



# OUR PLANET

The magazine of the United Nations Environment Programme - February 2007

## CONNECTED DREAMS

Globalization and the Environment



# OUR PLANET

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To view current and past issues of this publication online, please visit  
[www.unep.org/ourplanet](http://www.unep.org/ourplanet)

ISSN 101 - 7394

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**Produced by:** UNEP Division of Communications and Public Information  
**Printed by:** Naturaprint  
**Distributed by:** SMI Books

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\* All dollar (\$) amounts refer to US dollars.

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# reflections

## by Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme

The very word globalization triggers often highly polarized views. For some it is an apocalyptic demon devouring the environment, homogenizing cultures and values and subverting equity, justice and common decency. For others it is the ultimate evolution of the market, freeing multinational corporations from government red tape and promising previously unimaginable economic development which could overcome poverty and scythe through what are seen as outdated, suffocating values.

In reality, it is neither and both — a force which can be steered in either direction and hopefully one that is deemed sensible and intelligent for people and the planet. We are missing the chance to do this amid the heated arguments, but UNEP aims to seize the moment in areas affecting its mandate and vision.

UNEP's annual Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum meetings provide an opportunity to raise the level of debate, and point towards the sustainable globalization we so urgently need. We need it because even before globalization became common parlance the Earth's ecosystem services, upon which all life depends, were declining. We need it because, at present, globalization is failing to capture the true value of nature-based goods and services. We need it because those benefiting from globalization may well do so at the expense of those unable to take part in its essentially short-term, market-led approach. And we need it because the gap between rich and poor is widening, with no evidence that wealth is 'trickling down'.

UNEP does not presume to be the first organization to organize a globalization debate. But we do perceive that a new understanding is emerging that the international community must address, fair and square, how it relates to environmental sustainability. Some pioneering corporations — including ones that depend on fisheries — are beginning to question whether the existing model is a good long term investment, whether the natural or nature-based resources upon which their profits are predicated will remain over the coming decades.

In 2001 the World Trade Organization launched the Doha Round with linkages between trade and environment; though stalled, it has firmly underlined that the globalization of trade needs managing to ensure environmental and human well being.

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Sustainably managing globalization can include many measures, from extending certification of timber and other natural resources to adopting green procurement policies. Innovative market mechanisms that start recognizing the true value of the Earth's assets are also urgently needed.

UNEP recently hosted the meeting of the parties to the Basel Convention on hazardous wastes. Globalization is triggering a massive rise in electronic wastes, some of which are being dumped in Asia and Africa: one investigation indicates that at least 100,000 computers arrive at the port of Lagos alone each month. Up to three quarters of the imports — which also includes old televisions and mobile phones — will end up in an African rubbish tip or open air incinerator.

Like any market, the global marketplace is both an economic and a social construct. Intelligent globalization implies willingness to incorporate such fundamental values as fairness and equity — and knowledge about how our planet can best sustain the production and consumption patterns of now close to 7 billion people. Environmental sustainability and social equity have emerged as key determinants of whether globalization is a viable economic development path for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. How we manage the opportunities and risks associated with it is ultimately for everyone to choose — not for some to dictate.

Johnny Clegg, the South African rock star and anti-apartheid campaigner, has chosen — and become a computer recycling businessman. Learning that his old PC was likely to end up polluting land or water, he established a company to recycle electronic waste. He has already opened a plant near Johannesburg and aims to set up an ultra-modern, high-tech factory near Cape Town recycling United States and European e-waste, and providing work for 17,000 township people. He is demonstrating that globalization is what we want it to be — a threat, or a new way of doing businesses that brings an intelligent and creative approach to conserving finite natural resources, and to benefiting the planet and its people.

Cover photo © ChinaFotoPress/Getty Images. Plastic recycled slippers float on water as part of an environmentally themed art show created for World Environment Day, 5 June, 2006, in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province, China. Looking afresh at our consumption and production patterns, and redefining our attitudes to waste and a product's lifecycle, are components of a broader discussion of the environmental implications of globalization.

