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Media Release

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WWF's Earth Hour 2009 set to be largest climate event in history

74 cities in 62 countries already commit to turn out lights as campaign launches with aim to reach one billion.

Poznan, Poland, December 10, 2008— Dozens of events around the world today marked the launch of the campaign for Earth Hour 2009, a global climate event for which 74 cities in 62 countries have already committed to switch off their lights at 8:30 p.m. on March 28.

The Earth Hour 2009 campaign aims to have more than one billion people in 1,000 cities turn off lights for one hour in a graphic demonstration of support for determined international action on climate change.

A key event is scheduled for Poznan, Poland where world nations are currently meeting under the banner of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). They are charged with thrashing out a new international climate change agreement which needs to be signed off at next December's UNFCCC summit.

"When leaders gather in Copenhagen to negotiate a new global deal on climate, they must feel that the eyes of the world are upon them," said James Leape, Director General of WWF International. "Earth Hour provides an opportunity for the public to send a powerful signal that that they are watching and that they expect action."

Cities already listed to participate in Earth Hour 2009 include Cape Town, Chicago, Copenhagen, Dubai, Hong Kong, Istanbul, Las Vegas, Lisbon, London, Los Angeles, Manila, Mexico City, Moscow, Nashville, Oslo, Rome, San Francisco, Singapore, Sydney, Toronto, and Warsaw.

Some of the international icons which will go dark for an hour in solidarity include the world's tallest hotel tower (the Burj Dubai in Dubai), the tallest towers in the Americas (the CN tower in Toronto) and the southern hemisphere (the Sky Tower in Auckland) and Moscow's Federation Tower. Sweden's King Carl XVI Gustaf has confirmed his support for Earth Hour while Quirinale - the official residence of the President of the Italian Republic, Giorgio Napolitano - will also turn its lights off. Other landmarks which plan to merge into the night sky include the normally floodlit Table Mountain over Cape Town, South Africa and the Sydney Opera House.

"The global economic meltdown has demonstrated that the world can unite and take action in times of crisis," said Kim Carstensen, who leads WWF's Global Climate Initiative. "That same decisive, multilateral approach is needed as we face the rapidly escalating climate crisis. Turning 'off' for Earth Hour sends a powerful message to our leaders that they must do what's necessary to secure the future of the Earth."

This press release and associated material can be found on www.panda.org

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Many organizations around the world announced their support for Earth Hour, including the C40 Large Cities Climate Leadership Group.

“The C40 Climate Leadership Group is about cities working together to drive down greenhouse gas emissions and that is why as Chair of the C40 I support Earth Hour,” said Toronto Mayor David Miller. “It's crucial that cities and the public come together to take action against climate change and Earth Hour provides a great platform to do that.”

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Note to Editors:

- Hong Kong will announce details of its Earth Hour participation at a press conference on December 14 and Beijing will hold an Earth Hour launch ceremony on December 15. For more information please contact Chris Chaplin (China, Chinese, English languages) email: cchaplin@wwfchina.org or King-yin Lee (Hong Kong, Chinese, English languages) email: kylee@wwf.org.hk
- Video B-roll, audio clips and Earth Hour still images can be found at www.earthhour.org/mediacentre
- Please refer to backgrounder for a full list of cities and landmarks already committed to Earth Hour 2009.

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About Earth Hour

The Earth Hour lights-out initiative began in Sydney, Australia in 2007 as an awareness-raising exercise. In 2008, it went spectacularly global when more than 50 million people in more than 270 cities in over 35 countries turned off their lights for one hour in March - although one Fijian village, Visoqo, which had never had electricity or lighting, marked the occasion by turning on its newly installed solar powered lighting for the first time. For Earth Hour 2009, WWF has teams in many countries ready to support a local Earth Hour roll out.

About WWF

WWF is one of the world's largest and most respected independent conservation organizations, with almost 5 million supporters and a global network active in over 100 countries. WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the earth's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by conserving the world's biological diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable, and promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.

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