



## **Report Finds Few Countries Able to Break Link between Drive toward Prosperity and Environmental Stress**

**New York, 3 May**—Increased globalization, urbanization and rising prosperity around the world are taking an ever greater toll on the world's ecosystems, according to two United Nations reports issued today to coincide with today's opening of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development.

The two "*Trends in Sustainable Development*" reports—one focusing on Sustainable Consumption and Production and the other on chemicals, mining, transport and waste management, find that while globalization has helped shift resource and energy-intensive production between countries, it has not substantially reduced the global environmental impacts of these activities.

In a review of the ecological footprint—the measure of the scale of demands which human activities place on natural systems—the reports cite three areas with alarm: biodiversity loss, interference with the nitrogen cycle and climate change as areas of particular concern. In 1960, there were no countries that exceeded their biocapacity; at present, there are 24.

In 2005, industrialized countries used 50 per cent of the fossil energy, industrial minerals and metallic ores while accounting for only one-sixth of world population. Moreover, the size of the rich countries' ecological footprint has continued to grow, mostly as a result of rising greenhouse gas emissions.

Only a few countries have managed to weaken the link between economic activity and resource extraction, pollution and waste generation. The projected growth in population, income and wealth over the next 40 years is expected to put increasing pressure on resources. If rising middle classes of emerging economies were to emulate the consumption patterns of rich countries, two planets would be needed by 2040.

The reports also show the growing weight of the developing world not only in the global economy but also in global chemicals production, resource extraction and use, and transport demand. It highlights the rapid growth of automobile ownership and e-waste generation and trade as major challenges. Some countries have managed very well the revenues from extraction of their mineral resources while others have struggled with weak governance, missing the opportunity to invest those revenues in human development and long-term diversification.

The reports come as the Commission on Sustainable Development is poised to start a two-year cycle focusing largely on the sustainable use and management of resources. The 2010 session will consist of a review of the issues, the scope of the problems and challenges, and possible solutions. At the 2011 session, countries will look at concrete policy recommendations. This year's session runs from 3-14 May.

The Trend Reports also highlights areas of progress and these include a range of public policies, including ecological tax reform, sustainable public procurement, such as in Argentina, the European Union, Japan, Mexico, Switzerland and others. Programs such as LEED in USA, PromisE in Finland, GRIHA in India Green have worked to promote greener standards for buildings while the Republic of Korea, China, USA, and others have promoted energy efficiency and renewable energy through green stimulus packages.

The Reports also include examples of voluntary initiatives by private industry, non-governmental organizations and others: industry initiatives that include the Global Compact, Ceres sustainability reporting initiative, eco-design for sustainable products, voluntary standards (global like ISO as well as national) and eco-labels (EnergyStar in USA, Green Label Scheme in Thailand), and peer-to-peer campaigns for behavioral change such as the UK's 10:10 campaign to reduce everyone's carbon footprint by 10 per cent by 2010.

The Reports can be found at [http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/resources/res\\_publtrends.shtml](http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/resources/res_publtrends.shtml).

For further information, please contact Dan Shepard of the Department of Public Information, tel. 1 212 963-9495, email [shepard@un.org](mailto:shepard@un.org) or Danielle Loff-Fernandes, 1 212 963-3926, email [loff-fernandes@un.org](mailto:loff-fernandes@un.org)

**Printed by the United Nations Department of Public Information | 3 May 2010 | 100% recycled paper**