



Photo: © Thanh Sang Tran/UNEP
 • 40% AND RISES FROM 1995 TO 2010
 ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

ENVIRONMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT PEOPLE, PLANET, PROSPERITY

By 2032:

- 70% of the Earth's land surface could be affected by the impact of roads.
- More than half of the people in the world could be living in water-stressed areas.
- 20% of people consume 90% of the planet's resources.
- 4 billion people are surviving on between US \$1-\$2 a day...an unsustainable pattern, which leaves an ever larger, and more destructive footprint of human activity on the world.
- The choice is ours, and the time for making the choice is now — all stakeholders have to take positive action for the environment, and the world.

“...how would our children feel when they find out that their ancestors are the ones to blame for ruining the beauty of the world?”

— Yara Al Sayed, age 11,

• We are at a crossroads with the future in our hands. The decisions taken today and tomorrow will define the kind of environments this and future generations will enjoy.

• We must seize the opportunity presented by the World Summit on Sustainable Development, to begin a new phase of action to tackle the underlying causes of environmental degradation, especially poverty.

ACTION: Establishment of a panel on Global Environmental Change.

POVERTY AND ENVIRONMENT

The environment is the major asset of the world and it must be preserved and used responsibly for sustainable development. The environment must serve to help the poor escape from the vicious circle of poverty, hunger, disease, pollution and depletion of natural resources. We need to integrate social, economic and environmental policies to ensure sustainable development. This is the ONLY path out of poverty.

ACTION: Support the ability of developing countries to fully participate in trade that respects the environment and development needs of the many not the few.

The poor are hit hardest by environmental degradation. They lack the resources to adapt to a deteriorating environment, or unforeseen disasters caused by climate change or other factors beyond their control.

ACTION: Develop global ability to provide early warning of environmental threats and incorporate it into the decision-making process.

WATER

- Some 80 countries were suffering severe water shortages by the mid-1990s; this is estimated to rise to two-thirds of the world's population over the next 25 years.
- 6,000 people, mostly poor, die every day from water-related diseases. They lack the resources to change their situation.
- Without adequate clean water, there can be no escape from poverty. Water is the basis for good health and food production.
- UNEP-UN Habitat Water for African Cities project is strengthening local capacity to develop water resources and efficient management. It raises awareness at every level to put into practice the least-cost solutions for sustainable water conservation.

ACTION: Support and promotion of environmentally sustainable water use.

ACTION: Promotion of energy for sustainable development, including investment in renewable energy.



Women holding windmills in India
 Photo: Kartik Shinde/UNEP

ENERGY

- Total energy consumption grew by 70% between 1972 and 1999, outpacing the rate of increase in population.
- The world's richest countries, 20% of the planet's population, use half of the commercial energy produced.
- Over 2 billion people in developing countries have no access to electricity — without energy the poor of the world have no means to move forward
- Renewable energy provides about 4% of the world's commercial energy.
- Additional efforts to introduce affordable, renewable and sustainable energy, especially in developing countries, must be accelerated.



Young boy in Manila Bay, Philippines
 Photograph: Bartmut Schwarzbach/UNEP

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

- Poor health is draining one of the few resources the developing world possesses — the energy of its manpower
- Water pollution, poor sanitation and water shortages nurture disease, and kill over 12 million people every year
- Sewage pollution of the seas has precipitated a health crisis of massive proportions, costing in the region of US \$13 billion

ACTIONS: UNEP will support sustainable and cost effective development of waste water treatment in coastal cities; UNEP will promote and help countries deliver national programmes of action for the protection of the marine environment from land-based activities.

Air pollution is increasing especially in developing countries. Approximately 5% of all deaths and diseases globally, are attributable to air pollution. Two million of these, mostly women and children, suffer from the effects of indoor air pollution from bio-mass fuels.

ACTION: UNEP promotes initiatives to minimize the impact of air pollution on health.

Residents of the Arctic depend on traditional food sources which are now so contaminated with persistent organic pollutants that women can no longer safely breast-feed their infants.

ACTION: UNEP supports developing countries efforts to deal with chemicals and implement the rules and regulations needed for their better and safer management.

BIODIVERSITY

- 3 billion people rely primarily on traditional medicine.
- Many poor people also depend on the world's natural biodiversity for food and fuel...any loss of biodiversity has far-reaching effects on them.
- 12% of birds and almost 25% of mammals are currently regarded as globally threatened due to the loss and fragmentation of habitats such as forests, wetlands and mangrove swamps.
- The value of pharmaceuticals derived from genetic resources is estimated at between 75 billion and 150 billion US dollars — Indigenous peoples should benefit from the assets which surround them.
- Coral reefs provide essential fish habitat, food, medicine, income and employment. These natural assets are being degraded.

ACTION: UNEP can assist in building up the ability of countries to develop and implement wildlife conservation strategies.

FOOD SECURITY AND ENVIRONMENT

- Marine pollution remains a concern, oxygen depletion has serious impacts on fisheries, aquaculture and tourism.
- Fisheries are also under serious threat from overexploitation. Three quarters of fish stocks are fully exploited and a third have already collapsed.

ACTION: Establishment of a mechanism for Global Marine Assessment.

- 15% of the Earth's land cover, an area bigger than the USA and Mexico combined, is now degraded as a result of human activities.
- Soil erosion is a key factor in land degradation.
- The world's poor, struggling to move from the brink of constant hunger, farm land ever more intensively — as a result resources are declining as are the chances of achieving sustainable development.

ACTION: UNEP supports enhanced knowledge, and understanding, of sustainable land use methods, to avoid deforestation, desertification and water pollution.

“When the well's dry, we know the worth of water.”

— Benjamin Franklin 1746

“When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world.”

— John Muir