



Our planet

The magazine of the United Nations Environment Programme - May 2009



JUAN RAFAEL ELVIRA QUESADA
WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY, 5 JUNE

JEAN-LOUIS BORLOO
GREEN GROWTH

HRH PRINCE EL HASSAN BIN TALAL
SOLAR REVOLUTION

FERNANDO HADDAD
LEARNING FOR LIFE

YOUR PLANET
NEEDS YOU
practical action



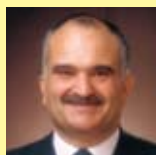
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FERNANDO HADDAD : Learning for life
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ANNA LEHMANN : Money can grow on trees
describes how, with positive incentives to communities and Governments to maintain forests, standing trees could become a new commodity on world markets.

Our Planet, the magazine of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
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To view current and past issues of this publication online, please visit www.unep.org/ourplanet

ISSN 101 - 7394

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Produced by: UNEP Division of Communications and Public Information
Printed by: Progress Press | **Distributed by:** SMI Books

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DIPAL CHANDRA BARUA : Green Light **PAGE 24**
shows how affordable renewable energy is bringing power
and employment to poor rural people.



LI YAN : Low-carbon China **PAGE 28**
describes what her country is doing to combat climate change, and calls for
urgent action to build a green economy.



SHAI AGASSI : Driving away oil addiction **PAGE 30**
explains how environmental and economic interests are being realigned to make
a revolutionary system of electric cars a reality.



SHAKIRA : Doing it for the kids **PAGE 34**
describes her projects to help save the poorest and most vulnerable children
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paper, using vegetable -based inks and other
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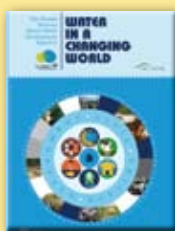


The Natural Fix? The role of ecosystems in climate mitigation

The rapid response assessment on biosequestration provides a synthesis of the current state of knowledge regarding the role of biological systems, including natural ecosystems, agri-ecosystems, and bio-engineered systems, in sequestering carbon. Potential policies to increase biosequestration are examined taking into consideration the social, economic and environmental aspects involved, as well as potential trade-offs. The assessment also looks at the impacts of climate change on the capacity of systems to absorb carbon.

The Environmental Food Crisis: The Environment's Role in Averting Future Food Crises

A new rapid response assessment report released by UNEP cautions that unless action is taken, nearly twenty-five percent of the world's food production may be lost due to environmental degradation by 2050. Prepared by the Rapid Response Assessment Team at UNEP/GRID-Arendal and UNEP-WCMC, the report provides the first summary by the UN of how climate change, water stress, invasive pests and land degradation may impact world food security, food prices and life on the planet and how we may be able to feed the world in a more sustainable manner. The report calls for intelligent and creative approaches to recycling food wastes and fish discards.

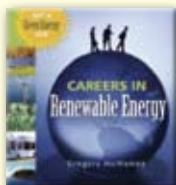


World Water Development Report 3: Bridging Divides for Water (Earthscan, 2008)

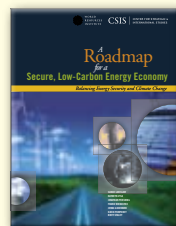
The United Nations World Water Development report, launched at the 5th World Water Forum in Istanbul in March 2009, shows that urgent action is needed if we are to avoid a global water crisis. Written and coordinated by the 26 UN agencies and entities which make up UN-Water, the report provides a comprehensive analysis of the state of the world's freshwater resources. It also, for the first time, shows how changes in water demand and supply are affected by and affect other global dynamics.

Careers in Renewable Energy: Get a Green Energy Job Gregory McNamee (PixyJack Press, 2008)

This book contains a wealth of information and resources for anyone searching for a job in the fast-growing field of renewable energy. Readers can discover how green



energy can be a part of their professional future. It highlights, a slew of job sectors including solar and wind energy, biofuels, hydrogen energy and fuel cells, geothermal energy, hydro energy, green building, climate study, energy management and efficiency, and much more.



