

UNEP in 2005

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WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY • 5 June 2006
DESERTS AND DESERTIFICATION



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UNEP Governing Structure

The UNEP Governing Council was established in accordance with UN General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 15 December 1975 (Institutional and financial arrangements for international environmental cooperation). The Governing Council reports to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council. Its 58 members are elected by the General Assembly for four-year terms, taking into account the principle of equitable regional representation. Full information on the composition, functions and responsibilities of the UNEP Governing Council and the Committee of Permanent Representatives, formally established and strengthened as a subsidiary organ to the Governing Council by decision 19/32 of 4 April 1997, is available at www.unep.org/governingbodies.

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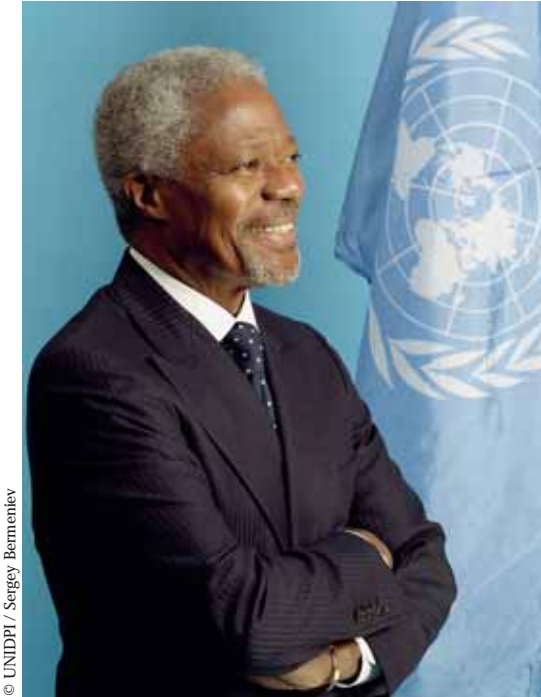
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* Members whose terms expire on 31 December 2007.

** Members whose terms expire on 31 December 2009.

Message from the United Nations Secretary-General



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Kofi Annan
United Nations Secretary-General

Sixty years ago, the environment was not among the issues that were foremost in the minds of the founders of the United Nations. Today it is evident that if we are to fulfil the promise of the Charter -- to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom -- we will have to redouble our efforts to protect and wisely use what remains of the world's natural capital.

Environmental sustainability is one of the eight Millennium Development Goals endorsed by world leaders in the year 2000, and is increasingly a theme of all development strategies. The outcome document of the 2005 World Summit reaffirmed the importance of environmental protection as one of three mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development, alongside economic and social development. For my part, I have stressed repeatedly that all our efforts to defeat poverty and pursue sustainable development will be in vain if environmental degradation and natural resource depletion continue unabated.

The United Nations Environment Programme plays a key global role in trying to ensure that environmental concerns and activities are better integrated in the broader sustainable development framework. Through policy advice, expert information and capacity building services, UNEP helps decision makers in government, business and civil society make wise choices. As the deadlines for achieving the Millennium Development Goals grow near, I urge Governments to intensify their efforts and work even more closely with and through UNEP to protect the environmental basis on which our development depends.

Environmental sustainability for a secure future

by Klaus Toepfer



For too many people, 2005 will be remembered as a year of disasters. From the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami, to the 8 October earthquake that rocked Pakistan and India, the world's media brought news and pictures of countless personal tragedies. In the intervening months we saw devastation wreaked on communities in the southern United States, the Caribbean and Central America from the most intense hurricane season on record, while people from Europe to Australia endured the wrath of the elements as floods and fires destroyed years of endeavour with awesome ease. Finally, as the year came to a close, we heard familiar alarms of another devastating drought from eastern Africa that threatens the lives of millions.

The environment can be humanity's greatest friend or most implacable foe. Ecosystems provide for many of our needs: from the atmosphere that shields us from the sun's rays and supplies the air we breathe, to the broad diversity of life that gives us our food and much of our fabric and building materials. In the more than three decades since UNEP was founded, the international community and the people of the world have developed an increasingly sophisticated understanding of both the importance and the fragility of the

natural systems on which our society and our development depend, and the need to consider environmental questions in all areas of decision making.

That process has been evolving for some time, marked by milestones such as the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment, which gave birth to UNEP, the 1992 Earth Summit, which gave us Agenda 21, the Millennium Summit, where the Millennium Development Goals were agreed, the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development and, most recently, the 2005 World Summit. These conferences have all helped to raise the profile of the environment on the international development agenda, as well as in the minds of the public.

In March 2005, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, in which UNEP was closely involved, revealed that 60 per cent of the world's ecosystems are in decline or even degraded to an extent that we can no longer rely on their services. These services include climate regulation, clean air and water, fertile land and productive fisheries. They are the services that help to keep disease and pests in check, that provide valuable new medicines and protect communities from natural disasters.

The importance of preserving and wisely managing the planet's natural assets to secure a sustainable future for humankind is a theme that runs throughout this Annual Report, and is the foundation for UNEP's work. A glance at the report's contents reveals the breadth and extent of this work and the cross-cutting nature of environmental issues in today's world.

Given the seriousness of the issues, and the truly alarming statistics related to global ecosystem decline, it would be understandable if one took a pessimistic view. However, I am not a pessimist, nor is the UN a pessimistic organization. For every problem there is a solution. A great many people and

organizations are working in a wide variety of ways to seek out those solutions for the benefit of humanity.

I would like to cite three examples from 2005 that, I think, give reasons for guarded optimism. Firstly, there is the paramount issue of climate change. After nearly a decade of anticipation, this year finally saw the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol, which provides essential mechanisms for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting clean development. Furthermore, its targets and deadlines provide the accountability and transparency necessary to enrolling the full support of the developing world, and especially the powerhouse economies of Asia, as we look forward to what comes after Kyoto in 2012. At the first Meeting of Parties to the Kyoto Protocol in November, governments showed the willingness to both collaborate and compromise that is essential to tackling global environmental challenges.

A similar spirit of collective resolve also marked the December Meeting of Parties to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. After a difficult year, which saw a second Extraordinary Meeting of the Parties in July to resolve outstanding issues related to exemptions to the phase-out of the ozone-depleting chemical methyl bromide, the meeting achieved multilateral consensus to keep the process to restore the ozone layer on track.

The third example comes from sub-Saharan Africa, where 2005 marked the final phase-out of lead additives in petrol. A result of a partnership between governments, international organizations and the private sector, this achievement will have significant benefits for the health of people, especially the young, throughout the continent. Such partnerships are, I believe, the way of the future. Through them the mantra of development at all costs is steadily being replaced by a philosophy of sustainable living that respects the planet and the rights and aspirations of generations not yet born.

UNEP has a central role to play in reinforcing this movement. It is a role that I have been privileged to direct for the past eight years. This year was my final one in charge of UNEP. The organization has changed much in recent years, and I tried to play my part. However, now is not a time for taking stock. It is a time for looking forward. UNEP

faces tremendous challenges and opportunities. Environmental pressures continue to mount, and much work remains to be done to achieve the many goals and targets set at the Millennium Summit and the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

At the beginning of the year, UNEP's Governing Council endorsed the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building to help developing countries and countries with economies in transition to improve their economies and the living standards of their people while preserving the natural capital on which their development is based. To help to implement that plan, I recently signed an agreement with the UN Development Programme which will enhance collaboration between the two organizations at global, regional and country level. Through this partnership, and the ambitious Bali Strategic Plan, UNEP has opened new avenues to pursue its strategy of ensuring that environmental sustainability and development go hand-in-hand.

