



International Volunteer Day 2009
Statement by the UNDP Administrator, Helen Clark

This year's International Volunteer Day on 5 December occurs just days prior to the opening of the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. There, it is hoped that world leaders will make progress on an agreement which is positive for our climate and for poverty reduction and development too.

While a new climate agreement is urgently needed, each of us can also make an enormous difference for the better in protecting our planet and achieving the MDGs. Volunteers and volunteerism have an important role to play in this.

The climate crisis is one of the greatest ongoing challenges our world faces. Indications are that climate change is taking place faster than previously predicted. It is the world's poor – especially poor women in developing countries – who are the hardest hit by its impacts.

Volunteers who work alongside marginalized, poor, and displaced communities can help them to tackle the climate challenges they face.

UNDP is supporting countries to develop low carbon growth, energy access, and adaptation strategies – and to place them at the heart of their national development plans. And we are supporting the least developed countries to be able to access climate finance now and in the future.

We are proud to co-operate closely with UNV as it seeks to channel volunteers and volunteerism to help tackle climate challenge and environmental degradation, and to promote sustainable development.

The tragic deaths in October of two UNV volunteers working on the elections in Afghanistan remind us that volunteers often work in difficult circumstances and at great personal risk. I pay tribute to those who died. They sought only to help others.

On the occasion of this International Volunteer Day, I pay tribute to the dedication and achievements of the millions of volunteers worldwide, including the 8,000 UNV volunteers, who work so tirelessly to help protect our climate and achieve the MDGs.