



#OnlyOneEarth

A Practical Guide to living sustainably
in harmony with nature

Developed for World Environment Day 2022



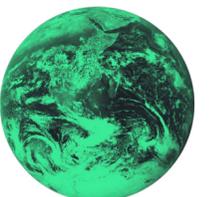
Image: Zhang Fengsheng/Unsplash



Contents

Introduction	3
Join the #OnlyOneEarth campaign for World Environment Day 2022	4
A planetary SOS.....	4
Transformative change.....	5
Making sustainable living the default option.....	5
Earth Action Numbers: Making your actions count!.....	6
A guide to World Environment Day actions	7
Governments	8
Close the emissions gap - now!.....	8
Protect and restore nature.....	8
Clean up our air and water.....	9
Cities and local authorities	10
Climate action.....	10
Nature action.....	10
Pollution action.....	10
Finance	12
Investment.....	12
Commercial banking.....	12
Insurance.....	12
Development finance.....	12

Business and industry	14
Energy and climate.....	14
Products and materials.....	14
Transport.....	15
Food systems.....	15
Non-government organizations, community organizations, and faith groups	16
Take the initiative.....	16
Join forces.....	16
Lead by example.....	16
Science and education	18
Push the boundaries with research.....	18
Build change-makers with education.....	18
Lead by example.....	18
Individuals	20
Raise your voice.....	20
Make sustainable choices.....	20
Money.....	20
Food.....	21
Stuff.....	21
Moving.....	21
Fun.....	22



Introduction

Climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste –evidence that Earth is “code red” is all around us and growing more ominous every day. At the same time, billions of people are short of income, food, shelter, health care and education. Energy and food crises on the heels of the COVID-19 pandemic and a spike in conflicts around the world are further causes for concern.

The way out of this dilemma is to transform our economies and societies to make them inclusive, fair and more connected with nature. We must shift from harming the planet to healing it. We must protect what we have and bring back what we lost to advance to a better, more sustainable future, where everyone can thrive.

[World Environment Day 2022](#) can help accelerate this shift.

This year’s campaign, #OnlyOneEarth, highlights the need to reset the balance with nature through transformative changes in how we eat, live, work and move around.

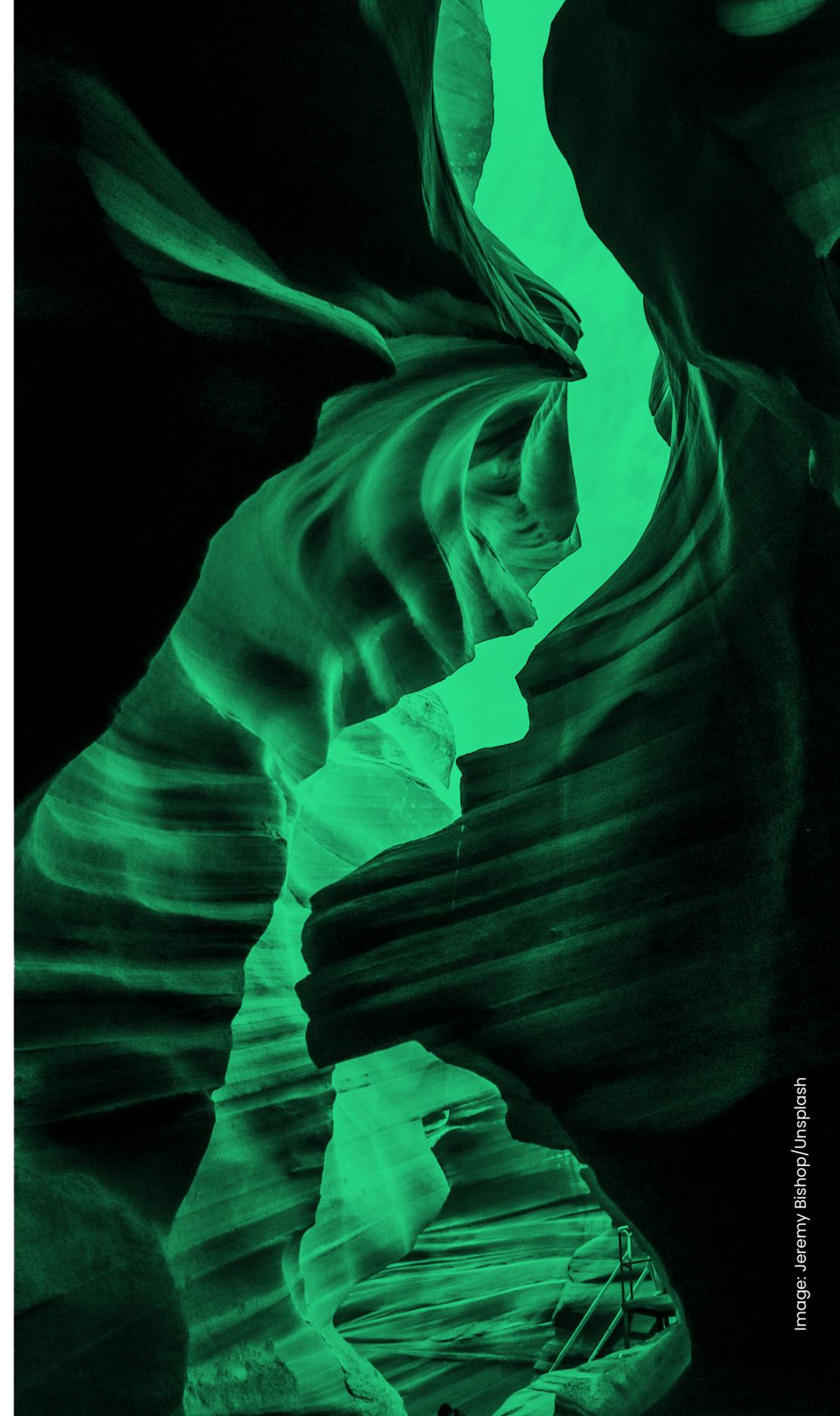
This guide presents actions that communities, organizations and people everywhere can take. It spotlights the key responsibility of governments, cities, business, faith groups and finance to make sustainable living possible by transforming consumption, production, infrastructure, investment and land use. It also includes examples of personal decisions to effect change and push for action.

