

International Mother Earth Day — UN Secretary-General's Message 2024

Humanity is acting like Mother Earth's delinquent child.

We depend on nature for the food we eat, the air we breathe, and the water we drink. Yet, we have brought chaos to the natural world: poisoning our planet with pollution, wiping out species and ecosystems with abandon, and destabilising our climate with greenhouse gas emissions.

These actions harm nature, and they harm humanity. We are imperilling food production, polluting our ocean and air, creating a more dangerous, less stable environment, and holding back sustainable development.

Together, we must restore harmony with nature, embrace sustainable production and consumption, and protect ourselves from harm – creating jobs, reducing poverty and driving sustainable development as we do so.

That means slamming the brakes on biodiversity loss, putting a stop to pollution, and slashing greenhouse gas emissions globally. It means supporting Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and others being hit hardest by the pollution, climate and biodiversity crises. It means delivering climate justice to countries on the frontline of climate chaos, and swiftly mobilising the finance and support countries need to act on climate, protect nature and promote sustainable development.

Countries must produce new national climate plans that align with limiting the rise in global temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius. These can double as national transition plans and national investment plans, underpinning sustainable development for generations to come. And the G20 must lead a fast, fair and funded global phaseout of fossil fuels, and put a stop to nature-wrecking subsidies, such as those that underwrite runaway production of planet-choking plastics.

Repairing relations with Mother Earth is the mother of all of humanity's challenges. We must act – and act now – to create a better future for us all.