

International Solidarity Days – June 2019

June 5—World Environment Day



Celebrated in 100 countries, the UN’s World Environment Day calls all citizens of the world to raise awareness about the care of Earth. Further, it is a day to foster action to protect the environment. Earth is our mother. She sustains and protects us and all life on our planet. This year, China will host the World Environment Celebrations on June 5th—the theme is air pollution. The main events will be held in Hangzhou, in the province of Zhejiang.

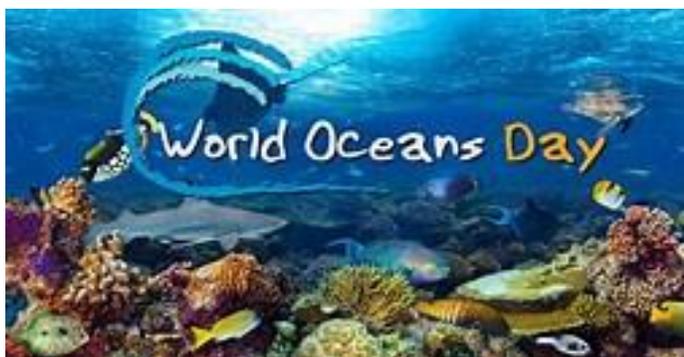
China was chosen to host the events because of the great strides they have made over the last 20 years in reducing air pollution in Beijing. In a recently published report, they outlined the efforts they made that yielded these results. With their growing green energy sector, China has become a leader in addressing climate change. The gathering will showcase renewable energy and green technologies aimed at improving air quality in cities and regions around the world.

Air Pollution facts:

- 92 per cent of people worldwide do not breathe clean air
- Air pollution costs the global economy \$5 trillion every year in welfare costs
- Ground-level ozone pollution is expected to reduce staple crop yields by 26 per cent by 2030
- Approximately 7 million people worldwide die prematurely each year from air pollution

Holy One, we lift our voices to you in praise for the wonders of creation. We thank you, especially, for the air we breathe. Inspire us to action on behalf of Mother Earth and Sister Air. We know that this is a critical time during which we must lower CO₂ emissions and toxic chemicals in the air. Now is also the time for increasing green spaces, protecting plants and trees that provide us with oxygen, and ending the use of fossil fuels. Help us to change our lives so that we and future generations can live healthy and sustainable lives.

June 8—World Oceans Day



Oceans cover about two thirds of the earth’s surface. Oceans provide us with food, medicine, and most of the oxygen we breathe. The oceans are also critical to maintaining the Earth’s temperatures, including seasonal changes and its rain cycles. This year everyone is being encouraged to “Wear Blue, Tell Two”. In addition to wearing something blue on that day, we are to share two facts that we have learned about Earth’s oceans with someone else.

One of the largest threats to our oceans is global climate change. Oceans are warming at an alarming rate and this can severely alter ocean currents, causing abnormal flood and draught cycles as well as increasing the rate of global warming. Plastic pollution in the oceans has also reached a critical level, killing fish, ocean mammals, and sea birds. As long as plastic production continues, pollution of the world’s oceans will increase, since plastic never disappears from the environment. It merely breaks down into smaller and smaller particles. Elimination of single use plastics and recycling of plastics needs to become a universal priority.

This year, the theme for World Oceans Day is “Gender and the Ocean”. This theme provides an opportunity to explore the gender dimension of humankind’s relationship with the ocean. On this day the UN will strive to build greater ocean and gender literacy and discover possible ways to promote gender equality in ocean-

related activities such as marine scientific research, fisheries, labor at sea, migration by sea and human trafficking, policy-making and management.

Creator of life, we thank you for the oceans that team with life, regulate earth's climate, inspire us with beauty and power, and sustain all living creatures. Open our hearts with a growing appreciation of how oceans affect all of us. Help us to care for the oceans by making sustainable living choices each day so that life can continue to flourish for generations to come.