Accelerating the advance towards sustainability is critical. In many cases, the solutions are already available, affordable and scalable. We can still avoid the worst of the climate crisis. We can halt further biodiversity loss. We can protect and revive degraded ecosystems. We can clean up our air, water and soil. We can repair our relationship with nature, and we can still achieve the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), agreed in 2015 by all countries in the United Nations. But we need to act now.

Humanity has come together before to prevent environmental catastrophes, mend the ozone layer, support vulnerable communities, restore millions of hectares of land and marine ecosystems protecting thousands of species, and ban dangerous pollutants – saving countless lives.

Let those victories be the torches that ignite more action and illuminate the path to a world in which we can live at peace with nature.

**In the universe are billions of galaxies,
In our galaxy are billions of planets,
But there is #OnlyOneEarth.
Let’s take care of it.**



Join the #OnlyOneEarth campaign for World Environment Day 2022

“Only One Earth” was the slogan for the [1972 Stockholm Conference](#), which put sustainable development on the global agenda and led to the establishment of the [UN Environment Programme](#) and World Environment Day.

Fifty years later, our reliance on this beautiful blue planet, and the stresses we place upon it, are more evident than ever. Adopting [#OnlyOneEarth](#) as the motto for World Environment Day 2022 emphasizes that time is running out to bring people and nature back into balance.

The campaign invites everyone to celebrate our Earth through collective action to address one or more aspects of the triple planetary emergency: climate change, biodiversity and nature loss, pollution and waste. Beyond what individuals can do, governments and business are best placed to leverage the power and finance needed to put in place the policies and infrastructures for sustainable living.

Youth and civil society play a key role in advocating for change. But all groups in society can and must take action to transform how we consume and manage the Earth and its resources.

World Environment Day 2022 comes at a crucial time. We are in the [Decade of Action](#) to meet the SDGs, the [UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030](#) is gaining momentum, and critical decisions will be taken in the coming months on protecting the climate and biodiversity.

Key dates around World Environment Day 2022 include:

- **20 April: Launch of the #OnlyOneEarth campaign**
- **9–20 May: UN Convention to Combat Desertification COP15, Abijan, Côte d’Ivoire**
- **14 May: World Migratory Bird Day**
- **22 May: International Day for Biological Diversity**
- **2–3 June: Stockholm+50 high-level meeting, Stockholm, Sweden**
- **5 June: World Environment Day 2022**
- **8 June: World Oceans Day 2022**
- **6–17 June: COP Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions Geneva, Switzerland**
- **9 August: International Day of Indigenous People**
- **12 August: International Youth Day**
- **29 August – 13 September: UN Biodiversity Conference, Kunming, China**

- **13–27 September 2022: 77th Session of the UN General Assembly**
- **7–18 November 2022: UN Climate Change Conference (COP 27), Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt**
- **10 December: Human Rights Day**

A planetary SOS

Earth faces a triple planetary emergency: the climate is heating up too quickly for people and nature to adapt; habitat loss and other pressures mean an estimated 1 million species are threatened with extinction; and pollution continues to poison our air, land and water.

- Earth’s climate has already warmed by [about 1°C](#) since pre-industrial times, with significantly larger increases over land. As a result, seasons are shifting and storms are intensifying; floods, droughts, heatwaves and wildfires are becoming more frequent and devastating.
- The climate crisis is adding to the [pressures on nature](#), as species and ecosystems struggle to adapt. Critical habitats from rainforests to wetlands continue to be lost to human expansion, including deforestation to make way for farming. Logging, overfishing and the illegal wildlife trade are hollowing out populations of rare plants and animals.

- Air pollution, much of it from the burning of fossil fuels, causes around [7 million](#) premature deaths a year. Nutrients from farming, sediment from soil erosion and discarded plastic waste are polluting both fresh and coastal waters

Science shows that these interlinked crises are the result of our unsustainable use of the planet's resources and the irresponsible disposal of our waste. Our demand for resources overshoots Earth's capacity to provide them by [an estimated 75 per cent](#); people significantly impact nearly [three-quarters of ice-free land](#) and two-thirds of the oceans; and greenhouse gas emissions must be [halved in the next eight years](#) to keep global warming below 1.5°C. There is new evidence that households are associated with two-thirds of all greenhouse gas emissions, and the latest [IPCC report](#) shows that sustainable lifestyles and behaviours could reduce our emissions by 40–70 per cent by 2050.

Transformative change

Tackling Earth's interlinked environmental and social challenges requires holistic solutions. Piecemeal actions have failed to prevent the problems, and systemic, transformative changes are needed to answer Earth's call for help.

The good news is the solutions and the technology exist and are increasingly affordable.

As laid out in a [landmark UNEP report](#), transformative change involves shifts in world views and values in addition to the technological, economic and social organization of our societies. It involves innovation, learning and cooperation, and the adaptation of governance structures, policies, business

models, technologies and diverse knowledge systems. It requires cross-sectoral planning and integrated approaches to find synergies and manage trade-offs in areas including food, mobility, construction, water, energy, ecosystems and human health.

Making sustainable living the default option

Truly transformative options need to be available, affordable and attractive to individuals so that they can make better daily decisions. Many of these options can only be created by larger entities: national and sub-national governments, financial institutions, businesses, international organizations, and other organizations with the power to rewrite the rules, frame our ambition and open up new horizons.

