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# EMPHASIS on the ENVIRONMENT

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY 2016  
SPECIAL REPORT

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## INTRODUCTION

World Environment Day is observed globally every year on June 5. The theme for this year is **Go Wild for Life**. According to United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), there is booming illegal trade in wildlife products is eroding Earth's precious biodiversity, robbing us of our natural heritage and driving whole species to the brink of extinction. The global agency says that efforts have been made in terms of having stronger policies, awareness campaigns and investments in community conservation and law enforcement.

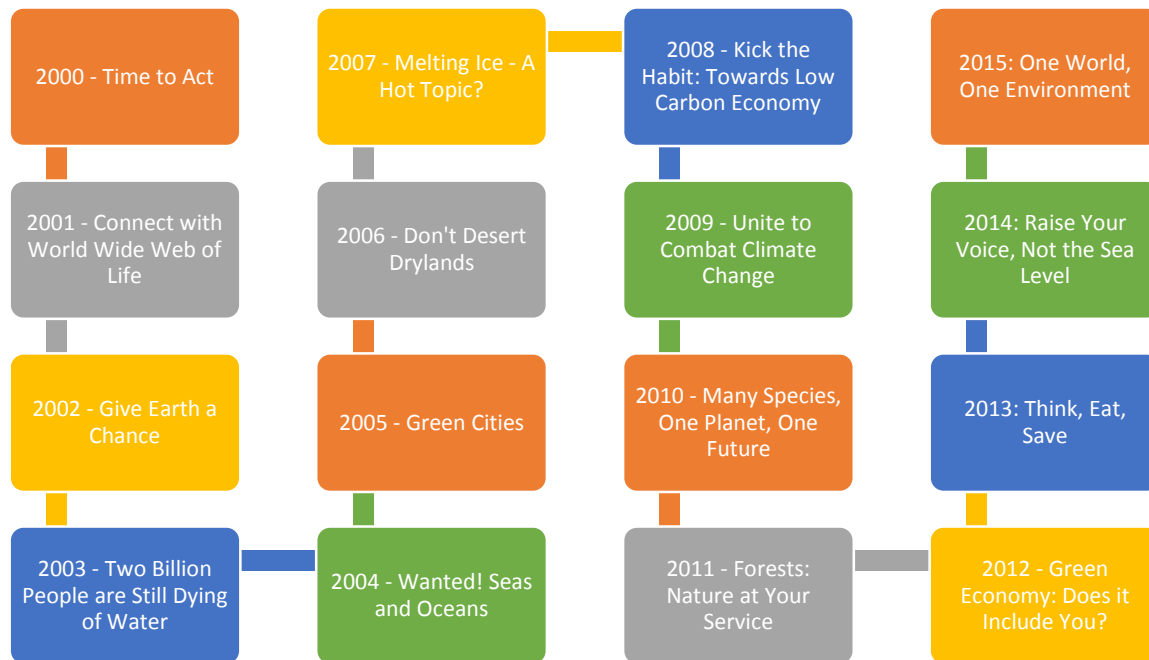
Marking this day, UNEP calls for global commitment for **zero tolerance on illegal trade in wildlife** in words and action. UN **Goodwill Ambassadors** Ian Somerhalder (actor and environmentalist from US), Gisele Bündchen (supermodel from Brazil), Yaya Toure (footballer from Côte d'Ivoire), Don Cheadle (actor from US) and Li Bingbing (actress from China) have also played their part in spreading this message worldwide.

The UNEP has especially acknowledged Nepal's efforts in wildlife conservation with the significant **increase in the number of rhinos in Nepal from 534 in 2011 to 645 in 2016** courtesy tougher penalties on poaching and streamlined judicial system.

Apart from these goodwill ambassadors, famous personalities in human history have largely emphasized the role of the environment through their famous quotes:

- "The environment is everything that isn't me". – Albert Einstein
- "We won't have a society if we destroy the environment". – Margaret Mead
- "By polluting clear water with slime you will never find good drinking water". – Aeschylus
- "After all, sustainability means running the global environment – Earth Inc. – like a corporation: with depreciation, amortization and maintenance accounts. In other words, keeping the asset whole, rather than undermining your natural capital". – Maurice Strong
- "People blame their environment. There is only one person to blame – and only one – themselves". – Robert Collier
- "Environmental degradation, overpopulation, refugees, narcotics, terrorism, world crime movements, and organized crime are worldwide problems that don't stop at a nation's borders". – Warren Christopher
- "The most important environmental issue is one that is rarely mentioned, and that is the lack of a conservation ethic in our culture". – Gaylord Nelson
- "Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed". – Mahatma Gandhi
- "What we are doing to the forests of the world is but a mirror reflection of what we are doing to ourselves and to one another". – Mahatma Gandhi

## World Environment Day themes and slogans from 2000 to 2015



## Highlights from UNEP Annual Report 2015

2015 marked important achievements in terms of commitment from international community by adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development building a strong foundation for sustainability of environmental protection.

