

Protecting our environment for future generations

Message from New Zealand's Minister for the Environment Trevor Mallard

Like many countries around the world, New Zealanders are proud of their country. Although we are a relatively new country, we take environment matters seriously. We owe this largely to the emphasis we put on the outdoors and the way in which this underpins our way of life.

We are fortunate enough to live in a country that has fabulous mountains to climb, rivers to traverse and bush to explore. Our moderate weather encourages a range of outdoor activities that have become synonymous with life in New Zealand.

But climate change is challenging our current lifestyle and is forcing us to change the way we do things. Already we are experiencing the impacts of climate change in New Zealand with more severe and longer droughts in on the east coast of the North Island that are having a devastating impact on our farming communities; more violent storms that are affecting our coastline's landscape; and more flooding in parts of New Zealand. The impacts of climate change affect our ecosystems, biodiversity, agriculture and marine life.

That is why we have put a climate change plan of action in place, to ensure our environment remains healthy and sustainable for future generations.

We are delighted to have been invited to host this year's event in Wellington, New Zealand and we will be doing our utmost to make sure it is a huge success across the world by engaging communities and enhancing political action.

Prime Minister Helen Clark announced in February 2007 her aim for New Zealand to be a truly sustainable nation. We have developed a strategy and plan of action that addresses the emissions of greenhouse gases across industry, business and in our homes.

World Environment Day is marked with a number of wide ranging activities that include United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) flagstone art exhibitions, photography exhibitions and children's painting competitions alongside host country activities and events.

Global activities in the past have included street rallies, bicycle parades, green concerts, school essay competitions, tree planting, recycling and clean up campaigns. For those interested in the science of climate change, there will be opportunities to engage at seminars, symposiums, workshops and conferences.

Enjoy your celebrations.