



## **International Volunteer Day 2009**

### **Statement by the Executive Coordinator of United Nations Volunteers, Flavia Pansieri**

This year the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme celebrates International Volunteer Day (IVD) on 5 December with the theme 'Volunteering for our Planet'. UNV wants to highlight how important it is for people everywhere to get involved as volunteers in finding solutions to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

IVD is celebrated two days before the start of the United Nations Conference in Copenhagen which will discuss, and hopefully agree on, collective action to address Climate Change. We encourage everyone to volunteer for our planet in support of the United Nations campaign to Seal the Deal on a Climate Change agreement.

Volunteers played an important role in the environmental movement from its very beginning. They recognized that individual and collective action based on free will was necessary to raise awareness about environmental action and spur governments to action. Governments are increasingly recognizing both the urgency of addressing climate change, and the support they have in doing this from their citizens. In Copenhagen, they have the opportunity to turn this powerful voluntary force into agreed international actions.

Across the world, people volunteer to protect our planet in many ways, from cleaning up their neighbourhoods and organizing recycling schemes, to campaigning for renewable forms of energy. Being an environmental volunteer can support many goals, including conserving biodiversity, tackling desertification and deforestation, reducing waste and pollution, improving water quality and sanitation, and sharing information to educate others.

This year let's recognize the millions of people who are actively volunteering for the environment and to address climate change. It is important for governments and organizations to recognize the value of volunteerism to the environment and also to society in general and how it builds social cohesion. Creating appropriate legislation to support and promote Volunteerism is essential. I would hereby like to thank all governments and other partners with whom we work across the globe to promote and recognize the value of volunteerism to foster progress.

I encourage all people and organizations to celebrate International Volunteer Day and to support Volunteering for our Planet. Please go to [www.VolunteeringForOurPlanet.org](http://www.VolunteeringForOurPlanet.org) and tell us how you contribute voluntarily to protecting our planet. We are tracking how many hours volunteers contribute worldwide; they will send a powerful message to delegates in Copenhagen that committed citizens, everywhere, support a climate change agreement and people are taking action as volunteers to be a part of the solution.

As we celebrate International Volunteer Day, I would like to pay a special tribute to the two UNV volunteers who lost their lives in the attack on a UN guest house in Afghanistan in October. Today, I also want to recognize all volunteers who serve with dedication in often difficult circumstances to promote peace and development. Thank you for your selfless action.

You, the volunteers, are our inspiration in action.