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**Selected Satellite
 Images of Our
 Changing Environment**

Selected Satellite Images of Our Changing Environment

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We regret any errors or omissions that may have been unwittingly made.

Selected Satellite Images of Our Changing Environment



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Foreword

Scientifically valid environmental data and information are crucial to gain understanding of global change impacts and causes as well as to support enlightened decision-making. While collection and analysis of scientifically credible environmental information, particularly for developing regions, continues to be a major challenge, visualizing and communicating environmental changes through appropriate use of available information is also proving to be an equally arduous proposition. The latter can be particularly useful in understanding the outcome of human induced interference in natural systems, and in settings where the decision maker can explore alternative scenarios and develop a deeper knowledge of the context of decisions. It should be noted that even developed countries benefit from visualizing the complexities of environmental changes using satellite data, for example to detect changes in an ecosystem over time.

The overall objective of UNEP's Division of Early Warning and Assessment (DEWA) is to improve the knowledge of decision-makers at national and international levels with regard to global environmental trends, condition and emerging issues. To assist countries with their goal of sustainable development, UNEP provides these data sets on land cover changes to illustrate the impacts of existing policies on societal behaviors in land management and environmental protection.

UNEP has developed a deep understanding of the critical role of data in general, and satellite imagery in

particular, in its endeavor to raise the profile of environmental issues across all levels of governments and societies. UNEP proposes to strengthen its links with relevant institutions in industrialized countries to enhance visualization of scientific information and encourage them to make such data accessible to developing countries. The identification, acquisition and dissemination of satellite imagery of critical ecosystems will help build capacity of national-level institutions to undertake their own environmental assessments and to report more effectively to satisfy their obligations under various conventions. Improved, integrated State of the Environment reporting at the national level is expected to enhance UNEP's ability for such reporting at the global level.

This publication *Selected Satellite Images of Our Changing Environment* uses satellite images to document environmental changes during the last thirty years in 50 selected sites around the world. I hope the information provided will not only be useful in the context of selected locales, but will also underscore the intrinsic value of harnessing, visualizing and communicating technologies to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of environmental changes.



Daniel Claasen

Acting Director

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