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**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**MESSAGE TO UNEP 25<sup>th</sup> GOVERNING COUNCIL  
AND GLOBAL MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM  
Nairobi, 16 February 2008**

It gives me great pleasure to greet the participants in this important global gathering.

Since the UNEP Governing Council met in Monaco last year, the world has endured multiple crises. Economies are reeling, and people are worried about food security, jobs and savings. An environmental thread runs through this story.

Soaring food prices brought intense focus not just on the issues of agriculture and trade but on the inflationary role of biofuel production. Wildly fluctuating crude oil costs illustrated once again our dependence on the fossil fuels that are causing climate change. And the short-sighted economic vision that has precipitated the current financial turmoil is also bankrupting our resource base.

For these and other reasons, the environment is increasingly occupying political centre stage. This gives us a tremendous opportunity to increase the momentum for sustainable development.

This year, I expect governments to finalize a comprehensive, inclusive and ratifiable deal at the climate talks in Copenhagen in December. The UNEP Governing Council is an important part of the process, and I look to you for leadership in the months ahead.

Leadership is also needed on global mercury pollution, a key agenda item at this meeting. Mercury poses a challenge in its own right but is also relevant in terms of climate change. One of the main sources of this toxic heavy metal is the burning of coal. The melting of the Arctic is also releasing trapped mercury back into the environment.

In meeting the climate challenge, I also look to you for help in promoting a green economy. A global Green New Deal can help tackle climate change and wasteful resource consumption. It can also re-energize economies, create opportunities for new and better livelihoods, and help us make headway towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

These are real possibilities that can be promoted and implemented by your Governments in collaboration with the brightest minds in business and the most dynamic members of civil society. But to make this new vision a reality, you will need assistance.

UNEP has been instrumental in developing the concept of the green economy, and is now identifying the tools for achieving it. But UNEP needs your support. Recent years have seen encouraging trends, in particular increased contributions to the Environment Fund. I welcome this vote of confidence, and urge you to maintain and increase your support.

I also ask you to commit even more strongly to the principles of green economic growth that can pave the way to the sustainable future we seek. Please accept my best wishes for a successful session.