



PRESS RELEASE

Unprecedented Environmental Investments and Commitments Made Today to Reduce Poverty

World Leaders, International Environment and Development Agencies Spark Leadership and Action to Reach Millennium Development Goals

14 September 2005 – New York, NY – A unique coalition of more than 30 international environment and anti-poverty agencies, including many governments, today announced unprecedented commitments to speed up poverty reduction and the achievement of the [Millennium Development Goals](#) (MDGs). They aim to significantly increase investment in the major asset upon which poor people directly depend – the environment. World leaders, through this unique coalition, will join in the call for a significant scaling up of worldwide investment in environmental management to reduce poverty in conjunction with the largest head of state gathering in history, the 2005 World Summit.

The agencies will be joined on 14 September, the opening day of the Summit, by an estimated 25 Heads of State and a similar number of government ministers for two [Environment for the MDGs](#) events. An afternoon high-level policy dialogue will present the economic case for investing in the environment to fight poverty and will chart priorities for action. The policy dialogue will be [webcast live](#) worldwide via the Internet.

The reality of poverty is this: 1.2 billion live on less than \$1 a day; almost half the world or 2.7 billion live on less than \$2 a day; and a majority of them depend on forests, farming and fisheries for their



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living. Getting more than half these people out of poverty by 2015 is a key target of the MDGs. A review of progress toward that goal will be high on the Summit agenda.

“The world’s poorest people are the most dependent on fertile soil, clean water and healthy ecosystems for their livelihoods,” said Klaus Toepfer, Executive Director of UNEP. “Investing in sound environmental management to improve these resources provides direct economic benefits for the poor along with the tools they need to lift themselves out of poverty.”

While the principal theme of the *Environment for the MDGs* is the linkage of MDG1 (Eradicating Extreme Poverty and Hunger) and MDG7 (Ensuring Environmental Sustainability), a healthy environment is the foundation for all the MDGs.

Attention will also be given to the critical role of good governance. “Increased investment alone is not enough,” notes Kemal Derviş, Administrator of UNDP. “To be effective, investments must be implemented and driven at the grassroots level by communities, local governments and the private sector. The poor must have secure rights and access to natural resources and a greater voice in decisions over the management of the land, water and biological resources that support their livelihoods.”

“Environmental sustainability is central to long term poverty reduction,” said Kumi Naidoo, chair of the Global Call to Action against Poverty, “and we urge world leaders at the UN summit to take decisive action to honor the commitments they have already made on the environment and in the Millennium Development Goals.”

An evening Head of State dinner will feature announcements of major new investments in environmental management that show commitments in action that signal a new approach for winning in the fight against poverty. International humanitarian hip hop activist Wyclef Jean will perform at this influential gathering. Planned announcements at the dinner will include, among others:

- The Government of Sweden is allocating one billion Swedish kronor (approximately USD \$150 million) to investment in environmental protection for the poor.
- Over 70 member companies in the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) are committing to new business models specifically to help alleviate poverty and lessen the impact on the environment.

- For the first time, a group of developing nations with rainforests are making a groundbreaking proposal and formally offering voluntary carbon emission reductions by reducing tree cutting in exchange for access to international markets for emissions trading.
- The recently-formed Forum for Energy Ministers of Africa (FEMA) are announcing plans of their commitment to decreasing dependency by Africa's poor on unsustainable energy sources such as firewood and charcoal to sustainable modern energy services and technologies.
- Eight of the world's largest conservation and environmental NGOs have come together to announce their commitment to integrate conservation and development efforts for improved livelihoods.
- IUCN - The World Conservation Union is announcing their new Conservation for Poverty Reduction Initiative to secure and improve rural livelihoods through the better management of ecosystems.
- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) will announce the UNDP/UNEP "Poverty and Environment Initiative" which seeks to mobilize coalitions to enable countries to more effectively integrate environment into their poverty reduction strategies.
- Makuleke, a traditional hunting community in South Africa, is announcing that they have voluntarily decided to give up their right to hunt on their own land in order to better preserve the biodiversity they are responsible for managing.
- Vert Espoir is a new national association of NGOs in Haiti that have come together to undertake a major campaign to plant trees in Haiti.
- The European Council is announcing a historic increase in funding for development assistance by 20 billion € annually.

There is evidence to show that investments pay back many-fold. Some tangible examples of how investing in the environment reduces poverty include:

- 100,000 fishermen and their families have benefited from coral reef rehabilitation and management in Indonesia. An investment of \$11million from 1998 to 2003 achieved a 15 percent economic rate of return.
- 800,000 people benefited from a community-driven program supplying safe drinking water and sanitation in Pakistan. Water-borne disease was cut by 90%. Women and girls no longer

spent 2-6 hours a day collecting water. School enrolment increased by 80% and household income rose by 24 percent.

- A community driven toilet program in Pune, India has invested in 10,000 toilets, improving sanitation for 500,000 people. It generates income for poor people who built and maintain the toilets. The capital cost of \$20 per person is far less than that of ineffective alternatives provided by city authorities.

Three reports substantiating the critical link between poverty and the environment will be unveiled at the *Environment for the MDGs* events. These reports are the result of the collaboration of five leading organizations addressing poverty and the environment. The first, entitled “*Sustaining the Environment to Fight Poverty and Achieve the MDGs: The Economic Case and Priorities for Action*,” synthesizes key messages for world leaders at the 2005 World Summit. The second, entitled “*Investing in Environmental Wealth for Poverty Reduction*,” is an economic analysis. The third, entitled “*Assessing Environment’s Contribution to Poverty Reduction*,” focuses on indicators and assessment methodologies. In addition, a supplementary report “*Sustainable Pathways to Attain the MDGs*” highlights the importance of investing in water, energy and sanitation for the MDGs.

Environment for the MDGs is an initiative of the [Poverty-Environment Partnership \(PEP\)](#), a network of more than 30 development and environment agencies that was formed to address the link between poverty and the environment. *Environment for the MDGs* is led by UNDP, UNEP, the governments of Denmark, Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, IUCN - The World Conservation Union, International Institute for Environment and Development, SNV Netherlands Development Organisation, World Resources Institute and WWF International.

[Overall program and details for the live web broadcast of the Policy Dialogue event are provided at www.undp.org/pei]

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