



**United
Nations
Association
of Australia**

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY – FACT SHEET

> WHAT IS WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY?

World Environment Day (WED) is celebrated on 5 June. It is an annual event that aims to be the biggest and most widely celebrated global day for positive environmental action. It has grown to become the one of the main vehicles through which the UN stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment and encourages political attention and action. Each year World Environment Day is held by a different city with a different theme. In 2012, WED will be hosted by Rio de Janeiro, Brazil to coincide with the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development.

The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) oversees World Environment Day and works to personalise environmental issues so that everyone realises their power and responsibility to become agents for change in support of sustainable and equitable development. World Environment Day is a day for people from all walks of life to come together to ensure a cleaner, greener and brighter outlook for themselves and future generations.

> ABOUT UNEP

UNEP oversees the official proceedings of World Environment Day each year, and strives to advocate environmental issues throughout the year. Its mission is “to provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations.”

UNEP addresses and promotes action on a range of environmental issues:

- climate change;
- disaster and conflict management;
- ecosystem management;
- environmental governance;
- harmful substances and hazardous waste; and
- resource efficiency.



> WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY AND UN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

The UN Environment Program was formed in 1972 and has been celebrating World Environment Day annually. Each WED is organised around a theme that focuses attention on a particularly pressing environmental concern and is held in a different global host country where the official celebrations take place. WED highlights the environmental challenges facing that country, and supports the efforts to address them. Through decades of WED celebrations, millions of people from all over the world and from all sectors of society have taken part in environmental action. By bundling their energy, WED has the power to generate hugely positive impacts on the planet.

> RIO+20

"Rio+20 is a moment to take stock of the past 20 years of sustainable development - a moment too, to deliver the means of implementation for a very different century in a world of seven billion people."

Achim Steiner, Under-Secretary General of the United Nations and UNEP Executive Director

The Rio+20 Conference represented a significant year for environmental and sustainable development as world leaders met at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, twenty years after the first Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. One of the main themes of the conference was 'a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication.' The WED theme was linked to the Rio+20 conference as a part of the global call for action on sustainable development and a more secure environmental future for everyone.

Rio+20 brought to attention the fact that the path to a green economy is through national and local approaches, and emphasized the promotion of domestic and local action. Additionally, 'The Future We Want' was borne from Rio+20, a critical outcome document bringing to attention the most important development issues facing the world.

The conference also lay down the groundwork for the Sustainable Development Goals which have continued on from the momentum of their predecessor, the Millennium Development Goals, this time spanning across the three pillars of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental.

> GREEN ECONOMY: DOES IT INCLUDE YOU?

UNEP defines the Green Economy as one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities.

Simply put, a green economy can be thought of as an economy which is:

- low carbon;
- resource efficient; and
- socially inclusive.

A Green Economy is one whose growth is driven by public and private investments that reduce carbon emissions and pollution, enhance energy and resource efficiency, and prevent the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services.

These investments need to be initiated and supported by targeted public expenditure, policy reforms and regulation changes. The question in the theme asks you, as an individual, to find out more about the Green Economy and think about whether in your country, you are being included in it.

MORE INFORMATION:

World Environment Day

<http://www.unep.org/wed/>

UN Environment Program

<http://www.unep.org/>

Rio+20 Summit

<http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/index.html>



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