For World Environment Day 2022, these entities are urged to become agents of transformative change. Those already committed can set in motion new policies, planning and investments. Where change has begun, it can be accelerated and scaled up.

Individuals and civil society actors are pivotal advocates, awareness-raisers and supporters. The more we raise our voices, emphasize what needs to be done and point out who is responsible, the faster change will come. Successful advocacy also involves accountability – calling out players who are moving too slowly or not living up to their commitments.

Along with energy, production systems and the protection of biodiversity, key areas for transformation include global trade and transport systems, how we build and live in our homes,

cities and places of work and worship, how and where our money is invested, food systems, and what we do for fun.

Work on this inspiring agenda has already begun and is gathering momentum. By supporting World Environment Day 2022 and the #OnlyOneEarth campaign and throwing your weight behind solutions such as those outlined below, you can help ensure that this unique and beautiful planet remains a comfortable home for humanity.



Share your #OnlyOneEarth action for #WorldEnvironmentDay!

The theme of [World Environment Day](#) is “Only One Earth,” and we want to showcase the wave of transformative action already underway to protect and restore our common home.

We’re asking people and organizations around the world to use numbers to highlight their activities, and to post these on their social media channels and share on our world map to inspire others to take action for people and planet.

Taking part in “Earth Action Numbers” is simple, here’s how to join in 3 easy steps.

1

Decide the action you want to share and write your post as two points that each start with a number.

Here are a few examples:

Example A:

2 million dollars of pension funds divested from fossil fuels.

1 company.

Example B:

60 bags of collected rubbish.

30 primary school students cleaning our river.

Example C:

5 people in our family home.

1 renewable energy provider powering it.

2

Help us put your action on the world map!

Go to <https://action.worldenvironmentday.global/>, log your action and get a downloadable social media card you can share with your followers.

3

Take a photo or record a short video showing the earth action you are taking. Get creative with the presentation! Then post it on your social media channels. Include your two Earth Action Numbers, and add #OnlyOneEarth and #WorldEnvironmentDay to the final line, like this:

1,235 kWh of solar energy.

10 electric buses in our city.

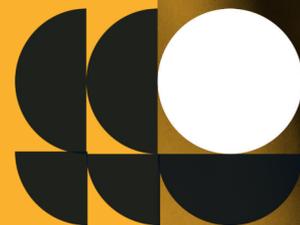
#OnlyOneEarth #WorldEnvironmentDay

Make sure to tag @UNEP, as we’ll be curating community contributions on our digital channels.

A guide to World Environment Day actions

Everyone everywhere can help create a more sustainable planet. On the following pages are some of the actions that organizations and people can take. Find the level (or levels) where you can be most effective, take inspiration from these suggestions and work out how you can have the biggest impact.

Share your action by taking part in the Earth Action Numbers, and using **#OnlyOneEarth** and **#WorldEnvironmentDay** on social media.



Governments

Only governments can implement cross-sectoral transformative change at scale. Whether at the global, national or regional level, governments are key drivers of sustainability. Ambitious and consistent policies and their sustained implementation by committed leaders are essential.

Along with regulating and setting the financial framework for human activities, and implementing environmentally-friendly policies; how governments use public funds – to equip offices or organize staff travel, for instance – creates market demands and sets examples.

World Environment Day is a great platform for leaders and governments everywhere to step up their sustainability commitments and transform their own activities and implement the policies that will enable everyone to solve the triple planetary crisis.

Here are some key areas for action, several of which bring benefits across the three emergencies:

Close the emissions gap - now!

To avoid a climate catastrophe, greenhouse gas emissions need to fall 45 per cent by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050. It can be done if all governments ramp up their commitments under the [Paris Agreement](#) and take strong action now to slash emissions.

- Lead from the top. Make the day-to-day operations of all government agencies carbon neutral by 2030.
- Sign up to, finance and implement national policies to meet the [Paris Agreement](#).
- Phase out fossil fuels and end fossil fuel subsidies.
- Introduce policies that incentivize renewable energy and promote energy efficiency.
- Tax carbon. Adding a price to carbon will incentivize industries to develop climate-friendly processes and products, and property developers to build in energy efficiency.
- Invest in renewable energy infrastructure, energy efficiency and clean transport initiatives to lock in sustainability.
- Promote and support climate-smart and sustainable agriculture.
- Halt and reverse deforestation.
- Ensure all government finances – including pensions, savings and insurance – are kept in portfolios that support sustainable initiatives and do not harm the climate, human health or nature.
- Use procurement powers to promote sustainable living. For example, offer only healthy foods with a low carbon footprint in canteens for public servants and incentivize staff to walk, cycle, and use public transport to come to work.

Links

<https://www.unep.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2021>

<https://www.iea.org/reports/net-zero-by-2050>

<https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/transport>

Protect and restore nature

Governments need to take strong action globally and nationally to halt the decline of nature and restore terrestrial and marine ecosystems. Past targets have been missed, so new objectives must be backed by strong action plans and financial support.

- Take the lead in agreeing and implementing an ambitious and inclusive [post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework](#) to halt and reverse biodiversity loss and ensure the sustainable use of nature.
- Announce support for the [UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030](#) and take action to revive the [1 billion hectares pledged to restoration](#) globally.
- [Overhaul your national accounting system](#) to put natural capital at the heart of assessments of human wealth and prosperity, and use them to guide economic policy.
- Launch reforms of tax structures and subsidies so that sustainable production provides jobs and prosperity, and environmental degradation no longer pays.
- Follow through on the [Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use](#) to protect and restore forests.

- Engage with local, indigenous and faith communities to understand how to strengthen compliance with laws and policies designed to protect ecosystems.

