

World Environment Day Statement by UNDP Administrator

Today, World Environment Day, is a reminder to us all to treat our planet better and lighten our carbon footprint. Climate change is a threat to everyone. But without action, the brunt of the impact would be felt by poor and vulnerable people in developing countries. With little capacity to cope, many more would become malnourished and in some circumstances struggle to find water, and even be displaced. This highlights just how intertwined the tasks of addressing climate change, reducing global poverty, and reaching the Millennium Development Goals are.

With this in mind, world leaders have a choice to make as they prepare to gather in Copenhagen this December. They can either seal a deal which leads to less carbon-intensive production and consumption, helps reignite global economic growth, creates jobs; and sets the world's poorer countries on a sustainable path out of poverty; or business as usual continues, threatening the future of the planet and its people.

A new, sustainable development path is essential in the face of climate change. Tackling this challenge head on means doing more than intervening in traditional environmental sectors. It requires investments in developing capacity to run cleaner economies. It requires action on governance, such as ensuring that local decision-makers have the knowledge and tools they need to make sustainable policy and investment decisions. Climate change considerations need to be built into the core of all development planning if we are to have a sustainable future.

While climate change presents a great challenge, it also presents opportunities for development. Carbon financing can generate new sources of funding. The challenge is to ensure that the poorest countries are able to access and invest such funds to achieve their development results. This is an area where UNDP seeks to step up its support for capacity development.

This World Environment Day, we should reflect on just how influential the discussions at Copenhagen could be in paving the way for a sustainable future. Together we should invest all our energy to seal a deal at Copenhagen which is good for the environment and for development.

Following the pledge of the United Nations Secretary-General on World Environment Day in 2007 and follow-on commitments by the UN Chief Executives Board, UNDP is joining the rest of the UN and 'walking the talk' on climate change. We are taking immediate steps to conduct an institution-wide greenhouse gas inventory, and will pilot a carbon neutrality initiative in one of our bureaux with the aim of taking it across the organization. These are just two among a number of 'green' practices UNDP is mainstreaming into its overall operations.