

GREEN CITIES

Nearly half the world's population lives in towns and cities. Over the next quarter-century virtually all population growth will be in urban areas in less developed countries. The environmental consequences of urban growth are considerable. Cities are prolific users of natural resources and generators of waste. They produce most of the greenhouse gases that are causing global climate change. They often also degrade local water quality, deplete aquifers, pollute the marine environment, foul the air and consume the land. The theme of World Environment Day 2005, 'Green Cities: Plan for the Planet!', highlighted the importance of addressing challenges presented by urbanization for sustainable development.

World Environment Day is celebrated every year on 5 June. It is one of the principal vehicles through which the UN stimulates environmental awareness and action around the world. Each year, interest and participation in World Environment Day continues to grow. For 2005, feedback was received from participating governments, businesses and communities in more than 100 countries. Activities included clean-ups, tree planting, recycling projects, art and essay competitions, exhibitions, seminars and awareness campaigns. UNEP's World Environment Day website, which received a record number of visits during the year, was made available in all six UN official languages—Arabic, Russian, Chinese, English, French and Spanish.

The main international World Environment Day 2005 celebrations were held in San Francisco, USA, with the support of the City of San Francisco and the San Francisco Department of the Environment. During the first five days of June, more than 350 World Environment Day activities were organized by civil society groups and by the City of San Francisco. Participants included the Governor of California, Arnold Schwarzenegger, former Vice-President of the United States of America, Al Gore, San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom, as well as the UNEP Executive Director, Klaus Toepfer. During the opening ceremony, Governor Schwarzenegger unveiled a plan to combat global warming by setting goals for reducing California's emissions of greenhouse gases.

SUSTAINABLE CITIES

Because of the importance of urban issues to sustainable development and attaining the Millennium Development Goals, UNEP expanded its work in this area during 2005 with the creation of an Urban Environment Unit and the establishment of a framework for better collaboration and the development of joint activities between UNEP and its sister agency UN-HABITAT. For example, the two agencies launched a campaign to highlight the role of cities in global environmental issues such as climate change, biodiversity and coastal pollution. Another UNEP priority is the Cities Alliance, which is supporting city development projects worldwide. UNEP is ensuring that environmental issues are fully integrated in Cities Alliance activities.



**GREEN CITIES
PLAN FOR THE PLANET!**

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

5 JUNE 2005



A group of people tour the solar panels on the top of the Moscone Center, 4 June 2005, in San Francisco, California. The panels can produce up to 675 kilowatts of power and provide 20-30 per cent of the electricity for any convention held there. It is said to be one of the largest city owned solar power systems in the United States. San Francisco hosted the World Environment Day 2005 celebrations, under the theme 'Green Cities'. © David Paul Morris/Getty Images

Millennium Development Goal 7—to ensure environmental sustainability—targets significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020. Among the main hazards of slum living are unsafe water and inadequate sanitation. Diarrhoea is the second most common cause of child mortality, estimated to be responsible for 12 per cent of deaths of children under five in developing countries—1.3 million deaths every year.

UNEP's International Environmental Technology Centre (IETC), based in Japan, is working to provide improved sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation through the promotion of environmentally sound technologies (ESTs) and related activities, such as capacity building, policy support, information and tools for assessments and awareness raising.

IETC is also working in the field of waste management, especially on promoting ESTs for converting waste into a valuable resource, in close association with ongoing international initiatives in Japan such as the 3-R (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) initiative and the Eco-town initiative. The 3-R initiative, which UNEP is promoting in collaboration with the Government of Japan, will provide a framework for dissemination and implementation of the 3-R principles in developing countries.

As part of the Eco-towns initiative, UNEP and the City of Kawasaki co-organised the First Asia-Pacific Eco-Business Forum in January 2005. The event, which brought together participants from Japan, China and the Philippines, resulted in a joint recommendation to develop guidelines for facilitating the implementation of the Eco-towns approach in other cities in the Asia-Pacific region based on the Kawasaki experience.



In Kenya, UNEP is working with the National Environmental Management Authority and the Kenya Association of Manufacturers on a project to tackle the growing challenge of plastic waste management. The Pilot project on Sustainable Management of Plastic Waste in Nairobi will identify key policy measures that need to be taken by local and national government, such as a levy on the thinnest plastic bags which are habitually used once and thrown away, polluting the environment and posing a considerable threat to domestic livestock and wildlife. The project will also provide technical assistance on cleaner production and sustainable consumption for the plastics industry and facilitate the establishment of community-based groups to engage in waste management.

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

Another major issue related to the urban environment is air quality related to vehicle exhaust emissions. UNEP hosts the Clearing House of the Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles, a public-private partnership established at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 to promote better air quality in developing country cities, including supporting the phase-out of lead from petrol, the reduction of sulphur levels in fuels and the introduction of cleaner vehicles.

