

## VOA Special English Environment Report

### EARTH DAY 2000

This is Bill White with the VOA Special English Environment Report.

On Saturday, hundreds of millions of people around the world will celebrate the 30th anniversary of Earth Day. More than 4,000 organizations are planning events in almost 200 countries. Earth Day 2000 is expected to be the largest environmental event in history.

Earth Day is a yearly call for people to work together to save the planet. The first Earth Day took place in the United States on April 22nd, 1970. Former Senator Gaylord Nelson started Earth Day because he believed few public officials were concerned about the environment. He organized a nationwide effort to educate people about environmental issues. 20 million Americans took part.

The first Earth Day helped make the environment an important political and social issue. It led to the passage of important legislation in the United States. Those laws included the clean air and clean water acts and the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency. Experts say the environment in the United States is better than it was 30 years ago. There are stronger laws and better technologies. And more people are concerned about the issues. But experts say there are major threats around the world. These include overpopulation, the reduction in animal and plant species and the rising temperature of the Earth.

Air and water pollution are still serious problems in many

developing countries. The Earth's growing population is putting more pressure on land and water supplies. The destruction of tropical forests threatens rare kinds of animals and plants. And, scientists say that burning fuels such as oil and coal is causing a dangerous warming of the Earth. They say global warming could be affecting the weather, increasing water levels and changing the planet's structure.

Denis Hayes helped organize the first Earth Day in 1970. He has rejoined the campaign for Earth Day 2000. He says the goal this year is to work toward the use of cleaner forms of energy for transportation, heating and lighting. The campaign also will deal with global warming and its effect on health, air, water and wildlife.

Some environmentalists question whether Earth Day will be effective. But Mr. Hayes says he is hopeful this year's event will lead to international action on clean energy.

This VOA Special English Environment Report was written by Cynthia Kirk. This is Bill White.

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