



**MEDIA ALERT**

**6 SEPTEMBER 2006**

## **GREEN GROUPS UNITE TO KEEP THE MEDITERRANEAN BLUE**

- **14 countries to participate in the UN-backed “Clean Up the Mediterranean” campaign this month**
- **Clean Up the Mediterranean campaign to be launched on 13 September 2006 in Athens, Greece from 11:00-12:00 at the Foreign Press Association office (23, Akademias St. 10671 Athens)**
- **In Greece, clean ups to be held in Attika, Athens, Volos, Kos, Syros, Crete and Pyrgos**

**Athens, Greece** – From scout groups to diving associations – volunteers across 14 countries in Europe, Africa and the Middle East are gearing up to take part in a new region-wide campaign to clean up the Mediterranean to be launched on 15 September 2006, ahead of the Clean Up the World weekend.

Clean Up the Mediterranean is the latest initiative of Clean Up the World, a global environmental campaign held in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which mobilizes an estimated 30 million volunteers from over 100 countries each year to “clean up, fix up and conserve the environment”. The flagship event of the campaign is Clean Up the World weekend celebrated globally on 15-17 September 2006.

Clean Up the World Chairman and Founder Ian Kiernan AO\* said: “The Blue Mediterranean’ – this travel agent cliché is all too familiar. But pollution, tourism and other pressures are threatening to change the Mediterranean as we know it. Clean Up the Mediterranean is about taking concrete steps – no matter how big or small – to address the environmental problems of this iconic region.”

Clean Up the Mediterranean seeks to mobilise community action to address the region’s environmental problems. Activities will range from removing rubbish from streets, parks, waterways and beaches to underwater clean ups, tree planting, water and energy conservation projects. Many communities will also implement recycling and educational programmes.

The countries that have joined the initiative so far include Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, France, Israel, Morocco, Palestine, Portugal, Serbia & Montenegro, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey and Gibraltar. Groups, organisations, businesses and communities across the region are encouraged to join Clean Up the Mediterranean campaign by registering online at [www.cleanuptheworld.org](http://www.cleanuptheworld.org). Members receive information and materials to assist with the promotion and implementation of environmental activities.

“Many communities throughout the region have faced uncertainty over the past year. Clean Up the Mediterranean is an opportunity to break down geographical and political barriers by working together to look after our shared environment,” Kiernan concluded.

Consider the following:

- UNEP estimates that 650 million tonnes of sewage, 129,000 tonnes of mineral oil, 60,000 tonnes of mercury, 3,800 tonnes of lead and 36,000 tonnes of phosphates are dumped into the Mediterranean each year. Meanwhile, 70 per cent of the wastewater dumped into the Mediterranean is untreated.

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\* Recipient of the Order of Australia

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- The sea is also a major oil transportation route and up to one million tons of crude oil is discharged annually from accidental spills, illegal bunkering and tank cleaning practices, as well as inadequate harbour facilities. The recent oil spill off the Lebanese coast has resulted in about 13,000 tonnes of heating oil leaking into the Mediterranean.
- Air pollution and smog conditions are worsening in the Mediterranean due to coastal industries as well as funnel emissions from busy maritime traffic.
- According to WWF, currently some 220 million tourists visit the Mediterranean annually, and the number is expected to rise to 350 million by 2020.
- Unsustainable fishing practices are also impacting heavily on the biodiversity in the Mediterranean. A WWF report found that overfishing and by-catch in the transitional zone between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean threaten to wipe out species such as common and striped dolphin, turtles, blue sharks, swordfish and shortfin makos.
- Mediterranean countries have already experienced a reduction of up to 20 per cent of rainfall while water demand has doubled in the last 50 years.
- According to estimates, the Parthenon, Greece's best-known architectural monument, has sustained more atmospheric damage since 1970 than it did in its first 2,000 years of existence.
- In France alone, over 8 million cigarette butts are dumped every day in the streets, parks, beaches and mountain areas.

Examples of Clean Up the Mediterranean activities include:

- removal of rubbish from the natural and urban environment, such as streets, parks, waterways, beaches, forests and underwater clean ups;
- tree planting and revegetation projects;
- biodiversity conservation and habitat restoration actions;
- community recycling and water reuse projects; and
- environmental awareness raising and education activities.

**For more information**, contact Kenya Cherny Scanlon at +61 2 9692 1215, [world@cleanup.com.au](mailto:world@cleanup.com.au) or visit [www.cleanuptheworld.org](http://www.cleanuptheworld.org). Photographs and detailed information about Clean Up the World activities in your area/country are available on request. You may also contact regional Clean Up the Mediterranean spokespeople in the following languages:

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***Clean Up the World is a campaign held in conjunction with our Primary Partner UNEP. Patron – Veolia Environnement. Global Media Partner – National Geographic Channels International. Sponsors – Brambles and Qantas. Supporter – The Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.***

## **About Clean Up the World**

The Clean Up campaign started in 1989 when an Australian solo-yachtsman and builder Ian Kiernan, appalled by the amount of rubbish he came across while sailing, organized a clean up of the Sydney Harbour, during which some 40,000 volunteers removed rusted car bodies, plastics, glass bottles and cigarette butts from the water.

The campaign went global in 1993, with Sydney becoming Clean Up the World's headquarters. Today it brings together hundreds of members from around the world ranging from local community groups to national campaigns that carry out environmental projects throughout the year. The Clean Up the World Weekend held in September each year has the highest participation of all. For more information, visit [www.cleanuptheworld.org](http://www.cleanuptheworld.org).