# verbatim



**"Once cut, a Tesso tree begins a long journey. Indonesians log and pulp it, but a Finnish company turns it into paper in China. German and Japanese companies then distribute the paper to office suppliers in Europe and the US."**

WWF-US President Kathryn Fuller, speaking at the Brown University/Providence Journal's PAX Americana Conference (2003)

**"Globalization has two faces, one potentially very destructive, but another that presents a historic opportunity for societies like ours."**

Michelle Bachelet, President of Chile speaking to Al Jazeera Television (2006)

**"Poverty resulting from the declining fish stocks is the major reason why young people are prepared to risk drowning in the Atlantic Ocean to reach Europe."**

Yayi Bayam Diouf, Senegalese anti-migration campaigner who lost his son to drowning (2006)

**"To become a responsible consumer is not simply to purchase on the basis of the price or the specific characteristics of a product, but to make one's purchase by using human and environmental criteria."**

Association Max Havelaar on their website at [www.maxhavelaarfrance.org/](http://www.maxhavelaarfrance.org/)

**"You don't help the world's poor by dressing up in a turtle outfit and throwing a stone through a McDonald's window. You help them by getting them the tools and institutions to help themselves."**

Thomas L. Friedman, in *The World is Flat, A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (2005)

**"In a country like Kenya, we produce the best coffee and the best tea in the world. And we push our land so much in order to produce more and more coffee, so that we can make more money in the market to service those debts and of course meet some of the basic needs, and so those crops are the main reason for the destruction of the environment."**

Wangari Maathai, interviewed by TransAfrica Forum on development, the environment and globalization (2006)

**"Unscrupulous dealers are also globalized."**

Pierre Portas, Deputy Executive Secretary of the Basel Convention Secretariat, commenting on the illegal toxic waste dumping in Côte d'Ivoire (2006)

# numbers

**5**

Percentage decline of carbon storage capacity of the world's forests since 2000  
— *Worldwatch Institute*

**70**

The percentage of the world's marine fisheries that are now fished up to or beyond their sustainable limit — *UN Food and Agricultural Organization*

**36,600,000**

Net loss in hectares of forested areas worldwide between 2000 and 2005—an area bigger than Germany and nearly the size of Japan — *UN Food and Agricultural Organization*

**60**

The percentage of the world's ecosystems that are in decline or degraded to an extent that we can no longer rely on their services  
— *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment*

**100,000,000**

The number of cell phones discarded in Europe every year—only 2 per cent are recycled — *UNEP Vital Waste Graphics*

**80**

The percentage of electronic waste produced in the United States shipped overseas for disposal  
— *Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition*

**16,000**

The number of plastic bags distributed every second  
— *UNEP Vital Waste Graphics*

**2065**

Latest estimated date for full recovery of the ozone layer  
— *Ozone Secretariat*

**300,000,000**

The number of people living in China's arid west who depend on water from glaciers for their survival—7 per cent of China's glaciers are lost to melting each year — *Chinese Academy of Sciences*

**60,000,000**

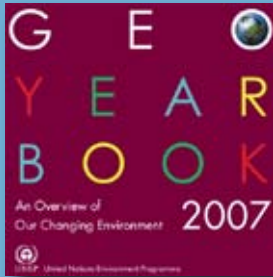
The amount in US dollars that African countries spend each year to control alien invasive water weeds, such as water hyacinth and water lettuce — *Convention on Biological Diversity*



# books

## GEO Yearbook 2007

The UNEP GEO Yearbook for 2007 features a section on Environment and Globalization. It examines risks posed by globalization for ecosystem services as well as opportunities to harness globalization trends to benefit ecosystems, support economic development, and advance human wellbeing.



## Wildlife Watching and Tourism

In this 2006 report, the UNEP-administered Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) studies the benefits and risks of the growth of tourism around the world, especially its impacts on biological diversity.



## Labour and the Environment: A Natural Synergy

Published by UNEP, the International Labour Organization, the World Health Organization, and trade unions, Labour and the Environment: A Natural Synergy explains the role that workers and their representatives can play in the implementation of sustainable development, illustrated by a number of case studies.



## UNEP 2006 Annual Report

The UNEP 2006 Annual Report looks at the organization's work and achievements during the year.



