



# UNEP: PM Modi a global leader on climate change

By **Geeta Mohan**  
in New Delhi

INDIA is making an effort to take a lead on World Environment Day, an international awareness campaign organised by the United Nations. Every year World Environment Day has a host country and a theme. This year it's being hosted in India and the theme is 'Beat Plastic pollution'.

Erik Solheim, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), is in India to participate in all the events organised across India to spread awareness against the threats of using plastic. Appreciating the role that India is playing in fighting the problems of "climate change" and "environmental degradation", Solheim lauded the Indian Prime Minister for showing the political will to tackle these challenges. "He is one of the global leaders on climate change. President Xi of China, President Macron on France and Prime Minister Modi have set up the International Solar Alliance", he said.

One of the biggest challenges for the international community has been to ensure consensus on the Paris Climate Accord, which the United States of America has pulled out from. Erik Solheim mentioned India's resoluteness by speaking of India's stand after the US pullout. "Remember what PM Modi had said when President Trump pulled out of the Paris Climate Accord, he said that it would be a crime against future generations if we don't act now. He has made India one of the global champions for resolute action against climate change", he said.

The theme this year is 'Beat



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Plastic Pollution'. Dia Mirza, actress-activist and UN Environment Goodwill Ambassador for India, was also there at the event held in New Delhi where she emphasised that awareness for the younger generation is key to a better future. "It is an old adage long used and abused. People here constantly say that we need to leave a better future for our children, but I believe we need to create better children for the future of this planet", she said.

One of the leading lights of the dinner Monday night was Vadodara-based activist Rajeshwari Singh, who has completed 1100-km-long journey on foot from Gujarat to Delhi in 45 days, to spread the message of the "plastic menace" to environment.

The UN body is working closely with the govern-

ment of India and other non-profit organisations in India to tackle the issue on environment pollution.

"The Indian government is really adamant to act and there are so many positives such as making universities plastic-free in Hyderabad, banning of plastic in Maharashtra, a lot is happening but at the end of the day government needs to regulate markets. EU is phasing out plastic straws and that move is under action. But the initiative has to come from the ground for the administration to act", said Erik Solheim.

Every World Environment Day has a different global host country, where the official celebrations take place. Marking the day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "Together, let us ensure that our future generations live in a clean and green planet, in harmony with nature."

An exhibition has also been put up on the occasion at the Rajpath lawns in New Delhi.