Links

<https://www.decadeonrestoration.org/>

<https://www.unep.org/resources/making-peace-nature>

<https://www.unep.org/resources/inclusive-wealth-report-2018>

Clean up our air and water

Air pollution kills millions of people prematurely every year and contributes to the climate crisis. Despite progress in some regions, indoor and outdoor air quality is still dangerously poor in many places. Meanwhile, plastics, chemicals and waste continue to flow into our oceans. These kill marine life, create dead zones and load our waters with millions of tons of microplastic particles, associated with [serious human health impacts](#) and unknown long-term effects on people and nature.

Pollution action governments can take:

- Forge an international agreement to end plastic pollution after 175 nations backed [the call for a new treaty](#) at the 2022 UN Environment Assembly.
- Ban, restrict or tax the use of single-use plastics such as plastic bags, packaging, bottles and cutlery.
- Improve waste management systems so that the right infrastructure is available to receive waste and ensure a high proportion can be reused or recycled.

- Reduce deadly air pollution by adopting the latest [WHO air quality guidelines](#) and closely monitor and incentivize compliance.
- Support the development of clean and affordable renewable energy, including for cooking, heat and light.
- Launch and implement cleaner transport policies, to enable citizens and products to move around their towns and country without causing air pollution.

Links

<https://www.unep.org/interactives/beat-plastic-pollution/>

<https://breathelife2030.org/>



Cities and local authorities

More than half of the world's 8 billion people live in urban areas, and that share is growing. Towns and cities often bear the brunt of the triple planetary crisis, and local and regional governments are at the forefront of the response. Responsible municipal and local authorities and their leaders are seizing the opportunity to design the environmentally and socially sustainable settlements of the future.

Some things that cities and local authorities can do:

Climate action

- Lead from the top. Make the day-to-day operations of all local government agencies carbon neutral by 2030.
- Lock in low emissions for generations to come and help meet the [Paris Agreement](#) targets by building sustainable infrastructure and renewable energy systems across your community.
- Create sustainable and efficient public transit systems as well as safe and effective routes for pedestrians and cyclists to reduce car use, travel times and congestion.
- Ensure all local government finances – including pensions, savings and insurance – are kept in portfolios that support sustainable initiatives that do not harm the climate, human health or nature.

- Set climate-smart building codes to incorporate better insulation and ventilation, solar panels, heat pumps, vehicle charging points and more – blaze the trail by retrofitting public buildings!
- Join the [Race to Zero](#), a global campaign rallying support for a healthy, resilient, net-zero recovery, and tap resources from initiatives such as UNEP's UrbanShift programme, the C40 network of mayors and ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability.

Links

- <https://racetozero.unfccc.int/system/cities/>
- <https://www.shiftcities.org/>
- <https://iclei.org/en/Home.html>

Nature action

- Restore urban ecosystems and deploy nature for sustainable development in areas such as urban wetlands and green corridors to provide habitat for biodiversity, counter threats like heatwaves and floods, and make cities more liveable.
- Provide clean water and sanitation for all to cut the pollution of waterways and ecosystems within and beyond urban areas, as well as to prevent disease.

- Join the [CitiesWithNature](#) initiative and register new commitments and actions to protect biodiversity in your city or other urban space.
- Rewild and restore existing public spaces and abandoned sites by decreasing mowing and encouraging natural regeneration so that trees, insects, birds, butterflies and even mammals return and thrive in cities.

Links

- <https://citieswithnature.org/>
- <https://naturvation.eu/atlas>
- <https://cities4forests.com/>

Pollution action

- Launch and support initiatives with communities, the private sector and others to secure support and agree a transformative pathway, and integrate planning systems to make your sustainable urban vision a reality.
- Collect, separate and safely dispose of waste to protect land and water while encouraging waste reduction and recycling by both citizens and businesses.
- Capture gas from landfills and organic waste to use as a substitute for fossil fuels.

- Set targets for the rapid reduction of plastic waste generation and pollution in your municipality and devise campaigns and actions to achieve them.
- Enforce low-emissions zones in densely populated areas so only clean vehicles and public transit can use those streets.
- Bring your city into [UNEP's BreatheLife network](https://breathelife2030.org/breathelife-cities/become-a-breathelife-city/) so you can find and share the best ways to improve urban air quality

Links

<https://breathelife2030.org/breathelife-cities/become-a-breathelife-city/>

<https://globalabc.org/resources/publications/decarbonizing-building-sector-10-key-measures>



Finance

Achieving sustainability requires a seismic shift in finance. Encouraging industries to shift to renewable resources, and slash pollutants and greenhouse gases can ease the pressure on nature. Investment must flow into activities that value nature and bring prosperity to all without harming the environment.

Robust and transparent environment, social and governance (ESG) approaches, due diligence and disclosure can drive transformative change while protecting the financial sector from accusations of greenwashing.

From development finance institutions and investment funds to insurance companies and commercial banks, investors of all kinds must finance the future and take the heat off the planet!

All financial players should align their business strategies with global and national sustainability goals, including the SDGs, the [Paris Agreement](#) and the upcoming Biodiversity Framework.

Here are some specific ways to make a difference:

Investment

- Join the [Global Investors for Sustainable Development](#) and [the Net-Zero Asset Owners Alliance](#).

- Implement the UN-backed [Principles of Responsible Investing](#).
- Set a target date for the decarbonization of your company's external portfolios and favour securities in companies pursuing high ESG standards.
- Disclose deforestation, soil degradation, waste generation and other practices harming ecosystems associated with your investments.
- Mobilize investment in activities like sustainable forestry and fisheries that restore ecosystems and benefit both people and nature.
- Adopt policies and targets that shift capital, investments and finance to companies using recycled plastic or alternatives to plastic, or sustainable feedstock.
- Ensure all internal corporate finances – including pensions, savings and insurance – are kept in portfolios that support sustainable initiatives that do not harm the climate, human health or nature. Divest from portfolios that do.
- Ensure the buildings where you are based are insulated to increase energy efficiency and that energy providers use renewables.

