

Climate Change: A Global Issue

Message from New Zealand's Prime Minister Rt Hon Helen Clark

It was with great pleasure that New Zealand accepted the invitation to host World Environment Day 2008. Climate change is the single biggest environmental issue facing the world today and I am honoured New Zealand has been invited to host this year's event.

Droughts and floods, rising sea-levels, melting ice, degrading eco-systems, loss of biodiversity and other impacts of climate change pose the potential for problems on a global scale requiring nations to collaborate to develop solutions. Countries around the world are recognising their roles in finding creative ways to face up to unprecedented challenges.

New Zealand is very aware of its responsibility to act. We take pride in our clean, green identity as a nation and we are determined to take action to protect it. We appreciate that protecting the climate means behaviour change by each and every one of us.

In early 2007 I issued the challenge for New Zealand to become a truly sustainable nation and even to aspire to be carbon neutral. Our government has launched a comprehensive set of policies for sustainability, including an emissions trading scheme, energy strategies (including energy efficiency and conservation), and programmes to help householders and businesses become more sustainable. These are designed to meet the challenges and grasp the opportunities of climate change. During 2008 we will build on these.

Every year World Environment Day focuses us all on the critical importance of protecting our environment. It provides an opportunity to learn from the experience of others. My hope for World Environment Day 2008 is that it will motivate governments, businesses, and communities around the world to take the actions necessary to bring about lasting improvements, and by these actions ensure the ability of the planet to sustain future generations.