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Note to Correspondents

United Nations to observe ‘Earth Hour’ in support of action on climate change, 28 March

The United Nations will observe “Earth Hour” on Saturday, 28 March, at its Headquarters in New York and other facilities around the world as part of an effort to mobilize global support for a new United Nations agreement to address climate change when Governments meet in Copenhagen in December.

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called Earth Hour “a way for the citizens of the world to send a clear message. They want action on climate change.”

It promises to be the largest demonstration of public concern about climate change ever attempted. People will be telling their representatives to seal a deal in Copenhagen, a deal at the climate change talks that will protect people and the planet,” he said.

Earth Hour, launched two years ago in Australia by the WWF, the global conservation organization, calls for people, communities and cities to turn off their non-essential lights for one hour starting at 8:30 p.m. local time. The symbolic effort will be observed by more than 1,000 cities and close to a billion people this year.

The United Nations will be joining many other landmarks around the world in turning off its lights at its New York Headquarters and other locations.

Secretary-General Ban said the deal that emerges from Copenhagen must be ambitious, fair and effective, and based on sound science. “We are on a dangerous path,” he said. “Our planet is warming. We must change our ways. We need green growth that benefits all communities. We need sustainable energy for a more climate-friendly, prosperous world. This is the path of the future. We must walk it together.”

Earth Hour occurs the day before the first round of crucial United Nations negotiations of 2009 on the new climate change agreement is set to begin in Bonn, Germany. The negotiations, which will take place from 29 March to 8 April, will be the first of three sessions leading up to the Copenhagen Climate Change Summit in December.

The Earth Hour event will take place one week after the vernal equinox -- when night and day are the same duration in both hemispheres -- which ensures that it will be night-time for all people, wherever they are, at 8:30 in the evening.

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