Major highlights from the report are as follows:

- 20 countries implemented ecosystem based and other adaption approaches
- 28 countries supported to reduce risks of natural disasters, industrial accidents and conflicts
- First massive open online course on ecosystem-based approaches to disaster risk reduction reached 12000 people in 183 countries
- 17 countries completed valuation of their ecosystems
- 32 countries pledged tougher action on illegal wildlife trade
- 21 UN organizations committed to climate neutrality
- 15 countries finalized UN Development Assistance Frameworks that incorporated principles of environmental sustainability
- 17 countries adopted policies promoting sound management of chemicals and waste

## Health and Environment

The wellbeing of an individual is directly related to their circumstances and environment. Various physical, chemical and biological factors including the factors such as where we live, the state of our environment, genetics, income and education level has an impact on a person. The determinants of health include the social and economic environment, physical environment and the person's individual characteristics and behaviours.

Environmental disruptions, such as dispersion of dangerous substances, acidification, over fertilization, photochemical air pollution, climate change, ground pollution and nuisance have impact on human health. Aspects of environmental quality and life style that are not voluntarily chosen (e.g. passive smoking, noise nuisance, stress) are also important. A basic principle of environmental policy is to limit the negative influence of these disruptions on human health to non-harmful levels.

Even the environmental consequences of climate change, such as extreme heat waves, rising sea-levels, changes in precipitation resulting in flooding and droughts, intense hurricanes, and degraded air quality has been affecting the physical, social, and psychological health of humans directly and indirectly. Climate change can be the cause of migration of various disease, it can also exacerbate health effects resulting from the release of toxic air pollutants in vulnerable populations like children, elderly, and patients with asthma or cardiovascular disease.

The severity of the health risks depends on the ability of public health and safety systems to address these changing threats. The factors like individual's behavior, age, gender, and economic status also has a role. People in developing countries may be the most vulnerable to health risks globally, but climate change poses significant threats to health even in wealthy nations such as the United States. Certain populations, such as children, pregnant women, older adults, and people with low incomes, face increased risks.

The **Environment Performance Index (EPI) 2016 has ranked Nepal 177 among 180 countries in terms of air quality.** In 2014, Nepal was ranked 139 in 2014 which goes to show that the condition is getting severe every year. According to the EPI, 75 percent of the total populations in Nepal are exposed to unsafe levels of fine particulate matters as air pollution is a growing global problem. Experts have pointed that air pollution has become a major threat to Nepal, especially in Kathmandu where the rapid urbanisation has been taking place along with population growth.

## Provisions related to environment in National Health Sector Strategy 2016-2020

National Health Sector Strategy (NHSS) is the major policy document providing strategic guidance to the Ministry of Health in Nepal in terms of designing health programmes in Nepal developed by a pool of experts in line with the global Sustainable Development Goals agenda. Under Outcome 7 – Healthy Lifestyles and Environment, the Ministry of Health has come up with the following key interventions designed to promote healthy lifestyle and environment:

- In collaboration with Ministry of Education, review/revise current approaches for School Health Programme emphasising health promotion, nutrition, sports, resilience from substance misuse and sexual health
- Expand psychosocial, psychiatric and curative care for gender based and sexual violence
- Promote healthy lifestyles through health facilities and community health workers as an integral part of health system
- Leverage community groups such as mothers groups and forestry user groups for promoting healthy lifestyles and behaviours
- Develop and implement urban health interventions in collaboration with municipalities
- Enhance capacity in environmental and occupational health impact monitoring and surveillance in MoHP.
- Implement surveillance of road traffic accidents
- Collaborate with other sectors to enforce standards for air, water and food quality
- Generate evidences on impact of climate change on human health
- Monitor changes in vector and disease pattern
- Expand water quality surveillance
- Gradually recruit and deploy community health inspectors

### Conclusion

There is a lot to be done, especially in terms of environmental conservation and protection. There is a global commitment and concern but there is also need for global action. To improve the natural ecosystem, what we require is the change in our **ethical ecosystem** compelling us to start conserving this beautiful gift of nature – the environment rather than waiting for things to happen. It's high time to get WILD for LIFE or else, nature will get WILD with us.

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