

Mexico and the World Environment Day

Message from Mexico's Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources Juan R. Elvira

The United Nations has granted Mexico the privilege of hosting the 2009 World Environment Day. Under the overall theme of "Your Planet Needs You! Unite to Combat Climate Change" we have proposed as sub-themes 'forests, poverty and climate change' because we recognize that conservation and the sustainable use of forest ecosystems are connected in a virtuous cycle with public welfare, the abatement of poverty levels, climate change mitigation, and limiting vulnerability to the adverse effects of global warming.

We also recognize that it is crucial to achieve sustainable patterns of production and consumption in order to diminish the pressures on ecosystems and to secure economic growth. In fact, economic growth can only be achieved and maintained if it is positively related to the public's welfare and to the conservation of the natural wealth that sustains it.

The celebration of World Environment Day takes place in the context of the greatest international economic crises in the last 70 years and during a key negotiation process where the engagement of all nations of the world is necessary in order to combat climate change; without doubt, one of the major challenges facing humanity.

It is of the highest importance for the government's leadership role, that economic recovery policies incorporate environmental criteria and encourage the sustainable use of natural resources, the efficient use of energy, and the conservation of ecosystems, just as proposed by the Green Economy Initiative of the United Nations Environment Programme.

In Mexico, we are working to develop a country of equal opportunities, one that is productive, efficient, competitive, and at the same time respectful of its natural assets. We seek the full public and economic recognition of such natural assets, which will consider not only the goods, but also the environmental services the ecosystems provide, and that will represent the foundations of economic development and public well-being.

On the international front, the Mexican Green Fund proposal calls on all countries to join a common commitment against the effects of climate change: All countries can and shall do something.

We are working to increase the standard of living of the people of Mexico through the generation of new development opportunities based on the sustainable use of natural resources. Allow me to give you just some examples. The people and owners of close to 2.3 million hectares of forests and rainforests in Mexico currently receive support, so that they can sustainably use this resource through reforestation, land conservation and restoration activities, among others. This is part of the payment for environmental services program of the Mexican government through which the owners of forest lands receive payment for the care and protection of forests.

In the more than 23 million hectares of Natural Protected Areas – which cover close to 12 per cent of our territory – we work with and support local communities to develop alternative, sustainable and productive activities. These activities not only contribute to increasing their family incomes, but to secure the conservation of the ecosystems they protect.

In Mexico, we are also aware of our role in solving the global environmental problems we face, such as climate change. That is why we are solidly engaged with and committed to the international community to face this threat. We are the only Non Annex I country to have submitted three national communications under the United National Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Our National Strategy on Climate Change will soon be unveiled and several states within Mexico are working on State Action Plans to Combat Climate Change.

The recovery of our forest ecosystems is a national priority. Among other initiatives, a significant number of Mexicans, from young to old, participated in the campaign “Let’s Plant for the Planet”, contributing 25 per cent of the international goal, by planting close to 530 million trees.

We are also working to reduce our carbon footprint through a number of different mitigation actions with the industrial, transport and staples industries, among others. On June 5th, we want to celebrate the environment and to acknowledge that it is only one earth we have and that our communities and countries are interconnected through environmental, economic and social interactions.

This year, the global celebration will be hosted in Mexico. We will share with the whole world our heritage as a mega-bio-diverse country, awakening the environmental conscience, with five ecosystems that show signs of recovery as witnesses: deserts, forests, rainforests, wetlands and coasts.

Our people are the best spokespersons to communicate this message. The Mexican people wish to show the world their commitment to conservation and the protection of natural wealth.

Each crisis presents new opportunities if we have the courage to draw on the lessons learned and to put them into practice, our differences notwithstanding. The current crisis has resulted in an unprecedented international cooperation mobilization. We have realized that global processes demand global perspectives. We need to continue designing our problem solving processes in an inclusive manner that gives due regard to each and every country in the world. In sum, we need to promote multilateral action.

In this 2009 World Environment Day, we wish to plant a seed in all the inhabitants of this planet. We hope that this seed engenders a stronger environmental conscience and a commitment to conserve and protect our shared natural treasures, in order to support efforts on the climate change front, and also to encourage and participate in a new green economy.

Today, every people on Earth shall take an action for the environment, one each day.
Let us look into the protection of the environment as a central element that will allow us
to achieve development and the eradication of poverty for all the peoples of the world.