

Message of Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme

I am delighted that Mexico and its people will be the 2009 global hosts of the annual United Nations WED celebrations on 5 June under the theme “Your Planet Needs You! Unite to Combat Climate Change.

Mexico is among a group of nations showing real leadership on the challenges of our age – from climate change to bringing environmental goods and services into the mainstream of national and international economics.

Mexico has no formal responsibility under the Kyoto Protocol – the current emission reduction treaty – but the country has nevertheless given its clear intent to set a voluntary target supported by a comprehensive greenhouse gas-cutting strategy.

This is the kind of leadership that is capable of resolving long-standing debates and ultimately unproductive disagreements that have divided the international community for too long.

Mexico has also recognized the abundant opportunities that are emerging from the existing agreement, and that will flow even faster and firmer if governments ‘seal the deal’ on new, scientifically-credible arrangements in December.

The country has, for example, developed a multi-billion dollar export business in solar panels and is, with the UN and the Global Environment Facility as partners, embarking on an ambitious solar water heating industry.

The aim is to reach an eventual target of 23.5 million cubic metres of installed capacity by 2020. China, the world leader in solar water heaters, has an installed solar water heater capacity of around 100 million cubic metres and has created 600,000 green jobs. Thus, by 2020, Mexico might have the potential to generate jobs for some 150,000 people in this sector alone as a result of the new project.

Mexico is now second only to Brazil in this region in terms of accessing the Clean Development Mechanism with projects ranging from wind power to biogas.

Over 1.5 million people are paid in the rural areas to manage forests and water-sheds as part of a deliberate policy linking decent jobs with the environmental, climate and overall Green Economy agenda.

WED 2009 comes just under 190 days before the UN climate convention meeting in Denmark—I would urge everyone across the globe to join the people of Mexico. Let us together send the simple request: ‘Seal the Deal’ in Copenhagen. In doing so world leaders will be delivering perhaps the most transformational and far-reaching stimulus package of them all, now and for the coming decades.