



India will be for the first time ever the global host of World Environment Day 2011 (WED) on 5 June.

This year's theme '**Forests: Nature at Your Service**' underscores the intrinsic link between quality of life and the health of forests and forest ecosystems. The WED theme also supports this year's UN International Year of Forests.

India is a country of 1.2 billion people who continue to put pressure on forests especially in densely populated areas where people are cultivating on marginal lands and where overgrazing is contributing to desertification.

But the Indian Government has also found solutions. While the socio-economic pressures on the country's forests are tremendous, India has instituted a tree-planting system to combat land-degradation and desertification, including windbreaks and shelterbelts to protect agricultural land.

In conserving its critical ecosystem, India has successfully introduced projects that track the health of the nation's plants, animals, water and other natural resources, including the Sunderbans - the largest deltaic mangrove forest in the world, and home to one of India's most iconic wildlife species: the tiger.

India has also launched a compensation afforestation programme under which any diversion of public forests for non-forestry purposes is compensated through afforestation in degraded or non-forested land. The funds received as compensation are used to improve forest management, protection of forests and of watershed areas. Moreover, a government authority has been created specifically to administer this programme.

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director, said: "Over close to the 40-year history of WED, India's cities and communities have been among the most active with a myriad of events undertaken across the country each and every year—so it is only fitting that this rapidly developing economy is the host in 2011."

"India's offer to host WED is another expression of India's strong commitment to work with the global community for sustainable development," says Dr. T. Chatterjee,

Secretary for Environment and Forests of the Government of India.

Two of India's most prominent cities - Mumbai and Delhi - will be the venue for this year's global celebration of the environment, with a myriad of activities over several days to inspire Indians and people around the world to take action for the environment.

The celebrations in India on 5 June are part of thousands of events taking place around the globe. WED 2011 will emphasize how individual actions can have an exponential impact, with a variety of activities ranging from school tree-planting drives to community clean-ups, car-free days, photo competitions on forests, bird-watching trips, city park clean-up initiatives, exhibits, green petitions, nationwide green campaigns and much more.