

The Sleeping Environmentalist in You and Me

by
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World Environment Day on the 5th of June this year had the theme: 'UNiting together to prevent global climate change' (www.unep.org)

'Oh my goodness, do we have an Environmental Day now as well?'

Or: "Oh dear, I totally forgot this one again" are some of the whispered remarks I can hear. Surely you and I don't have to worry about this day, we are environmentally conscious, we love our trips out into nature, we don't throw our rubbish around and we do take beautiful pictures out in the wild.....

World Environment Day is one of the principal vehicles through which the United Nations stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment and enhances political attention and action. This year's agenda was to:

1. Give a **human face to environmental issues;**
2. Empower **people to become active agents of sustainable and equitable development;**
3. Promote an understanding that **communities are pivotal to changing attitudes toward environmental issues;**
4. Advocate partnership which will ensure **all nations and peoples enjoy a safer and more prosperous future.**

Mexico, who was the host this year, is also a leading partner in UNEP's Billion Tree Campaign. The country, with the support of its President and people, has spearheaded the pledging and planting of some 25 per cent of the trees under the campaign. Accounting for around 1.5 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, the country is demonstrating its commitment to climate change on several fronts. (Source: www.unep.org)

Caring for the environment as a child, bring back memories of the people who were called 'Fauna & Flora'. They wore these khaki green uniforms with lapels on the shoulders and I remembered vaguely that my thoughts of them were 'the guys who took care and protected the environment, a place somewhere out there that has a big fence around it to keep everyone out who could disturb the area'. The last couple of years the big shock came to all of us when it was thrown wide open; (Al Gore took the lead with 'An Inconvenient Truth') that the environment, this place all around us, not just the fenced-in ones, are in big trouble.

How do we go about from here? There is no doubt that we all should get Energy Efficient RIGHT NOW (ways of how to do it in the next feature: *From Global Polluter to Global Cooler*).

One of the easiest and most cost effective things one can start with immediately, is to PLANT TREES, billions of trees. A single tree can absorb ONE ton of CO₂ over its life time and 40 trees can absorb ONE ton CO₂ PER YEAR. If you happen to live in an apartment building or do not have space to plant trees, there are many Tree Planting Programs active around the world; Trees for Africa being close to home. Do you know how many trees you need to plant to make your life style CO₂ neutral? A tree a day.....for two years continuously.

You can measure your CO₂ footprint on www.co2.org or our own version called 'CAP carbon footprint calculator' supplied by South African Climate Action Partnership, www.cap.org.za

Such a non-profit organization 'Trees for the future' who has been planting trees all over the world for more than 30 years, got my support and by donating trees to be planted on my behalf, I could neutralize my car's CO2 emissions (SA's own electric vehicle is still about 3 years away from full production!).

The Environment has YOUR face and MY face printed on it; YOU and I are the active agents to make sustainable living a reality; YOU and I form the community who must change our attitude towards the environment; and only YOU and I can ensure a safer and prosperous future for the next generations to come.