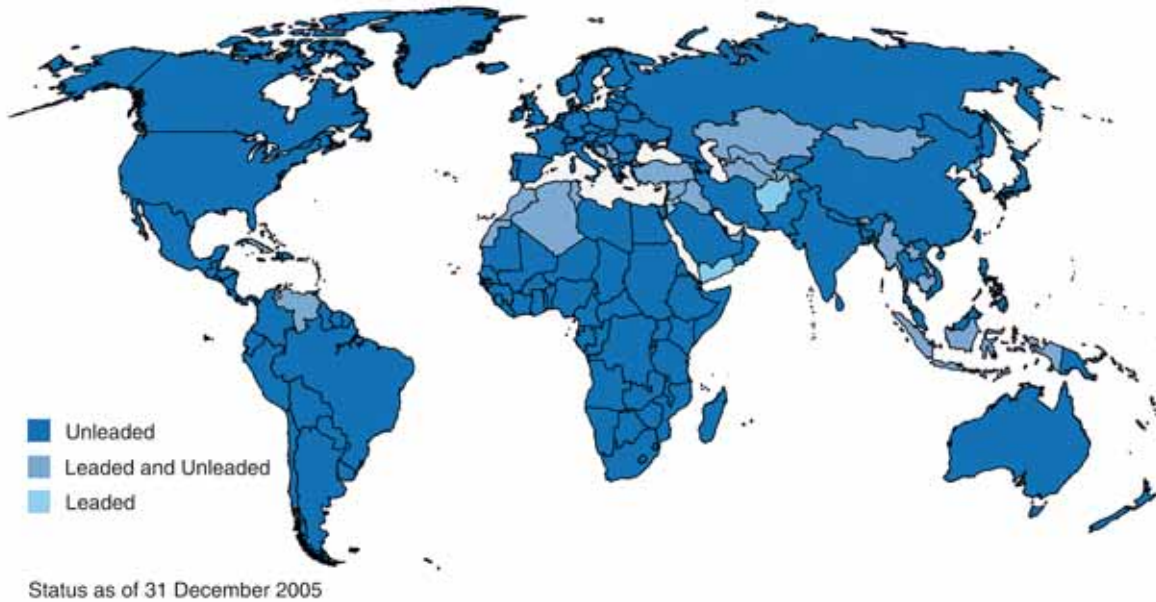


In 2005, the emphasis has been on technology and knowledge exchange to support governments and their partners to remove lead from petrol. Lead is a highly toxic element that has severe impacts on children's health and the environment. Most developed countries removed lead from petrol in the 1970s and 1980s. However, it has remained prevalent in petrol in developing countries. Through the Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles, UNEP has helped raise awareness and develop policies in sub-Saharan Africa, with the result that, by 1 January 2006, the continent will no longer import or produce leaded petrol, resulting in a full phase-out during the year. UNEP is now starting a global campaign for the complete elimination of leaded petrol worldwide by 2008. The Partnership is also preparing to help developing country governments to reduce sulphur levels in fuels, which will to reduce the harmful emissions of very fine particles.

Each year, World Environment Day provides motivation for communities and governments to act on environmental issues. Top: tackling plastic waste, Nairobi, Kenya; below: a zero-emission bus, San Francisco, USA. © UNEP



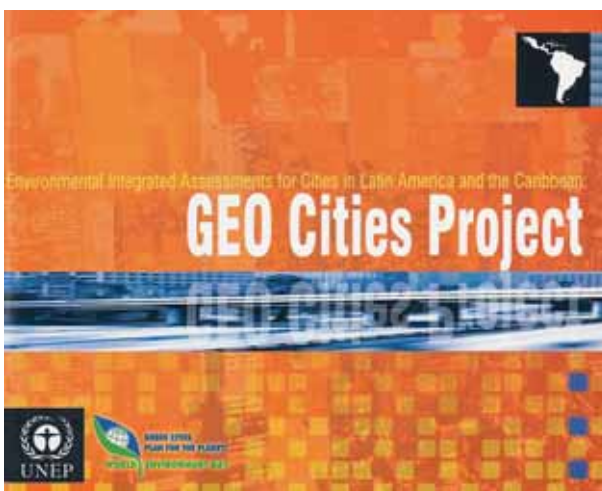
Leaded Petrol Phase-Out: Global Status



The Partnership for Clean Fuels has successfully phased out lead in petrol in sub-Saharan Africa. UNEP is now starting a global campaign for the complete elimination of leaded petrol worldwide by 2008. It is also turning its focus to reducing levels of sulphur in diesel fuel.

As an implementing agency of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), UNEP is also working with a number of municipalities worldwide to improve transport for a better local and global environment. Examples include work on public transport in Jakarta, Indonesia, and Istanbul, Turkey. In Latin America, cities are exchanging information and lessons learned on the topics of non-motorized transport, bus rapid transport and land management while implementing their city plans with the support of UNEP and the GEF.

In Europe, UNEP joined forces with the International Association of Public Transport to produce a TV campaign promoting the environmental and life-style benefits of public transport to coincide with the coming into force of the Kyoto Protocol in February 2005. Total greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector are growing faster than any other sector, and are estimated to be responsible for 30 per cent of carbon dioxide emissions in Europe, where approximately half of all trips in urban areas are less than 5 kilometres. With the theme ‘The world is your home—look after it!’, the animated 30-second commercial produced by McCann Erickson in English, French, German and Spanish was broadcast by a wide range of international stations. UNEP is also promoting public transport and eco-friendly buildings in the Asia-Pacific region.



The GEO Cities project in Latin America and the Caribbean is looking at the effects of urban areas on the environment. A standard methodology is being applied to analyse environmental impact in a growing number of cities throughout the region to help policy makers in local and national government to make informed decisions on urban planning and development.