been working on proposals on how this should be implemented at UWC.

Climate education as an important part of the project

UWC Robert Bosch College considers the High Atlas Foundation as an ideal partner for this type of collaboration. The Marrakech-based organization has planted millions of fruit and nut trees over the past 20 years, operates its own tree nurseries and also works with well-known partners such as the search engine Ecosia. It is particularly important for UWC RBC that people’s needs are at the center of reforestation. Trees are only planted when and where the locals want it; the income from the fruit creates a long-term interest in preserving the trees on site.

The College sees great potential for a project in the field of climate education and wants to provide young people with knowledge and tools for the restoration of destroyed ecosystems. “We are working on a summer course in the Atlas Mountains, in which young people from Morocco and from all over the world learn and experience together how reforestation projects can bring measurable improvements for people, nature and the climate.” A first small group of RBC students will travel from Freiburg to Morocco in June 2020 – of course by train.

The work of the High Atlas Foundation and the idea of cooperation was presented in the UWC RBC Auditorium on February 26, 2020 in a public lecture by president and co-founder of HAF, Dr. Yossef Ben-Meir; around 50 visitors from Freiburg followed the invitation.

In the long term, UWC RBC wants to work together with other institutions also in this regard, especially with schools in Freiburg. “The project is still in its infancy, but we would be happy if interested schools or other institutions contacted us”.