## Defending the Environment: Civil Society Strategies to Enforce International Environment Law

Linda A. Malone, Scott Pasternack (Island Press, 2006)

Defending the Environment provides strategies and detailed information for nongovernmental organizations, community groups and individuals to bring environmental and public health problems to the attention of international courts, tribunals and commissions, or to their domestic counterparts. This revised and updated edition also contains new case studies of the application of those strategies in recent years.



## Konsum. Globalisierung. Umwelt (Consumption, Globalization, Environment)

Edited by Marc Engelhardt and Markus Steigenberger (2005)  
This collection of essays and articles appeared after the McPlanet.com Conference, jointly organized by Attac, BUND and Greenpeace in cooperation with the Heinrich Böll Foundation and the UNEP collaborating centre, the Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy. Authors such as Martin Khor, Sunita Narain and Wolfgang Sachs argue that the "global consumer class" — the 20 per cent of rich global citizens that use up 80 per cent of the world's resources — can steer politicians and industry in the right direction.

## 80 hommes pour changer le monde (80 men to change the world)

Sylvain Darnil, Mathieu Le Roux (J.C. Lattes, 2005)

Imagine a world where... a bank helps all its clients escape from extreme poverty while still turning a profit... farmers do not use chemicals and yet increase their yields... packaging is biodegradable and nourishes the Earth instead of polluting it. This world exists, and this book illustrates it. The authors take us on a world tour of sustainable initiatives and positive businesses, proving that being a lucrative entrepreneur can also contribute to positive social and environmental impact. The story of 80 men and women, around the world, in all sorts of places, is an inspiring collection of innovative actions.

## Voyage aux pays du coton : Petit précis de mondialisation (Journey to the Lands of Cotton. A Brief Manual of Globalization)

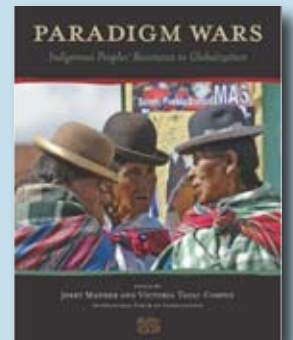
Erik Orsenna (Fayard, 2006)

In an attempt to illustrate and understand the past and present effects of globalization, Erik Orsenna takes us on a journey to the four corners of the world following the thread of the cotton trade. He visits plantations in Mali and the United States, research laboratories and huge cotton farms in Brazil, museums in Egypt, the dried out Aral Sea and the steppes of Uzbekistan, textile factories in China and France. These are all places of encounter with the raw material which has marked the history of entire countries and which to this day hundreds of millions of people still depend upon.

## Paradigm Wars: Indigenous Peoples' Resistance to Globalization

New 2nd edition (Sierra Club Books, 2006)

No community is more directly affected by economic globalization than the world's 350 million indigenous peoples, yet their voices have been largely excluded from the globalization debate. With many of the planet's remaining natural resources on indigenous lands, traditional indigenous practices of biodiversity preservation have, ironically, made these lands targets for global corporations seeking the last forests, genetic and plant materials, oil, and minerals. *Paradigm Wars: Indigenous Peoples' Resistance to Globalization* contains 28 articles on every phase of the global struggle for indigenous rights, and the stories of resistance.



## Worldchanging: A User's Guide for the 21st Century

Edited by Alex Steffen (Harry N. Abrams, 2006)

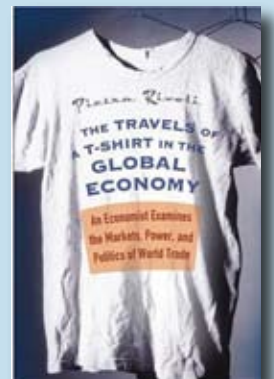
Coordinated by the co-founder of the award-winning website Worldchanging.com, this publication contains information, resources, reviews, and ideas from leading thinkers who believe that the means for building a better future lie all around us. Giving readers the tools they need to make a difference, each chapter offers new answers to key questions, such as: "Why does buying locally produced food make sense?" "What steps can I take to influence my workplace toward sustainability?" "How do I volunteer, advocate, and give more effectively?"



