

## World Environment Day • 5 June

### HISTORY

World Environment Day is the United Nations flagship environmental event, celebrated every year on 5 June in more than 100 countries around the world.

It was established in 1972 by the United Nations General Assembly and its commemoration is entrusted to the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP).



### PURPOSE

World Environment Day aims is to focus worldwide attention on the importance of the environment and to stimulate political attention and action.

The event seeks to give a human face to environmental issues; empower people to become active agents of sustainable and equitable development; promote an understanding that communities are pivotal to changing attitudes towards environmental issues; and advocate partnership, which will ensure that all nations and peoples enjoy a safer and more prosperous future.

On that particular day, heads of State, Prime Ministers and Ministers of Environment deliver statements and commit themselves to care for the Earth. Pledges are made which lead to the establishment of permanent governmental structures dealing with environmental management. It also provides an opportunity to sign or ratify international environmental conventions.

### THEME 2008: KICK THE HABIT—TOWARDS A LOW CARBON ECONOMY

The focus of the global 2008 celebrations will be on the solutions and the opportunities for countries, companies and communities to "Kick the habit" and de-carbonise their economies and life-styles.

Measures include greater energy efficiency in buildings and appliances, including light bulbs, up to a switch towards cleaner and renewable forms of electricity generation and transport systems.

A transition to a low carbon economy is essential to reversing the growth of global greenhouse gas emissions. Developed and developing countries stand to benefit environmentally, economically and socially from more efficient low-carbon technologies and strategies.

### EVENT 2008

Each year, a different city is chosen as the principal venue for the global celebration of World Environment Day. This year, the main host for the event is New Zealand, one of the first countries to pledge a carbon-neutral future.

Amongst others, the host country will focus on the role of forests in countering rises in greenhouse gases. An estimated 20 per cent of emissions contributing to climate change globally are a result of deforestation.

New Zealand, where forestry is an important industry and conservation of forests is a high priority, plans to use WED to highlight the role technologies and forestry management can play in achieving domestic and international climate goals.

**"As part of New Zealand's drive for greater environmental sustainability, we've made a commitment to reduce our emissions. But to overcome the challenge of climate change, kicking the carbon habit must be a truly global goal,**

**The Honourable Helen Clark**  
New Zealand Prime Minister