Commercial banking

- Require and help borrowers to meet high ESG standards

and implement green business plans that will boost the resilience of their operations.

- Set and meet targets for the reduction of your exposure to borrowers with negative impacts in areas including climate, resource efficiency, biodiversity and waste generation.
- Publish analyses of the ESG-related impact of your operations and include sustainability in your regular reporting.

Insurance

- Make ESG issues a key element when assessing and managing risk and help clients to assess, disclose and manage their ESG issues.
- Work with policymakers to improve legal frameworks for the reduction and management of ESG-related risks.
- Provide expertise on risk management and transfer, for instance to inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations supporting sustainable development.

Development finance

- Provide more long-term, low-interest finance to developing countries so that they can build the capacity, services, infrastructure and human capital needed to achieve the SDGs.

- Allocate more climate finance to resilience and adaptation to support early-warning systems and climate-resilient infrastructure and agriculture.
- Fund more programmes that integrate climate, biodiversity and pollution objectives with support for sustainable livelihoods.
- Establish programmes of financial support for start-ups and other businesses developing innovative and disruptive green products and services.
- Join the [Multi-Partner Trust Fund](#) of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration to fund the global restoration movement.

Links

<https://www.unepfi.org/>

<https://www.unpri.org/>

<https://www.gisdalliance.org/>

<https://www.unepfi.org/net-zero-alliance/>

<https://www.unepfi.org/net-zero-alliance/>

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/financing-for-development/>



Business and industry

Business and industry have the power to shape an economy that can meet our needs sustainably. We need a circular economy that can develop while using less material resources and values sustainability. While regulators and customers can't enable and raise the pressure for change, business leaders are the ones who can drive economic transformation

Companies that ignore their impact on the environment don't just alienate customers and turn off investors. Ultimately, they may risk their survival. Firms that underestimate ESG risks and fail to develop new, sustainable business models will be overtaken by rivals or disruptive start-ups.

Front-runners with new, affordable ways of meeting our needs for sustainable living will reap the benefits of lower material costs and risks, increased sales and inflows of capital from green investors. They can also stay ahead of tightening regulations and soaring fossil fuel energy costs.

Here are suggestions of action for businesses in four key areas for this World Environment Day.

Energy and climate

Business leaders can join the UN's Caring for Climate Initiative and strengthen their contribution to halting and adapting to the climate crisis with actions such as:

- Design and adopt a green business strategy that values sustainability, minimizes emissions and other environmental impacts, and positions your enterprise to thrive in the transition to a sustainable economy.
- Move your company's savings, pension scheme and financial investment portfolios to vehicles that support sustainable initiatives and do not harm the climate, human health or biodiversity.
- Join the [Race to Zero](#) – a global campaign rallying support from business, cities, regions, and investors for a healthy, resilient, zero carbon recovery.
- Set emission reduction targets for your business, work to continuously improve the energy efficiency and the carbon footprint of your operations, products, and services, and report publicly on your progress.
- Engage with national authorities, inter-governmental organizations and civil society to develop policies and measures that help businesses contribute to building a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy.
- Work with other enterprises nationally, in your industry and along value-chains to set new visions, adopt standards, reduce risks, assist with adaptation and enhance climate-related opportunities.
- Become a business champion for rapid and extensive climate action, working with peers, employees, customers, investors and the broader public.

Products and materials

- Switching production systems from a model of “take, make and waste” to a circular economy is essential to making our lives sustainable. At its heart is how we design goods and services to meet our needs, and how their production and consumption uses materials and energy. Here are some changes that your businesses can set in motion this World Environment Day.
- Adopt a green business strategy that values sustainability, minimizes environmental impacts, and positions your enterprise to thrive in the transition to a sustainable economy.
- Design new business models and resultant products and services that embrace repairability, upgradable products with long life cycles and natural materials, coupled with programmes that collect, remanufacture, repurpose or recycle them at the end of their lives.
- Invest in digital technologies that enable circularity by, for instance, identifying and tracing sustainable products, materials and components.
- Set ambitious circular performance and sustainability targets and fully disclose your efforts to achieve them.
- Support campaigns to drive global consumer behaviour change, including promoting sustainability aspirations like making durable, refurbished and recycled products more popular.
- Join other companies in the [New Plastics Economy Global](#)

[Commitment](#) and set targets to tackle plastic pollution at its source.

- Phase out unnecessary, avoidable, and problematic plastic items and replace them with alternative materials, products, and services.

Transport

Transport that uses fossil energy is a big source of greenhouse gas emissions and pollution. Shifting to sustainable transport and mobility is important for healthier communities and a healthy planet.

Here are some of the things the planet needs from the transport sector and businesses with significant transportation needs:

- Scaling up of mobility-as-a-service, such as bike- and car-sharing, and connected urban logistics that reduce emissions, traffic and environmental impacts.
- Overhauled corporate mobility policies, including the electrification of vehicle fleets and the promotion of vehicle sharing, cycling/walking and teleworking.
- The development and/or deployment of interoperable electric charging and new electric vehicles for all types of transport.
- Low-carbon fuels for long range and heavy-duty transportation, including in shipping and aviation.
- Shifts towards circularity in vehicle production, for instance through new materials, component remanufacturing, modular designs and end-of-life issues to ensure that the impacts of replaced vehicles are monitored until end of life.

- New technologies using electrostatic airflow to collect microplastics as they shed off vehicle tires.
- More sustainable road construction using, for instance, natural and recycled materials.

