



WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY 2010

UNV EXECUTIVE COORDINATOR FLAVIA PANSIERI

Bonn, Germany, 5 June 2010: The United Nations General Assembly designated 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity. As ever, voluntary action will be key to achieving its goals.

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon calls for such voluntary action in his own message for World Environment Day, appealing to everyone to help sound the alarm about the impact of human activities upon biodiversity and the world we live in. "Get involved, speak out," he says. "Learn and teach others. Show leadership and help clean up."

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme's 'Volunteering for our Planet' campaign last year united volunteers across the world, illustrating ordinary citizens' commitment to preserving our environment, mitigating climate change and safeguarding biodiversity. Hosted in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme, the campaign website invited visitors to voluntarily pledge their time and energy between World Environment Day 2009 on 5 June and International Volunteer Day on 5 December. It recorded pledges totalling 1.5 million hours, adding up to 900 working years voluntarily spent planting trees, reducing carbon emissions and cleaning up pollution.

'Volunteering for our Planet' showed the world that voluntary action counts. Environmental groups have recognized this for a long time, and UNV continues to cooperate with organizations across the world to help integrate volunteerism into their work.

In partnership with the United Nations Development Programme and the Global Environment Facility, UNV volunteers are harnessing the skills of people who live under the threat of climate change themselves. The Community-based Adaptation project supports people in ten countries as they build resilience into their local ecosystems and take ownership of their futures through voluntary action. Assisted by UNV volunteers, these community volunteers work on solutions to conserve water, promote sustainable agricultural techniques and protect local biodiversity and ecosystems.

Volunteers can also make a difference from afar. Via the UNV Online Volunteering service, for example, online volunteers supported the African Conservation Foundation's campaign to protect the critically endangered Cross River gorilla.

While governments put in place the legislation to enable volunteers to do their work, environmental organizations continue to integrate volunteers into their projects and programmes. By supporting volunteers and creating the necessary mechanisms and structures to assist them in their work, stakeholders can thus contribute to both environmental preservation and to sustainable development.

To preserve our one planet, its many species and our one future is going to take the continued efforts of many more volunteers and many, many more millions of hours of hard work and commitment. But together, through voluntary action we can make a real difference. Everyone can take a stand.