June 12—World Day Against Child Labor

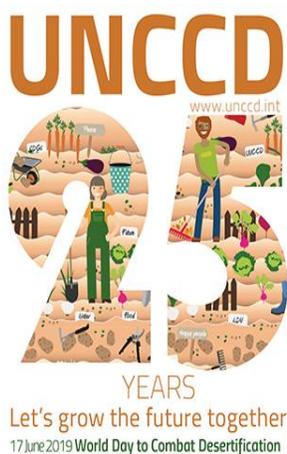


World Day Against Child Labor aims to accelerate action to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 8.8 of safe and secure working environments for all workers by 2030 and SDG target 8.7 of ending all forms of child labor by 2025. It is said that “children should not work in fields, but on dreams.” And yet, over 150 million children in the world work in nearly all economic sectors, with over 70% working in agriculture. Most of these child laborers work in unsafe conditions, for little or no pay. Such practices rob children of their childhood—socialization, playing, going to school,

getting adequate sleep and nutrition, and developing a sense of being loved and protected in a stable environment. The UN has made the protection of children from exploitation and child labor a top priority.

God, we ask you to bless all children around the world. Protect them from exploitation, abuse and fear. Give us the courage to step in whenever we know of a child being abused or neglected. Inspire people everywhere to cherish children, providing them with safety, caring, love, and compassion. May we provide them with education, nutrition, and stability, so that they may develop their full potential.

June 17—World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought



World Day to Combat Desertification (WDCD) will be celebrated worldwide on the 17th of June. This day calls our attention to the rapidly expanding areas of drought across our planet. This is a result of climate change, poor farming methods, deforestation and resulting erosion, and ozone destruction exposing agricultural lands to increased drying effects of the sun. This year's theme is: “25 Years—Let's Grow the Future Together!” UN events will take place in Ankara, Turkey. They will promote sustainable land management, as well as celebrate the 25 years of progress toward achieving land degradation neutrality. The 2030 Agenda for

Sustainable Development declares that “we are determined to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations”. Specifically, Goal 15 states our resolve to halt and reverse land degradation.

Mother/Father God, we thank you for Mother Earth who sustains our lives. Help us to protect the land on which we grow our crops. Help us to treat agricultural land with respect, using

sustainable, non-toxic methods to promote growth of the food that nourishes us. Expand our consciousness so that we conserve groundwater as much as possible. Help us to restore and protect native grasslands and woodlands that protect our lands from flooding that washes away topsoil and soil nutrients. Thank you for all the blessings of the land, the holy ground on which we live.

June 20—World Refugee Day



The world refugee crisis continues to worsen as millions of people flee their home countries to escape violence, war, hunger and fear. In recent years, climate change refugees have had to relocate because their home communities have been inundated with sea water as sea levels rise. Many refugees leave their homes with virtually nothing as they “run for their lives”. Refugees can spend months or years in refugee camps that are unsafe, unsanitary, and overcrowded, as they await processing. They have little say as to what country they will eventually be resettled in. When they get there, most do not know the language of the receiving country and are often met with hostility and suspicion. On World

Refugee Day we are all called to reach out to refugees in our communities, offering whatever support we can to ease their resettlement. All of us can do something—teaching them language, helping those in need to find a job, assisting children in registering for school and vaccinations, helping collect clothes or household items that refugees will need in their new homes or apartments. Most of all, we can offer our friendship, respect and welcome!

God, we ask you to protect all people who have to flee their homes in order to survive. Bless them on their dangerous journeys to safety. Once they make their way to our countries, help us to welcome them with open arms and open hearts. Move us to respond with respect and love to each refugee in our midst. Also, help us to work for just immigration and asylum policies in our own countries so that human rights are respected and international laws regarding refugees are enforced.

June 26—International Day In Support Of Victims Of Torture



Torture is an immoral act because it violates the dignity of the human person and caused irreparable harm to those who suffer torture. Torture attempts to deny the humanity of the victim, but in reality, it also robs the torturer of his/her humanity. On the International Day In Support Of Victims Of Torture, the UN invites all of us to stand in solidarity with the thousands of victims of torture. Together, we join with people around the world to say “No” to torture and to actively reject any and all attempts to justify torture. Under international law, torture is never allowed

under any circumstances. It cannot be justified even as a measure of last resort. Those guilty of torturing others must be prosecuted and those who suffer torture have a right to redress and compensation, including medical and psychological care. We must not send torture victims back to receive further torture. Instead, our asylum processes must find ways of eliciting the stories of torture from asylum claimants in ways that respect their experience and their difficulty in articulating what has happened to them.

God, prevent human beings everywhere from torture. Give us compassion, so that when we look into the eyes of another person we will see a brother or sister with the same feelings, hopes, dreams and needs as we have. Protect us as we call on governments around the world to reject all forms of torture, and all attempts to justify it. Let our hearts grow in compassion and respect for human dignity.