Links

<https://www.unglobalcompact.org/>

<https://www.unglobalcompact.org/take-action/action/climate>

<https://sciencebasedtargets.org/>

<https://www.wbcsd.org/Overview/About-us/Vision-2050-Time-to-Transform/Resources/Time-to-Transform-Executive-Summaries>

<https://www.resourcepanel.org/reports/re-defining-value-manufacturing-revolution>

<https://www.businessfornature.org/>

Food systems

How we produce, process and deliver food is a major driver of the climate crisis and the single greatest threat to biodiversity. Here are a few of the many actions that businesses can announce on World Environment Day to transform our food systems and enable people to make more sustainable choices:

- Redesign food systems and products with smaller environmental footprints that provide energy and nutrients from several different food groups with higher nutritional value.
- Produce food in sustainable farming systems and fisheries that preserve and restore the productivity of our land and

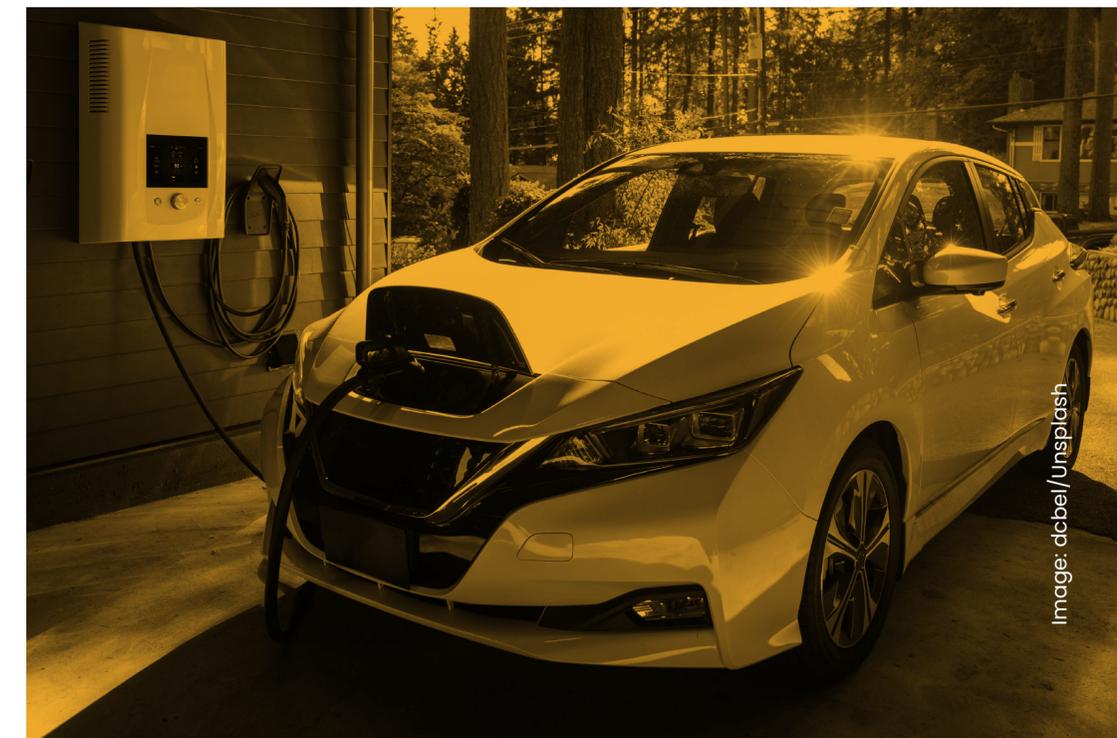
oceans, prevent pollution and protect biodiversity.

- Free supply chains completely and verifiably from deforestation or the conversion of other natural habitats
- Support campaigns to shift consumer choices towards healthy and sustainable foods and to reduce food waste.
- Prioritize foods that are regional, seasonal, plant-rich and are made with few chemical inputs.
- Minimize packaging and use only reuseable or recyclable materials.
- Support and apply credible and transparent food labelling schemes that enable customers to make sustainable choices.

Links

<https://www.fao.org/3/I9900EN/i9900en.pdf>

https://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/issues_doc/agriculture_and_food/soil-principles.pdf



Non-government organizations, community organizations, and faith groups

Civil society groups can catalyze and amplify action to forge a more sustainable planet. This World Environment Day, you have a key role in reminding governments, businesses and other actors of their responsibilities and commitments to create a better future, and in holding them to account.

Here are some examples of key things your organization or faith group can do:

Take the initiative

Identify and select environmental issues that have impacts and are important to your group, such as the climate crisis, ecosystem degradation, biodiversity loss or pollution, and consider what action you can take – either through a project on the ground or through calling for change. For instance, you could:

- Launch or support a project to bring back nature under the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. Browse the [ecosystem restoration playbook](#) for ideas.
- Campaign in your local area for action to address pollution such as the creation of low emissions zones or improved management and disposal of waste, including plastics, and of farm nutrients.

- Hold a public debate involving different stakeholders to identify the most effective steps toward local sustainability that have the broadest support and present them to decision makers.
- Lobby government leaders for ambitious policies that affect our lifestyles, like phasing out fossil fuels, and favour low-carbon mobility, including walking, cycling and ride sharing or other sector specific actions.

Join forces

Join a wider initiative addressing the planetary emergencies to pool knowledge and resources and create momentum to transform the relationship between people and nature. For instance, you could:

- Join local or national coalitions of organizations calling for transformative change and participate in negotiations and conferences convened by governments and other organizations on the environment.
- Check out the [Community Organizing Toolkit](#) to learn how you can get your town, club, school or faith group active for ecosystem restoration.
- Join UNEP's [Faith for Earth Initiative](#) to work alongside

other interreligious and interfaith groups in the fight against environmental degradation.

