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Heading for sustainable management Federal Environment Agency hosts Natural Resources Day

The steady growth in world population and the rising per capita consumption of energy and material goods demand a speedy change in the thinking of the private sector, the political forum and society as to how to handle natural resources, that is, with renewable and finite raw materials, water and soil. Climate protection along with protection of resources features on the agenda of international environmental politics. The Federal Environment Agency has initiated an event billed as Natural Resources Day whose motto is "Factor X: Beyond Climate Change", which is scheduled to take place for the first time on 16 September 2009 in Berlin as a side event to the World Resources Forum 2009 taking place in Davos. This international platform will also convene for the first time and seeks to bridge the gap between science and the economy. The objective of both events is to draw attention to the intelligent economical use and sustainable management of natural resources.

"Ever scarcer resources have made the issue of their protection and efficiency in handling them the economic order of the day. Material costs in the manufacturing industry are currently already at an average 40 percent and are set to rise", said UBA President Jochen Flasbarth. "As with energy efficiency, we must also encourage innovation in this area and tap into existing potential for savings. This will boost our economy and gain competitive advantage", added Flasbarth.

We are extracting far more resources from the earth than the planet can sustain. According to OECD estimates, global raw materials extraction will rise from its level of 53 billion tonnes in 2005 to 80 billion tonnes by 2020 as the volume of goods and services produced continues to grow. This will concur with greater consumption of land area and energy as well as additional pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

The annual per capita consumption of raw materials in Germany is about 60 tonnes, and some 50 tonnes in the European Union. Shortages in the supply of rare, strategically vital metals such as platinum or neodymium have already been foreseen. An assortment of next generation technologies, e.g. electromobility, depends on certain rare metals. Platinum, for example, is a component in fuel cells, and neodymium and copper are used to manufacture the electric engines in hybrid vehicles. However, the industrialised states are wasteful with raw materials as well as land area. Land take for settlement and transport areas here in Germany is still at roughly 100 hectares per day, placing the country far away from the goal stated in the national sustainability strategy, namely to reduce land consumption to 30 hectares per day.

Wastefulness with our natural resources is also the subject of the short film *Factor X: Beyond Climate Change - FLOW* produced by UBA and due to premiere on 16 September in Berlin and Davos. Through impressive imagery the film reveals how global materials cycles are linked and points to the limits of a consumption-oriented lifestyle. Facts and figures caution the observer to take responsibility—without actually discouraging him.

In addition to the film premiere, the schedule for the Berlin event includes photo and design object exhibitions as well as lectures and talks. Experts from the private sector, science and the political arena will be discussing with Michael Müller, Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for Environment, how we can manage with consuming far less resources in future. The national Resource Efficiency Network will also be introduced. Delegates from non-governmental organisations will be drawing attention to the issue of fair distribution of natural resources and ecological and social problems as they relate to raw materials extraction. Another focus point of the Resources Day is product design. Visitors to Natural Resources Day will be able to tune in live to the debates taking place at the same time at the World Resources Forum in Davos.

Programme and further information:

<http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/ressourcen/index.htm>

<http://www.worldresourcesforum.org/program>

<http://www.beyondclimatechange.de/>

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