

**United Nations Development Programme**



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Speech

***Launch of World Environment Day 2008 -  
"Go GREEN -  
Get to Grips with Climate Change"***

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## **GO GREEN - Get To Grips With Climate Change**

Yang Berhormat Datuk Ong Ka Chuan, Housing and Local  
Government Minister  
Y.Bhg. Dato' Teo Chiang Kok, 1 Utama Director  
Distinguished guests  
Members of the media  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon,

As a concerned citizen of Malaysia, I am very happy to be here for the 2008 World Environment Day celebration at 1 Utama. It is a genuine pleasure to volunteer my time whenever possible, for causes I feel strongly about.

With a population of over 6 billion, how do we overcome the problem of sustaining our current lifestyle habits? The greatest challenge confronting us, mankind, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is our sustainability on this planet and the global climate crisis. Climate change is not just an environmental issue. It is much more because it forces us to question the very foundation of the development that has shaped our world since the Great Industrial Revolution, including our addiction to oil.

The crisis we face today arises from the accumulated results of two centuries of unsustainable: industrial development, energy production, clearing of forests; unsustainable lifestyles and consumption patterns.

To put it another way, we have used the global atmosphere as a free good without consideration of the consequences.

We are already suffering the consequences of unsustainability now; flooding, landslides, over-flowing rubbish landfills, acid rain, haze, poisonous pollution and numerous "natural" disasters which affect also our economy.

Meanwhile, there is alarming and overwhelming scientific evidence that the world is moving toward the tipping point, at which irreversible

ecological catastrophe and reversals in our (human) progress would be unavoidable.

Socially, the impacts are already being felt with economic dislocations across the world – from food riots in Haiti to the devastating destruction in Myanmar. And it is the poor who are hardest hit. But we all feel the impact, so there's no time like the present to realize something can be done about it!

On this World Environment Day, the message which I bring to you, my fellow Malaysians, is that we are all part of the solution. You, as a consumer, have incredible power to create change. Whether you are an individual, a business or a government, there are many steps you can take to reduce your ecological footprint. It is message we all must take to heart.

Around the world, nations are looking afresh at green options. Here in Malaysia, I feel we are beginning to do the same. However, we sorely lack real action.

Our ecological footprint, as human beings, is a measure of how much energy and resources we consume to sustain ourselves, compared with nature's ability to **renew** these resources.

Every action we take, from where we build our house, to how we supply ourselves with water and electricity, every tree we cut, how much we drive our cars, whether or not we recycle etc., all has an affect on our environment. As the Malay proverb goes, *"Though a tree grows so high, the falling leaves return to the root."*

Just as no one is immune from the adverse impacts of climate change, **no one** is exempt from responsibility. The latest UNDP Human Development Report states that with 0.4% of the world's population, Malaysia accounts for 0.6% of global emissions - an average of 7.5 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per person. This means that the carbon footprint of the average Malaysian is now larger than that of France. If all countries in the world were to emit CO<sub>2</sub> at similar levels, we would exceed our sustainable carbon budget by approximately 237%!

So what can we do about it?

At the policy level, tackling climate change requires us to put a **premium** on environmental conservation. Halting the destruction of our rainforests,

home access for recycling, tax incentives to purchase a hybrid or bio-fuel car and environmentally friendly products. Legislation for retailers that requires them to take back unwanted packaging, encouraging the use of eco-friendly packaging such as palm oil husk product, instead of polystyrene and plastic, are but some examples.

At the individual level, it requires us to make a wholehearted commitment to going green, which doesn't necessarily mean going without, but entails making thoughtful and deliberate choices as **consumers** to reduce our harmful impact and practice sustainable consumption. Energy saving light-bulbs for example; efficient and minimizes waste.

The production, processing, transportation, and packaging of the food we consume, can all contribute to environmental damage. Buying locally produced products is already lowering your ecological footprint because of the reduction of transportation.

When you buy green products you show the corporations who make them, that our environment is important to you. As consumer- behaviour gets greener, product manufacturers will respond by making more of their products better for the environment.

This trend in moral responsibility in consumerism has much potential to grow in Malaysia. I reject plastic whenever possible and bring my own shopping bags. In my family we separate and recycle all our rubbish, we keep our water and electricity consumption low, run lower-fuel consumption vehicles, we buy organic and environmentally friendly products; for example all our organic chicken, fish and vegetables come from a farm only an hour away. Due to demand, it is now a neighbourhood shop.

We have found this relatively easy and simple, except for the availability of recycling disposal in neighbourhoods, so it could be easier for every household if the government and private sector gets involved and implements actions for Green consumerism, which includes not just what we buy, but also how we live.

Good planets are hard to find. Actions taken—or not taken— right now, will have a profound bearing on our future. If we continue on our current course of oil-driven economic growth and carbon-intensive lifestyles, we unfortunately, have no where else to go.

On this World Environment Day, I urge the private sector, state and national governments, and all citizens to seize this opportunity to promote urgent and lasting **action**. The world cannot wait another ten or twenty years in theoretical debates and political negotiations. Whatever else divides us, humanity shares a single planet.

No matter what you're religion, I'm sure many of us would like to be free to reach greater enlightenment in knowledge and spiritually be more at peace; we cannot do this if our earth cannot sustain us. Let us work together to truly make Malaysia "Green" with an ecological footprint that is sustainable for all our future generations to come.

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