- Join an initiative like the [Global Partnership on Marine Litter](#), the [Global Partnership on Nutrient Management](#) or the [Regional Seas Programme](#) to help identify sources and solutions for marine pollution.
- Join the observance of the [International Day of Clean Air for blue skies](#) to support improvement in air quality to protect not only human health but also planetary health.
- Join the [Clean Seas campaign](#) and turn the tide on plastic pollution.

Lead by example

Shake up your own organization or faith community to minimize its impact on the environment and urge your members to reduce their personal environmental footprint. For instance, you could:

- Move your organization's savings, pension scheme and financial investment portfolios to ones that support sustainable initiatives and do not harm the climate, human health or biodiversity.
- Assess the environmental impacts of your organization

or groups' activities and premises, including your water and energy consumption or your procurement purchases, and draw up a plan with clear targets to reduce them.

- Deliver a speech or a religious sermon explaining the need for action on sustainability and share this practical guide with your members to encourage them to reduce their personal or business environmental footprint.
- Make environmental stewardship part of your organization's guiding principles and communicate these to your members and the wider public.
- Support initiatives that promote sustainable living, like offering healthy, plant-rich meals to your staff and community during events and observances, or encouraging your staff and community to walk, cycle and use public transport.

Links

<https://www.unep.org/about-un-environment/faith-earth-initiative>

www.AnatomyofAction.org



Science and education

We cannot transform our societies and economies unless we know how. The next generation, who have the most to lose from environmental breakdown, urgently need the knowledge and tools to bring about positive change. That is why science and education are indispensable in our efforts to transform our economies and societies.

Our understanding of the natural world as well as our technological capabilities are advancing rapidly, unlocking more and more possibilities. Here are some actions that universities, research institutes, schools, scientists and teachers can take to step up the pace.

Push the boundaries with research

- Allocate more research resources to developing new energy generation, transmission and storage technologies to accelerate transformation of the energy sector.
- Research the most effective ways to help ecosystems bounce back from degradation – from farmlands to forests, rivers and oceans.
- Target the development of low-carbon industrial materials that can be manufactured sustainably, are durable in use, and are easy to recycle or remanufacture.

- Work on new strains of crops and livestock that can help us to intensify food production while using less land and polluting chemical inputs.
- Tap the power of citizen science and involve thousands of people in, for instance, monitoring birds, insects, wildlife and reporting pollution.
- Partner with business schools to develop curricula to educate eco-entrepreneurs on developing green business models.
- Partner with educators and influencers in the media and arts to integrate sustainable living and aspirational messaging into our cultural context.

Build change-makers with education

- Building sustainability into education programmes for all ages so that they understand the risks facing their generation and how we can bring about transformative change.
- Learn more about [UNEP's Sustainable University Framework](#) or check out the [Race to Zero](#) for Universities and Colleges.
- Found an environment club for students ready to dive deeper into finding and realizing solutions to climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

- Hold a World Environment Day event for your students where they write to local and national leaders asking for the changes they would like to see.
- Examine the impacts that your institution and its activities have on the environment and work out a plan, including measurable targets, to become more sustainable.

Lead by example

- Move your organization's savings, pension scheme and financial investment portfolios to ones that support sustainable initiatives and do not harm the climate, human health or biodiversity.
- Check out the [Community Organizing Toolkit](#) to learn how you can get your school active for ecosystem restoration.
- Ensure the buildings where you work are insulated to increase energy efficiency and, where possible, switch your energy provider to one that uses renewable energy.
- Consider building your school with local and sustainable materials, such as sustainable wood.
- Offer balanced, healthy meals, including plant-rich and locally sourced options, to your staff and students and at public events.

- Incentivize and encourage your staff and students to walk, cycle and use public transport to come to their place of study or work.
- Create opportunities for young people to connect with nature, such as outdoor sports activities and guided walks to discover local flora and fauna.

Links

<https://ed.ted.com/earth-school>

<https://schools.wwf.ca/> (Living Planet @ School)

<https://natureforall.global/discovery-zone>

<https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-sustainable-development>



Individuals

As citizens, workers, students, consumers or in any number of other roles, our individual decisions shape how our societies impact the environment. As well as making our personal lives more sustainable, as individuals we can press for and support faster and more far-reaching environmental change from larger entities like governments and businesses.

Raise your voice

Speak up for the big changes that really transform our relationship with the planet. Here are some ways to make yourself heard:

- **ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE** – Support leaders with clear commitments and/or a track record of action on environmental emergencies including climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. Encourage your government to join the [net-zero coalition](#), live up to or increase their ecosystem [restoration commitments](#) and get in line with the [Paris Agreement](#).
- **START THE DISCUSSION** – Start a petition, organize a debate or call a demonstration to encourage your government – national or local, including at city-level – as well as big businesses to join the net-zero coalition, transform transportation, restore and protect nature and clean up our air and water.
- **ASK FOR ACTION** – Ask your town council, employer, school or university to set ambitious sustainability targets,

join the [Race to Zero](#), support the [UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration](#) and take part in efforts to make and monitor progress. Encourage, put pressure on and support your national and local governments and businesses in taking measures to improve air quality by addressing sources of air pollution.

- **CAMPAIGN** – For sustainable urban planning, including the restoration of disused or contaminated sites, the inclusion of green spaces in new housing developments, and strong public transport networks.
- **SPREAD KNOWLEDGE** – Take a deep dive into the science around an issue that concerns you and spread your knowledge with friends, family and your wider community, and in public discussions, including on social media.
- **GET INVOLVED** – Join a local organization that advances sustainability and restores nature including by campaigning for systemic change.

For more examples of the transformative changes that you can call on governments and other actors to accelerate, read through the other sections in this guide.

