

Get outside, connect with the planet that sustains us, urges UN on World Environment Day

5 June 2017 – With well documented physical and mental health benefits of being in nature, the theme of this year's World Environment Day – 'Connecting People to Nature' – the United Nations is highlighting the [vast benefits](#), from food security and improved health to water supply and climatic stability, that clean environments provide to humanity.

“This is our environment. It is the keystone of a sustainable future. Without a healthy environment we cannot end poverty or build prosperity,” said [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres in a [video message](#) on the Day, commemorated annually on 5 June.

Pointing to land, water oceans, forests, and “the air that we breathe,” the UN chief reaffirmed that everyone has a role to play “in protecting our only home,” including using less plastics, driving less, wasting less food and “teaching each other to care.”

“On World Environment Day and every day let us reconnect with nature. Let us cherish the planet that protects us,” concluded Mr. Guterres.

[World Environment Day](#) is the largest global day for positive environmental action. This year, the main celebrations are hosted by Canada. The UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)) says thousands of people across six continents are joining massive clean-ups of beaches and parks, countries are protecting 1,600 square kilometres of land, and over 30 iconic landmarks, including the Empire State Building, ‘Christ the Redeemer’ statue in Rio, and Niagara Falls, will light up in green.

The Day's theme encourages people to simply ‘get back outdoors’

The 2017 edition of the Day coincides with the opening at UN Headquarters in New York of [The Ocean Conference](#), the first-ever high-level global meeting on conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. The Governments of Fiji and Sweden have the co-hosting responsibilities of the Conference.

The [2030 Agenda](#) resolves “to ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources,” in particular, the Agenda's associated Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) 14 and 15 focus on respectively [conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas and marine resources](#) and on [protecting, restoring and promoting sustainable use of land ecosystems](#).

“Our entire modern life, with its skyscrapers and smartphones, [stands on a delicate foundation of natural systems](#),” said UN Environment chief

Erik Solheim in remarks on the Day. “Today, these foundations are shaking, undermined by man-made climate change, deforestation and extinctions. No amount of advanced technology will save us if we destroy and pollute our natural lifeblood.”

Billions of rural people around the world spend every working day ‘connected to nature’ and appreciate their dependence on natural water supplies and how nature support their livelihoods in the form of fertile soil. They are among the first to suffer when ecosystems are threatened, whether by pollution, climate change or over-exploitation.

VIDEO: The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) calls on everyone this World Environment Day to show how they’re #WithNature. Featuring UNEP Goodwill Ambassadors Gisele Bündchen and Don Cheadle.

‘Connect with nature’ by visiting an iconic UNECSO-designated site

In line with the theme of the Day, ‘Connecting People with Nature,’ Irina Bokova, the Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, [invited](#) everyone to take time out from busy lives and to visit one of UNESCO’s sites including [Biosphere Reserves](#), many [Global Geoparks](#) and iconic [World Heritage sites](#) often overlying key strategic surface or groundwater resources and which bring together more than 2,000 exceptional sites around the world.

“All of them employ local people and have their doors wide open to the public, because we know now this is the surest path to more inclusive and sustainable development, respectful of the boundaries of the planet,” she said, calling women and men everywhere “to connect with the nature around them that gives beauty, meaning and harmony to the lives we lead.”