



# PRESS RELEASE



UN OFFICE OF THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES,  
LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

## **NEW STUDY REVEALS ENVIRONMENTAL VULNERABILITY OF LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES**

**New York**, 26 January 2006: A recently released pilot nation-by-nation study of environmental performance reveals that most of the world's 50 Least Developed Countries continue to lag behind their international counterparts in efforts to achieve environmental protection.

The Pilot 2006 Environmental Performance Index, jointly produced by Yale and Columbia universities, is intended to focus more attention on how various governments have tackled environmental concerns. The Index provided "peer group" rankings for each country showing how its performance stacks up against others facing similar environmental challenges. According to the project researchers, these benchmarks allow easy tracking of leaders and laggards on an issue-by-issue and aggregate basis.

Overall, the most vulnerable countries fared worst, with 32 of the 34 sub-Saharan LDCs, along with Bangladesh, Haiti, Yemen, Laos and Papua New Guinea, scoring at or below 40 percent. New Zealand, Sweden and Finland – the top three countries – scored above 85 percent.

"It is not coincidental that the majority of the countries which under performed are categorized as least developed. Often the critical shortage of resources means that they

have little capacity to invest in environmental infrastructure. Access to drinking water and sanitation systems continues to be a daily uphill battle for millions of people in these vulnerable countries,” UN Envoy for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States Anwarul K. Chowdhury said on Thursday.

However, it is not all bad news for the poorest countries, as some managed to top the score chart when air quality was assessed. The ranking tended to favour less industrialized nations like Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, all occupying a place in the top five. The energy sustainability portion of the index factors national wealth into measurements of energy efficiency and greenhouse-gas emissions. All but three of the top 25 spots in the worldwide rankings are occupied by countries in economic distress, including Uganda, Chad and Myanmar.

Mr. Chowdhury pointed out that while a country’s wealth may be a significant determinant of environmental outcomes, some countries achieved environmental results that far exceeded their peers, demonstrating that policy choices also affect performance.

He stressed the link between environmental protection and sustainable development, noting that the poor are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation and lack of access to clean, affordable energy services.

In Africa, poverty and the degradation of the environmental resources are inextricably linked: poverty leads to unsustainable use of resources which again leads to further poverty.

“These issues are also global as climate change, loss of biodiversity and ozone layer depletion cannot be addressed by countries acting alone. I urge development partners to assist these countries strengthen their capacity to address these challenges at national and community levels, seeking out and sharing best practices and linking partners through projects that help poor people build sustainable livelihoods,” Chowdhury said.

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