## The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy: An Economist Examines the Markets, Power and Politics of World Trade

Pietra Rivoli (John Wiley & Sons, 2005)

From a Texas cotton field to a Chinese factory, and from trade negotiations in Washington to a used clothing market in Africa, Pietra Rivoli uses her t-shirt to illustrate crucial lessons in the globalization debate and to demonstrate the impact of markets and politics on both rich and poor countries.



www.unep.org/publications

# people

**MARK MALLOCH BROWN** has been named a visiting fellow at the Yale Centre for the Study of Globalization. A national of the United Kingdom, Mr. Malloch Brown had served as U.N. Deputy Secretary-General to outgoing Secretary-General Kofi Annan. While at the



Centre, Mr. Malloch Brown plans to focus on writing a book on changing leadership in a globalized world. Corporate and political leaders are struggling with problems that cross borders, he said, citing concerns about AIDS, climate change and terrorist organizations. "The modern security threat is not your neighbour's army any more," he said. "I think it calls for a whole new set of leadership traits and approaches to problem solving."

**SYLVIE LEMMET**, a national of France, has been appointed Director of the UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (DTIE), based in



Paris. Ms. Lemmet holds Master's Degrees in Public Administration from Harvard University and from the Ecole Nationale d'Administration. She brings to UNEP a wealth of managerial and technical expertise, spanning many years working with the private sector, NGOs, and with international organizations, including Medecins Sans Frontières and The World Bank. More recently, she was Senior Auditor with the French Cour des Comptes, where she played an active role in the reform process of the public sector in France and participated as a member of Cour des Comptes' audit team of the UN.

**PETER GILRUTH** has been appointed Director, Division of Early Warning and Assessment (DEWA). Mr. Gilruth, an American national, holds a Master's Degree in Environmental Management and a PhD in Forestry and Forest Product Techniques. He brings to UNEP

more than 20 years experience as an environmental scientist, project manager and strategist with the US Government, academia, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and, currently, the private sector. As a scientist, Mr. Gilruth has gained international



recognition and respect, particularly in the field of environmental assessment. His career has been characterized by successes in applying environmental science, assessment and information to promoting and developing environmental policies at all level.

**IBRAHIM THIAW** has been appointed Director, Division of Environmental Policy Implementation (DEPI). Mr. Thiaw, a national of Mauritania, holds an advanced university degree in Forestry and Forest Product Techniques, and brings to UNEP more than 22 years of expertise in the fields of natural resource management and environmental policy. Since his early career with the Ministry of Rural Development of Mauritania, Mr. Thiaw has successfully developed and implemented large-scale environmental programmes and projects in Africa and globally. As IUCN Regional Director for West Africa, and most



recently as Acting Director-General of IUCN, Mr. Thiaw has been instrumental in shaping the future of environmental conservation.

**JANOS PASZTOR**, a national of Hungary, has been appointed Chief, Secretariat of the Environmental Management Group (EMG). Mr. Pasztor holds a Master's Degree in Energy and Chemical Engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Throughout his career, Mr. Pasztor has participated in high-level environmental negotiations. He began his professional career in the field of environment in

1979 and worked for more than 10 years with NGOs and academia before joining the secretariat of the UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1990. Since 1993, Mr. Pasztor has held senior positions with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), including as UNFCCC



representative in the EMG and Coordinator of the Project-based Mechanisms Programme.

French President Jacques Chirac has appointed **NICOLAS HULOT** to the Organizing Committee of the International Conference on the Environment scheduled to take place in Paris in February 2007. A French TV personality and leading environmentalist,



Nicolas Hulot has been highlighting the environmental costs of globalization for the past 20 years as the presenter of the highly-acclaimed TV eco-magazine "Ushuaïa". Now in his mid-fifties, he is increasingly active in the political arena as well, for instance initiating the Pacte écologique, which calls on all candidates for the upcoming French presidential elections to place environmental concerns at the forefront of their political agenda.