Links

<https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/climate-action/act-now>

<https://natureforall.global/home>

Make sustainable choices

Below is just a selection of the many ways we can change our own lives. Taken together, sustainable personal choices have the power to reshape local and national economies and power transformative change.

Money

Financial investments are a key lever in the hands of individuals, students, community groups and employees. Check and make sure your personal, workplace, town, school or community organisation's savings, pension or investments are with financial institutions that set and meet high sustainability standards – they are the companies of the future! If you own, inherit or buy your own home or other property, save energy and money in the long run by insulating it and making its heating and cooling systems as efficient and sustainable as possible.

- **ETHICAL INVESTING** – Use your principles to guide investing and consider socially and environmentally responsible options. For example, transfer your accounts to a sustainable bank and invest in stocks and bonds issued by renewable energy firms, manufacturers of green products or polluters that are radically cleaning up their act.
- **DIVESTMENT** – As the flipside to the above, swap your investments away from companies with a heavy

environmental footprint, such as those implicated in deforestation, water pollution, fossil fuels, or resource over exploitation.

- **ENERGY-POSITIVE HOMES** – Use efficient heating and cooling systems to save the planet and claw back the cost with lower bills. Changing your habits can also make a big difference, so turn the thermostat up or down a degree, ditch or add a layer of clothing and don't heat or cool only the rooms in use.
- **CONSERVE ENERGY** – Insulate your home and push for insulation in your workplace, keeping them cooler in summer and warmer in winter. Turn-off lights and electronics when not in use, use appliances with high energy-efficiency ratings in your home. This will reduce emissions and save you money.

Food

With the world's population set to touch 9 billion by 2050, demand for food is rising rapidly, adding to the pressure on Earth's natural resources. We can all help reduce the negative impacts with small changes in how we buy and consume food. A balanced, plant-based diet is good for our health and for the planet.

- **BALANCE YOUR DIET** – A [balanced diet](#) is one that provides energy and nutrients from several different food groups. Reduce foods that need more natural resources, especially water, to produce (meat uses more than plants or pulses), or fruits and vegetables that aren't in season or are imported over long distances.
- **USE ALL YOUR FOOD** – Buy only the food you need and

use it all up – if you toss it, you are throwing away your own money! Store food carefully to stop it from spoiling and compost any scraps and leftovers.

- **GROW YOUR OWN** – Growing your own food not only saves you money. It also reduces the transport, packaging, and waste of food. Nurturing the plants in your yard or on your balcony can even improve your mental well-being.

Stuff

Consumer choices are vital in shifting to a circular and sustainable economy. Buying products and services with a low environmental footprint – and only buying items that you really need and can share with others – boosts green businesses while shrinking polluters. It's a way to invest in a better future.

- **BEYOND BUYING** – Think about what you really need and cut back the amount of stuff that you buy – and throw away. Choose items that are made to last and that can then be recycled or repurposed. Maybe you can find what you need second hand.
- **CHOOSE NATURAL** – Buy products that support ecosystems and local communities, such as sustainable wood.
- **FASHION SLOW DOWN** – Buy fewer and better clothes that you still like even when they show their age. Stay away from fast fashion that mass produces at the cost of the environment and labour standards in poorer countries. Fashion is cyclical – create your own style with quality used clothes from decades ago!
- **DITCH DISPOSABLES** – Refuse everyday products that

cannot be reused, such as plastic cups and cutlery, plastic and paper bags, batteries and sanitary products. There is nearly always a sustainable alternative! Take the [Clean Seas pledge](#) to reduce your plastic footprint.

Moving

Personal transport is a huge contributor to the climate crisis. Travel by cars that use petrol and diesel and by airplane are responsible for much of the transport sector's greenhouse gas emissions, especially in high-income countries. And fossil fuel transport is a big source of the air pollutants that kill millions of people prematurely every year.

- **KEEP ACTIVE** – Do more walking or cycling to cut vehicle pollution and road congestion while getting some fresh air and boosting your fitness. The more people use cycle lanes and sidewalks, the more governments will need to re-design infrastructure to focus less on cars.
- **SHARE YOUR RIDE** – If walking or cycling isn't practical, opt for public and shared transport instead of driving. Hook up with family, friends and colleagues to share a ride – and the cost – of any car travel.
- **DITCH THE FLIGHTS** – Explore nearby holiday destinations, your local ecosystems or how far you can go by train, bus and bike.
- **GO CLEANER** – Swap to environmentally friendlier options like electric vehicles and cleaner fuels, and reduce your overall kilometre-count, for instance by limiting weekend trips to local areas. Holiday close to home and avoid air travel.

Fun

How we spend our free time hugely influences our impacts on the environment. Outings and vacations can involve long, polluting – and stressful – journeys. The facilities we use and the activities we take part in also have vastly different profiles in terms of the resources they consume. Put your energy into experiences that bring you into harmony with the planet

- **ENJOY THE JOURNEY** – Staying local for outings and holidays can reduce your carbon footprint, save you money and allow you to travel more slowly, without the stress of long journeys. If you do go the distance, do it less often but stay longer.
- **LEARN HOW TO HEAL NATURE** – Spend time on organic farms or join an [ecosystem restoration camp](#) during your trip.
- **STAY CURIOUS** – Embrace a life of constant learning, adventure, and curiosity, and keep an open mind. There are many sustainable ways to live a good life, so find out what makes sense for you and put into action!
- **CHOOSE EXPERIENCES** – Consider spending more time and resources on experiences that add value to your life without leaving a heavy environmental footprint. It could be cultural events, team sports, a course to learn new skills, or volunteering for an ecosystem restoration initiative.

Links

www.AnatomyofAction.org

<https://breathelife2030.org/challenge/>

<https://www.un.org/en/actnow/>





Image: Patrick/Pexels



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