A Roadmap for a Secure, Low-Carbon Economy: Balancing Energy Security and Climate Change

Sarah Landislaw, Kathryn Zyla, Jonathan Pershing, Frank Verrastro, Jenna Woodward, David Pumphrey, Britt Childs Staley (World Resources Institute, 2009)

This report, released by the Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS) Energy and National Security Program and the World Resources Institute, identifies a set of policies to address energy security and climate change simultaneously. Furthermore, the roadmap creates a three-part framework for thinking about the transition to a secure, low-carbon economy.

Gorillas: The Gentle Giants

Martin Harvey, Letitia Farris-Toussaint (Evans Mitchell Publications, 2009)

This 132 page book features a combination of informative text and striking images designed to take us through the history, features and habits of gorillas. The reader gets a sense of the fascinating creatures' family life, their environments and the problems they face in the future. The author, Letitia Farris-Toussaint, discusses gorillas' fight for survival as they are faced with problems of poaching, disease, deforestation, and the effect of armed conflict. The fact that these majestic creatures are one of man's closest relatives (second only to Chimpanzees) becomes abundantly clear by looking at their expressions and gestures caught in Martin Harvey's photographs. The launch of this book supported the survival of gorilla populations and marked the Year of the Gorilla (YoG) 2009.



Biofuels and Rural Poverty

Joy Clancy, Jon Lovett (Earthscan, 2009)

The role of biofuels in poverty reduction is typically explored from an energy security or climate change perspective. This book on the other hand explores the potential consequences of large-scale production of transport fuel substitutes on rural areas, principally in developing countries but also in some poor rural areas of developed countries. Three key concerns are examined with a North-South perspective: ecological issues (related to land use and biodiversity), pro-poor policies (related to food and land security, gender and income generation) and equity of benefits within the global value chain. Questions raised in the book include whether or not biofuels can be pro-poor, and if smallholder farmers can be equitably integrated in the biofuels global supply chain.





ACHIM STEINER

UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, UNEP

World Environment Day (WED) is your day – an occasion for the public to demonstrate, by practical and inspiring grass roots action that positive environmental change is alive and kicking in villages, towns and cities across the globe. It also needs to be a Day for transformational thinking and intellectual debate, which is why UNEP commissioned a study on biosequestration – an inelegant word perhaps but one with extremely elegant and far-reaching implications.

Carbon capture and storage is an increasingly popular solution to the climate change challenge. The idea is that carbon emissions from power stations and other sources can be captured, consigned to underground stores in the earth's geology, and contained within them. By some estimates it could contribute 15 to over 50 per cent of the global effort to stabilize emissions of greenhouse gases at 450 to 750 parts per million.

Not everyone is convinced, however. Some experts are concerned that the technology is not tried and tested and that the CO₂, instead of being locked away, could suddenly bubble back into the atmosphere.

Yet there is another form of carbon capture and storage that has been perfected over hundreds of millions of years. Forests naturally remove carbon,

locking it away in tree trunks and branches, and returning it to soils when leaves are shed. But instead of maintaining and enhancing nature's own solution, the world is destroying it. Indeed some 20 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions come from clearing and burning forests.

Paying tropical forested countries to manage forests could reverse this and Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) must be a key component of 'sealing the deal' at December's crucial UN climate convention meeting in Copenhagen. By one estimate, Indonesia alone could get compensation of \$1 billion a year by reducing its deforestation rate to one million hectares annually.

UNEP's World Conservation Monitoring Centre estimates that some 15 per cent of carbon is locked away in trees and forests in the world's National Parks and protected areas. Boosting investment in these could not just increase carbon capture and storage but trigger a wide range of other benefits, from soil and water stabilization and reduced biodiversity loss to improved tourism revenues and new jobs. Mexico – the global host of WED 2009, which has Latin America's second largest closed-canopy forest – is among those in the forefront of the REDD debate.

Other natural systems – from peatlands and wetlands to grasses, soils and shrubs – also have the ability either to release or to absorb carbon. The seas and oceans are cycling up to 40 per cent of CO₂ emissions for free.

Over the past 10,000 years, farming has domesticated and promoted single season annually cropped cereal, oil and leguminous plants. But experts suggest that moving 'back to the future' to perennials, multi-year crops with deep roots, will boost soil fertility and stability 50 fold and may prove more resilient in a climate changed world. They are also 50 per cent better at carbon capture and storage than their annual cousins. And because they do not need to be planted every year, there is less need to use energy-burning farm machinery, pesticides and fertilizers.

