

World Population Day Message from UNFPA's Executive Director

World Population Day offers a unique opportunity to remind ourselves that population is a global issue. The growth and movement of population affect first and foremost the nations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, where nearly all the continuing population growth takes place. But population issues also have a major impact on the world economy, migration patterns, and above all the environment.

A growing population means a greater and greater need for land, food, and work. When it is out of balance with resources, it may place an unduly heavy burden on the ability of countries to meet the need for schools, health-care, housing, and other services.

Governments in 'developing' countries increasingly believe that rapid population growth and its uneven distribution hold back development efforts. Population issues affect the life of every one of us, whatever country we live

in, and whatever its rate of population growth or level of development.

Slower, more balanced, population growth is in the interest of us all. It is also within the power of all of us to decide on. National decisions can help to inform personal decisions in this regard — the decision for greater investment in education (especially of women and girls), in health-care, in employment, and in family planning.

World Population Day reminds all of us that the future depends on a balance between numbers on one hand and resources on the other.

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On the Use and Misuse of the Term 'Ecosystem'

'Ecosystem', as proposed originally by A.G. Tansley (1935) and subsequently refined by N.B. Marshall (1986) regarding marine aspects, and by N. Polunin (1986) and others for global application, is a valuable scientific term that must have a definite meaning for its ecologist (as opposed to ecologist* etc.) users. It is *not* a mere smart-sounding catchword for any kind of system or quasi-system that, involving both living biota and inert components, may seem desirable to a would-be user needing a term that sounds learned or technical, and certainly should not be so employed.

Yet some such or other term is apt to be needed to imply the holistic but less-integrated nature of particular and usually major entities that are held together in some way by an ecological factor or consideration while embracing more or less numerous ecosystems. For such an agglomerate we propose the term 'ecocomplex',

examples being an 'island ecocomplex', a 'lake ecocomplex', a 'river ecocomplex', or even 'the global ecocomplex'.† We have heard all such entities referred to as 'ecosystems', and have seen these and some others in print — hence this plea for clarification.

REFERENCES

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- TANSLEY, A.G. (1935). The use and abuse of vegetational concepts and terms. *Ecology*, **16**, pp. 284–307.

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* For explanation of this term see the note by R.A. Lewin & N. Polunin, entitled 'Ecology and "Ecotaxis"', published in our latest issue (*Environmental Conservation*, Vol. 17, No. 2, p. 177, Summer 1990). — Ed.

† We could also speak of, for example, a 'tropical rain-forest ecocomplex', though such entities of relatively even dominance by a single life-form seem better referred to as ecobiomes — but surely not 'ecosystems', or 'biomes', which latter term applies only to the living parts of the system that necessarily involves other components.

The M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation

The M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, established in July 1988, is a non-profit Trust recognized by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India. The Foundation aims to respond to the challenges inherent in the changing nature of national food security. Malnutrition and under-nutrition are now more the result of inadequate purchasing power than of scarcity of food in the market. Economic and ecological access to food will be the major food-security challenges of the '90s and

beyond in India. The following issues therefore deserve much-increased scientific attention:

- Promotion of sustainable and equitable agricultural and rural development,
- Development of ecologically sound and economically viable 'green technologies' by integrating traditional skills and frontier science, and
- Generation of increased and improved opportunities for skilled employment — particularly for rural women and youth.