



Organization of American States

Message from the Department of Sustainable Development on World Environment Day



Since its inception on June 5, 1973, World Environment Day (WED) has increasingly been embraced as an opportunity for introspection by individuals, Governments and corporations on the state and fate of our planet and to ponder ways in which the livelihoods of current and future citizens of the world can be assured.

It is always in this context, that the Department of Sustainable Development (DSD) of the Organization of American States has observed World Environment Day 2011.

The United Nations (UN) has quite fittingly dedicated 2011 the International Year of the Forests (IYF) under the slogan of "Celebrating forest for people." The OAS-DSD wholeheartedly supports the aims of the IYF which include, increasing awareness of the sustainable management, conservation, and development of forests. These aims are central to sustaining the livelihoods of all the world's citizens, but more especially the people of the Americas which boasts over a billion acres of rainforest which produces over twenty percent of the world's oxygen. There can be little doubt therefore that the unsustainable use of the Earth's forests would severely disrupt the plethora of environmental services that forests provide, including the absorbing of a quarter of the world's carbon emissions, accommodating more than half of the planet's species of animals, birds, and insects, and supporting the livelihoods of around 400 million of the world's poorest people.



Amazonian canopy in Tambopata National Reserve in Peru.

The critical role of forests survival of the Earth's natural environment is inextricably linked to the survival of mankind. Therefore, decisive and concerted action in all quarters and at all scales and levels is the only way forward. With the support from OAS Member states, the DSD is dedicated to integrating environmental policies with poverty alleviation, and socio-economic development goals throughout the region. Furthermore, the DSD continues to urge both civil society and governments to consolidate efforts in maintaining the health of our forests and planet, and encourages individuals to take simple steps to incorporate green practices into daily activities such as utilizing public transportation, conducting do-it-yourself energy audits, and consuming local foods, among others.

The DSD is integrally involved in the preparatory process of the Rio +20, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, and welcomes all opportunities to strengthen work among member states, international institutions, governments, civil society, and non-governmental organizations from around the world towards environmental conservation, economic development, and a more sustainable future. We urge all citizens of the world and especially those in the Americas whatever they can to support this cause. For truly, WE ARE THE WORLD!

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