



PLANT FOR THE PLANET THE BILLION TREE CAMPAIGN

An Album





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Introduction



“The symbolism – and the substantive significance – of planting a tree has universal power in every culture and every society on Earth, and it is a way for individual men, women and children to participate in creating solutions for the environmental crisis.”

Al Gore, 2007 Nobel Peace Prize Winner

In 2007, a year of “planetary emergency”, when global warming was widely recognized as the defining issue of our era, the Billion Tree Campaign came to symbolize the readiness of people everywhere to work to protect our climate and collective home.

Inspired by the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Professor Wangari Maathai, the first United Nations global tree-planting campaign was met with more enthusiasm than anyone could have predicted. After its launch in November 2006, word of the Campaign spread rapidly and partners joined the initiative with remarkable speed.

The original goal of gathering a billion pledges in one year was exceeded in just five months. The billionth tree was in the ground in November 2007. By the end of January 2008, nearly 2.38 billion trees had been pledged and more than 1.8 billion planted.

This publication can introduce but a fraction of the energy and results inspired by the Campaign. It is intended to convey the range of partners moved to action: from children to giant corporations, from women’s groups to technocrats, dancers to diplomats, farmers to national governments.

Trees are more significant than many of us might imagine. They commemorate births and lives lived. They beautify slums, farms and grand avenues. They provide shade, oxygen, and delight. They cool the Earth.

Some of the seedlings we plant will restore springs long dry, prevent soil erosion and create fertilizer to boost harvests. Others will break the Sahara winds, halting the spread of desert sand dunes. Countless more will provide food for people, in rural areas and cities alike. Some will supply forage for livestock and for insects that pollinate crops. Many will produce wood and natural oils for building and for fuel. Yet others will be used to create medicines to heal the human body and essential oils to ease the soul.

All will draw carbon dioxide from the air, leaving us a little less vulnerable to the threats posed by climate change.

We offer this booklet in celebration of the power of voluntary action and in the hope that the spirit and progress of the Billion Tree Campaign will be sustained.

Foreword



Mr. Achim Steiner, Executive Director
of the United Nations Environment
Programme and United Nations
Under-Secretary-General

If the world is to make a transition to a low-carbon society and avoid the environmental, social and economic impacts of unchecked climate change, all sectors of society must be mobilized.

For too long the debate on what to do about climate change has been confined to the political and scientific arenas. Many ordinary people have lacked a tangible way of expressing their concerns and an avenue for national, regional and global action.

In late 2006, UNEP, in cooperation with the World Agroforestry Centre, launched Plant for the Planet: the Billion Tree Campaign as a way of empowering the global public to face the challenge of this generation.

We were honoured to have as patrons Professor Wangari Maathai, the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, who, to a great extent, was the inspiration for the Campaign, and Prince Albert II of Monaco, who has established a global reputation as a committed environmentalist.

The response has in many ways surpassed all our expectations. The Campaign galvanized young people, scouts, faith and community groups across the world as well as schools, kindergartens, towns, cities and companies.

The precise number of people mobilized awaits compilation. It is worthy of note, however, that 600,000 people, including school children in Uttar Pradesh, India, planted 10.5 million trees in a single day in July 2007. 35 million young people in Turkey have been mobilized and 10,000 schools in Malaysia are taking part. An estimated 500,000 children in schools in sub Saharan Africa and the United Kingdom have joined the initiative via the British Council. The 1,500 members off the Emirates Environmental Group have pledged to plant one million trees in the United Arab Emirates. In

of Mexico has catalyzed the planting of 250 million trees enlisting the army to achieve that goal.

We have decided to extend the Campaign for another year, by popular demand, with the goal of planting a total of two billion more trees. I am convinced that this new target will be met and almost certainly surpassed

There were a few cynical smiles and shaking of heads when the Billion Tree Campaign was launched. Some said it would never happen while others failed at first to see its raison d'être.

But citizen after citizen, community after community and country after country have proved the doubters wrong and demonstrated an abiding truth: given a focus and the chance to act, millions if not billions of people around this world want an end to pollution and environmental deterioration and they have rolled up their sleeves and got their hands dirty to prove the point.

In empowering the public, the Campaign is also empowering Governments by providing proof that

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