



Speakers: Biographies

Denise Zmekhol - Director

As a Sao Paulo native, Denise Zmekhol studied social communication and journalism in Brazil, and completed her studies in photography, film and broadcasting at San Francisco State University. When she returned to Brazil in 1987, Ms Zmekhol assisted on numerous documentaries filmed in the Amazon. In addition to her film work, she photographed extensively, producing the photo exhibition Children of the Amazon. In 1998, Ms Zmekhol returned to the United States to co-produce and co-direct DIGITAL JOURNEY, an Emmy award winning public television series. She is currently producing a video with Google Earth Outreach to train Indigenous Amazonian tribes how to use Google Earth to create maps to record cultural traditions and to monitor the forest against illegal logging.

Chris Vanden Bilcke - Head of UNEP's Liaison Office to the European Union in Brussels

Prior to joining UNEP, Mr Vanden Bilcke, a Belgian national, served as Head of Unit for Environment and Sustainable Development in the Belgian Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs. His professional career has included assignments with the cabinet of the Belgian federal Environment Minister, with the Permanent Representation of Belgium to the European Union. He participated as delegate in numerous meetings of the UNEP Governing Council, the IEG process, the Commission for Sustainable Development, and several environmental Conventions' governing bodies. Under the Belgian EU presidencies in 2001 and 2010 he co-chaired the Working Party for International Environment Issues in which the 27 define their common positions inter alia on UNEP.



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INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF FORESTS- CELEBRATIONS AND OBSERVANCES AROUND THE WORLD



**INTERNATIONAL YEAR
OF FORESTS • 2011**

Every year an area of rainforest the size of New Jersey is cut down and destroyed, causing severe damage to the environment. On the 20th December 2006 The United Nations General Assembly declared 2011 as the International Year of Forests to raise awareness of sustainable management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. Now, at the end of the International Year of Forests we can reflect on, and appreciate, all the benefits we derive from the world's forests, and mobilize to better protect this precious resource.

The theme of the Forests 2011 celebration was “Forests for People,” highlighting the value of forests and their economic and social relationship with humankind. Achieving a sustainable future requires the effort of everyday people. These people are Forest Heroes and to honour them, the United Nations Forum on Forests Secretariat (UNFFS) launched the Forest Heroes Programme and Awards, which recognizes the efforts of people who work tirelessly to sustain, protect, and manage our forests.

To find out more about the International Year of Forests and the events around the world connected to it, please visit: <http://www.un.org/en/events/iyof2011/index.shtml>

European Forests

European forests may be expanding by around 7,000 hectares a year but many are still under threat from fragmentation as a result of felling, fires and conversion to agricultural land according to experts with the United Nations. These isolated and fragmented forest systems are not only more vulnerable to climate change, they are less able to support wildlife, stabilize soils and supply sufficient water to the cities, companies and communities that rely on such ecosystem services.

GreenUp's citizen action on forests is vital to address climate change, ensure green corridors across the region to protect habitats, maintain biodiversity and healthy ecosystems. Fashion designer Vivienne Westwood has created a Tree-shirt, to restore ecological connectivity, protecting forest biodiversity and as she puts it “helping animals to party”. All proceeds go to reforestation activities in Europe.



**Buy a Vivienne Westwood Tree-Shirt & we'll plant a tree
at www.unep.org/greenup**