

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

MESSAGE ON INTERNATIONAL MOTHER EARTH DAY

22 April 2010

Mother Earth – our only home – is under pressure. We are making progressively unreasonable demands on her, and she is showing the strain. For all of human history we have depended on nature's bounty for sustenance, well-being and development. Too often we have drawn on nature's capital without putting back. We are now beginning to see the consequences of failing to safeguard our investment.

Climate change and the depleted ozone layer are among the starker examples. Biological diversity -- the incredible variety of life on Earth that sustains us -- is in rapid decline. Freshwater and marine resources are increasingly polluted; soils and once-prolific fisheries are growing barren.

The impact of our neglectful stewardship is being felt most by the world's most vulnerable people: those who live on the desert margins; indigenous communities; the rural poor; the inhabitants of the squalid slums of the world's expanding megacities. If they are to break out of the poverty trap and prosper, they need – at the very minimum – fertile land, clean water and adequate sanitation.

Environmental sustainability – the wise management of Mother Earth's bounty – is one of eight Millennium Development Goals adopted a decade ago by United Nations Member States. The deadline for achieving the goals is 2015. This September, I will convene a summit in New York to review progress towards the MDGs and develop an agenda for action – a practical, results-oriented plan, with concrete steps and timelines. Protecting Mother Earth must be an integral component of our strategy.

Without a sustainable environmental base, we will have little hope of attaining our objectives for reducing poverty and hunger and improving health and human well-being. For these reasons and more, the General Assembly has proclaimed that each year on 22 April we will observe International Mother Earth Day. I call on all governments, businesses and citizens of the world to give our Mother Earth the respect and care she deserves.