





Ban Ki-moon, Bloomberg celebrate Earth Day in Times Square

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NEW YORK, April 22 (Xinhua) -- UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon and New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg joined the public in celebrating the 40th Earth Day in Times Square Thursday.

Among the crowd were environmental activists and business leaders. Hundreds of native New Yorkers and tourists attended the event, which included performances from the cast of the Broadway show "Hair" and music group "Grace Potter and the Nocturnals," with Time Square's famous flashing billboards in the background.

Ban stressed the need to respect and care for the Earth, noting that safeguarding the environment would help achieve development goals and ensure the health and well-being of its inhabitants.

"Without a sustainable environmental base, we will have little hope of attaining our objectives for reducing poverty and hunger and improving health and human well-being," he said.

The secretary general stressed that the Earth is under pressure. "We are making progressively unreasonable demands on her, and she is showing the strain."

"For all of human history we have depended on nature's bounty for sustenance, well-being and development. Too often we have drawn on nature's capital without putting back. We are now beginning to see the consequences of failing to safeguard our investment," Ban said.

Climate change and the depleted ozone layer are among the starkest examples, Ban said, noting that biological diversity is in rapid decline, that freshwater and marine resources are increasingly polluted, and soils and fisheries are growing barren.

"The impact of our neglectful stewardship is being felt most by the world's most vulnerable people," he said. If they are to break out of the poverty trap, they need at the very least fertile land, clean water and adequate sanitation, he noted.

"I call on all governments, businesses and citizens of the world to give our Mother Earth the respect and care she deserves," he added.

The General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution last year proclaiming April 22 as International Mother Earth Day, expressing its conviction that, to achieve a just balance among the economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations, "it is necessary to promote harmony with nature and the Earth."

"If we are really going to improve the planet, we have to find ways to do it that is in our interests, short term and long term," Bloomberg told media.

"Short term it is the air we breathe and the water we drink. Long term it is the planet we are going to leave for our kids," the mayor said.

Miss America 2010, Caressa Cameron, and Mandy Gonzalez, who plays Elphaba in Broadway's "Wicked," were among those who handed out environmental movement leaflets.

Former U.S. Vice President Al Gore shared his Earth Day messages on the screens in Times Square.

Earth Day is a day designed to inspire awareness and appreciation for the environment. It was founded by U.S. Senator Gaylord Nelson as an environmental teach-in held on April 22, 1970.

The event is celebrated in the spring in the Northern Hemisphere and in the autumn in the Southern Hemisphere.