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## UN agency chooses India as global host of this year's World Environment Day



UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner (left)

22 February 2011 – The United Nations Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)) today [announced](#) that India will be the global host of this year's World Environment Day (WED) on 5 June, during which the intrinsic link between quality of life and the health of forests and forest ecosystems will be highlighted.

The theme of WED 2011 – “Forests: Nature at Your Service” – complements the focus of the UN International Year of Forests.

India's 1.2 billion people continue to put pressure on forests especially in densely populated areas where people are cultivating on marginal lands and where overgrazing is contributing to desertification, according to UNEP.

However, the Indian Government has found solutions to the pressure on forests by embarking on tree-planting to combat land-degradation and desertification, including windbreaks and shelterbelts to protect agricultural land.

The country has successfully introduced projects that track the health of the plants, animals, water and other natural resources, including the Sunderbans – the largest deltaic mangrove forest in the world and home to one of India's most iconic wildlife species – the tiger.

India has also launched a compensation afforestation programme under which any diversion of public forests for non-forestry purposes is compensated through afforestation in degraded or non-

forested land. The funds received as compensation are used to improve forest management and the protection of forests and of watershed areas.

“Over close to the 40-year history of WED, India’s cities and communities have been among the most active with a myriad of events undertaken across the country each and every year. It is only fitting that this rapidly developing economy is the host in 2011,” said Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP.

“From its manufacturing of solar and wind turbines to its Rural Employment Guarantee Act, which underwrites paid work for millions of households via investments in areas ranging from water conservation to sustainable land management, foundations are being laid towards a fundamental and far reaching new development path,” added Mr. Steiner.

The South Asian country is planning one of the largest green energy projects in the world, which will generate 20,000 megawatts of solar energy and 3,000 megawatts from wind farms on 50,000 acres in the south-western state of Karnataka.

The celebrations in India on 5 June will be part of thousands of events taking place across the world. This year’s WED will emphasize how individual actions can have an exponential impact, with a variety of activities ranging from school tree-planting drives to community clean-ups, car-free days, photo competitions on forests, bird-watching trips, city park clean-up initiatives, exhibits, green petitions, nationwide green campaigns and much more, according to UNEP.

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