**MELS ELEUSIZOV**, the leader of the Kazakh environmental organization 'Tabigat' and a former presidential candidate, is once again mobilizing his compatriots in a bid to prevent the further deterioration of Lake Balkhash, which may soon be the site of a new nuclear power plant. Lake Balkhash is the 15th largest lake in the world, covering more than 16,000 square kilometres. Due to a number of environmental and man-made influences, such as less rainfall and the construction of a reservoir on the main tributary, the Ili River, the lake's water level is falling rapidly: by up to



2.3 meters in recent years. If nothing is done, the lake could face a similar fate as the neighbouring Aral Sea.

Bangladeshi economist **MOHAMMAD YUNUS**, founder of the Grameen Bank, was awarded the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize for his vision in providing micro-credit facilities, predominantly to women, so they can establish income-generating schemes to free themselves and their families from poverty.



Recognizing the link between poverty and environment, several UNEP initiatives use the micro-credit principle pioneered by Dr. Yunus, especially those related to promoting environmentally sustainable energy technologies at home and village level.

**ROY SESANA** leader of the Bushmen of the Kalahari, also known as the San people, won a landmark case against the Government of Botswana in December 2006. The Government of Botswana, which had evicted more than 1,000 San people from their traditional home range in the Kalahari game reserve, preventing them



from following a lifestyle they had pursued for millennia, accepted the ruling that said it had acted illegally in cutting their water supplies and compelling them to move to settlements on the edge of the reserve.



# the most

# global issue

by Joseph  
Stiglitz

The world is engaged in a grand experiment, studying what happens when you increase carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere by larger and larger amounts. The scientific community is fairly sure of the outcome – and it is not pretty. The gases act like a greenhouse to capture solar energy and, gradually, the Earth warms up. Glaciers and polar ice melts, ocean currents change, and sea levels rise. It is not yet clear how long this will take to happen, but it has been taking place far faster than even many pessimists thought even ten years ago, with far more adverse consequences.

If we had access to a thousand planets, then you could imagine conducting such an experiment on one, and if things turned out badly – as the vast majority of scientists worry it will – moving on to the next. But we don't have that choice; there isn't another planet we can move to. We're stuck here on Earth.

No issue is more global than global warming: everyone shares the same atmosphere. So while the United States alone adds almost six billion tons of carbon dioxide to it every year, contributing to climate change, everyone everywhere else will suffer the consequences. If the greenhouse gases emitted by the United States stayed over its territory, America could conduct its own experiment to study the results of filling the air over its cities with these gases. But, unfortunately, carbon dioxide molecules do not respect borders. ►

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And though emissions from the U.S. or China or any other country affect the *global* atmosphere, the United States (or China, or any other country emitting greenhouse gases) does not have to pay for the consequences of its pollution outside its borders. Thus, it has insufficient incentives to conserve.

As I point out in my recent book, *Making Globalization Work*, America — in spite of its protestations — can well afford to reduce pollution: there are countries that emit only a fraction as much greenhouse gases per person while enjoying just as high a standard of living. But not taking responsibility for its emissions does give American producers a competitive advantage over producers from countries that are doing something about their pollution. It is not surprising that many countries have not reduced their emissions. It is more so that — as part of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol — European countries, Japan, and a few others have put their own self-interest aside, in the interest of the well-being of the whole world, and agreed to do so.

As with so many aspects of globalization, it is the poor that are most likely

Important as the Kyoto Protocol was, it left out some 75 per cent of the sources of emissions: the developing countries have no obligations; America, the world's largest polluter, did not sign on; and nothing was done about deforestation, which contributes vastly to global warming.

Efficiency requires reducing greenhouse gas concentrations in the most cost-effective manner. Planting forests may be one way, but it may be even more efficient simply to preserve the world's rainforests, mostly located in developing countries. Deforestation is bad for the atmosphere for two reasons: there are fewer trees converting carbon dioxide into oxygen; and carbon stored in the wood is released into the atmosphere as it burns or decomposes.

Tropical rainforests not only reduce the level of carbon in the atmosphere: they also help preserve biodiversity. Many medicines, for example, have made use of this precious resource. The Biodiversity Convention, signed in 1992, was designed to ensure its maintenance — including providing some incentives for developing countries, but, regrettably, the United States has

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