

World Environment Day Not just another day!

World Environment Day, commemorated each year on 5 June, is about you and me. It is one of the principal vehicles through which the United Nations stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment and enhances political attention and action.

World Environment Day is a people's event with colorful activities such as street rallies, bicycle parades, green concerts, essays and poster competitions in schools, tree planting, as well as recycling and clean-up campaigns.

World Environment Day is also a multi-media event which inspires thousands of journalists to write and report enthusiastically and critically on the environment. It is a visual event with television documentaries, photo exhibits and displays, as well as an intellectual event for those who organize and participate in seminars, round table meetings and symposia.

In many countries, this observance provides an opportunity to sign or ratify international conventions and sometimes leads to the establishment of permanent government structures dealing with environmental management and economic planning.

With the theme, 2000 The Environment Millennium, Time to Act, WED'2000 calls for each and everyone of us to demonstrate our commitment to protecting the environment and to preventing further damage to Our One and Only Earth.

Broadly, our agenda is to give a human face to environmental issues; empower people to become active agents of sustainable and equitable development; promote an understanding that communities are pivotal to changing attitudes towards environmental issues; and advocate partnership which will ensure all nations and peoples enjoy a safer and more prosperous future.

In an effort to raise environmental awareness and action, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is calling upon individuals and organizations the world over to commemorate World Environment Day on 5 June in a way that will improve people's quality of life.

The theme for this year's World Environment Day, '2000 — The Environment Millennium — Time to Act', is a timely reminder of our role in the preservation of the ecosystem.

"In the last millennium, and particularly in the last century, realising this role has proved to be a great challenge. Never in the history of mankind have we done so much, in so little time, to destroy the wonderful ecosystem that sustains us," says United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan in his World Environment Day message.

"The repercussions of our destructive action will be felt for generations to come. It may take us another millennium to put things right," says Annan.

"In our daily lives, it is not always easy to recognize how closely we are interconnected with our fellow human beings. Increasingly, however, we are recognizing that

what connects the street child in Rio, the farmer in Kalimantan, the factory worker in Germany and the stockbroker in New York is the global environment," says UNEP's Executive Director, Klaus Toepfer.

"More and more, we are realizing how interdependent we are and that what we do has far reaching ramifications — even if the connections are not immediately obvious. In fact, the ramifications are already being felt in every corner of the globe," says Toepfer.

The agenda

"The environmental agenda of the 21st century should be one that drives environmental improvements to accompany economic and social gains. In the new millennium, we need global cooperation that promotes sustainable development."

"Global agreements that ensure trade and environment policies are mutually supportive must succeed in helping the poorest of the poor in the world. They must also succeed for the sake of the environment," explains Toepfer.

"The global community must implement an integrated approach to environmental management. This approach must be underpinned by the need to involve the various actors in civil society in the formation and implementation of policy measures," adds Toepfer.

"I take heart in the growing engagement of people around the world



in addressing our pressing environmental needs, especially when I see this engagement spreading to industry and governments. I am particularly heartened by the fact that young people are becoming more aware and vocal about environmental issues to ensure that the price they pay for our environmental misdeeds will not be too great," says Toepfer.

The first World Environment Day of the third millennium is indeed special. For the first time, since the inception of this United Nations day, the main international celebrations will be held in the Pacific region, and more specifically Australia.

"UNEP is honoured that Australia has generously offered to host this important event in the City of Adelaide. World Environment Day 2000 gives an unique opportunity to promote people's participation in caring for the environment, not only in Australia, but throughout the region and around the world," says Toepfer.

Singular honour

As the host of World Environment

Day, Australia and the City of Adelaide are making a concerted effort to promote environmental awareness and action locally, nationally, regionally and internationally by organizing a series of important events.

These include: a meeting on the environment with business leaders; the establishment of a Millennium Tree Park in South Australia; the launching of an environment handbook for industry (June 5); the hosting of the Australian Youth Parliament on the Environment (June 2-5); the organization of a three-day forum on careers in the environment in which thousands of students are expected to participate (June 2-5); cleanup campaigns; tree planting activities in Sydney and Melbourne; the issuance of a report and manual for local governments; the organization of a national quality monitoring day; and the organization of an environmental parade with water as the theme. In addition, the world's largest volunteer organization, Trees for Life, will plant approximately 1.5

million trees around the State of South Australia.

The main event in Australia will be held on 4 June and will culminate with the presentation of UNEP's Global 500 award to 14 individuals and organizations from 13 countries who have made outstanding contributions to the protection of the environment.

"These 'silent heroes' are members of a broad and growing environmental movement that is flourishing around the world. They have taken the path that most of us hesitate to take for want of time or caring," says Toepfer.

"In honouring the Global 500 laureates, UNEP hopes that others will be inspired by their extraordinary deeds."

"On this World Environment Day, and in this United Nations International Year for the Culture of Peace, let us reverse the trend of violence against nature and our fellow human beings. Otherwise, we may not have another thousand years to correct our mistakes," says Annan.

HOST COUNTRIES OF INTERNATIONAL WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY AND GLOBAL 500 CEREMONY EVENT

- Tokyo, Japan -1999
- Moscow, Russian Federation -1998
- Seoul, Republic of Korea -1997
- Istanbul, Turkey -1996
- Pretoria, South Africa -1995
- London, United Kingdom -1994
- Beijing, China -1993
- Rio de Janeiro, Brazil -1992
- Stockholm, Sweden -1991
- Mexico City, Mexico -1990
- Brussels, Belgium -1989
- Bangkok, Thailand -1988
- Nairobi, Kenya -1987

LET US MAKE EVERY DAY WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY !!