Carbon capture and storage may seem a simple and straight forward technological fix, but does it make our economies more resource and more fuel efficient, or simply perpetuate a dependency on fossil fuels and energy insecurity. What if the hundreds of billions of dollars now being invested in it were partly diverted into its biological counterpart. This well proven, natural system could well provide, as they say, "a bigger bang for our buck", which not only removes carbon dioxide but addresses wider sustainability challenges including a true Green Revolution and the poverty-related UN Millennium Development Goals.

Building the bridge

"...we need this planet because we do not have anywhere else to live."



JUAN RAFAEL ELVIRA QUESADA

Mexican Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources speaks with Satinder Bindra

Mexico is no stranger to hosting the UN's premier outreach event on the environment – World Environment Day (WED). The country last hosted it in 1990, and late last year won a fiercely competitive bid to become only the second country after China to do so twice.

The theme of this year's World Environment Day is 'Your Planet Needs You – Unite to Combat Climate Change'. As part of its responsibilities, the Mexican government will stage festivities over five days in various parts

of the country. The celebrations will provide an opportunity for the government to demonstrate how its payments to hundreds of thousands of poor people for protecting forests not only helps in the fight against climate change, but can also alleviate poverty.

This year the international community will also be watching the event closely, because WED takes place just months before what it is hoped will be a meaningful deal for reducing greenhouse



gas emissions in Copenhagen, Denmark, in December.

As one of its planned activities for WED, Mexico has pledged to act as a bridge between the North and South to help seal a deal in Copenhagen. To find out more about Mexico's environmental ambitions and WED plans, UNEP's director of communications Satinder Bindra sat down for a freewheeling discussion with Mexico's Secretary of State for the Environment, Juan Rafael Elvira Quesada.

Here are some excerpts:

Mr Secretary, why did Mexico decide to host the World Environment Day festivities and what does this really mean for the country?

"We needed to push environmental topics on to the national agenda, and we think it is a very good opportunity for Mexico to show how we can work together – all the countries – to make a call to everybody to create awareness of the need to work on the environment. I think it is very important for Mexico, for Central America and for all the world."

You talked about reaching the region around Mexico, and also the world: so can you give us a flavour of what has been planned for 5th June and the days surrounding it?

"We are including all of society as a whole – young people, students, children, businessmen and NGO's – in the celebrations. The point is to showcase five different places – Lakes, Rivers, Beaches, Forests and these kinds of ecosystems – all in different parts of Mexico. We have to show how we are going to protect these places.

For World Environment Day we will invite people to do something related to cultural activities, academic and scientific activities, activities in general for all of society, so that everybody can be part not only of the problem but also of the solution."

What is the message you want to send to the rest of the world during these celebrations?

"We think that we can tackle a big problem called climate change by reducing poverty and by protecting

the forests in Mexico. This solution could be part of the world solution in many of the continents, like Africa, Asia, Latin America. What we want to show is that everybody can work towards climate change, and we can work towards reducing poverty and we can also work towards saving the forests."

You talked about combating climate change, but what about reducing emissions? Is that going to come up in all the discussions and seminars during these celebrations?

"Yes, we want to show the world our special program for climate change. The president wants to show the world what we are doing to mitigate or cope with Climate Change. Mexico can reach a voluntary goal [to reduce emissions] and can work with the rest of the world because everyone in the world can do something against climate change. You are part of this planet and your planet needs you. To put it another way, we need this planet because we do not have anywhere else to live."

Mr Secretary, in December this year there will be a very important meeting in Copenhagen to try to reduce growing emissions. Can WED 2009 do anything to convince the countries of the world that an agreement there is critical for the planet?

"Yes of course we want to build the bridge for many countries to go to Copenhagen and reach the agreement. It does not depend on where you are and what is your classification, it depends on how you can invite everyone in the world to work and help to get a good agreement, a world agreement to really protect the environment and the planet."

GREEN GROWTH

"Against the backdrop of the global credit crisis and economic change, the Grenelle Environnement will cause investment of some 400 billion euros and create more than 550,000 jobs in France."



JEAN-LOUIS BORLOO

Minister of Environment, Energy, Sustainable Development and the Sea

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