



Plant a Billion Trees ...

... and a Canopy of Hope will reach into the Sky

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: Earth in the Balance (1992)

Down-to-Earth action against climate change is being launched by UNEP so that individuals, communities, organizations, private business, and governments can play their part in averting the biggest environmental and security threat to the planet. During 2007 UNEP wants your help to plant a billion trees—a symbol of climate solidarity and a highly practical way of reducing the pollution that is causing global warming.

Plant for the Planet: The Billion Tree Campaign, launched in Nairobi in November 2006, is backed by prominent international personalities including Nobel Peace Prize laureate and Green Belt activist, Wangari Maathai.

The campaign — in which UNEP will be working with all sectors of society in all regions of the world — will utilize the power of the Internet to realize the billion tree promise. Using a new and dedicated website www.unep.org/billiontreecampaign, individuals and entities will be encouraged to enter pledges to plant anything from a single tree to several million. The website will record the running tally of pledges and publish photos and accounts from registered members of the campaign depicting what they have achieved.

The campaign builds on the success of UNEP's *Plant for the Planet* campaign. It will encourage the planting of indigenous species, and ones appropriate to the local environment. Advice on tree-planting will be made available via the website, as will information about reforestation and other tree-related issues — including links to partner organizations equipped to give advice tailored to local conditions. As ideal planting conditions vary from region to region, the campaign will operate throughout the year.

Besides focusing on tree-planting and deforestation, the *Billion Tree Campaign* will fulfill a broader symbolic purpose, highlighting not only climate change but other pressing issues including biodiversity loss and the urgent need for integrated water resource management.

Responsibility for arranging the planting will rest with the person or organization making the pledge. They can physically carry it out themselves, or pay for others to do so.

UNEP will act as a catalyst, providing leadership and federating existing tree planting activities from all over the world. It will provide a small secretariat which will raise awareness worldwide about the campaign, and about how people and organizations can join it. Landmark events, such as the 2007 World Environment Day celebrations, which will focus on climate change under the slogan of *Melting Ice: A Hot Topic?* ■

When we are planting trees sometimes people will say to me, “I don’t want to plant this tree, because it will not grow fast enough.” I have to keep reminding them that the trees they are cutting today were not planted by them, but by those who came before. So they must plant the trees that will benefit communities in the future. I remind them that like a seedling, with sun, good soil, and abundant rain, the roots of our future will bury themselves in the ground and a canopy of hope will reach into the sky.

Wangari Maathai: Unbowed – One Woman’s Story (2006)