

A The environment

Look at these extracts from letters to an international magazine.

Your article on **climate change** was excellent. **Rising sea levels** and the increase in **greenhouse gases**¹ are the result of our actions. We are **disturbing the ecological balance** everywhere, as can be seen in the decrease in **fish stocks**² in the oceans.

¹ gases which cause the greenhouse effect, especially carbon dioxide

² the number of fish

It is clear that we must **tackle pollution** before it is too late. **Exhaust fumes** from millions of vehicles and the burning of **fossil fuels**³ are causing **irreparable**⁴ damage to our environment.

³ fuels such as gas, coal and oil

⁴ which cannot be repaired (also *irreversible*)

We must accept that we have seriously **depleted**⁵ **the ozone layer** in the last few decades by our selfish actions. Embracing **green politics** may be our best hope in the long term, but we need urgent short-term measures too.

⁵ reduced something in size or amount, especially supplies of energy, money, etc.

Crops fail year after year in some of the poorest parts of the world. This has brought **devastating**⁶ **famines** to some regions and equally **devastating floods** to others. We call these **natural disasters**, but it is human beings who are causing them.

⁶ causing a lot of damage or destruction

B Poverty

Look at this radio interview with Pascal Delrio, an international expert, talking about poverty.

Interviewer: Mr Delrio, do you believe we can solve the problem of world poverty?

Delrio: I am more optimistic now than before. Millions of people have succeeded in **escaping poverty** in the last decade, but it is also true that in some regions, more people than ever are living **below the poverty line**, and we must help these people to **lift them out of poverty**.

Interviewer: But how can we achieve that?

Delrio: I accept that there is no **simple solution**. The **widening gulf**¹ between rich and poor in some countries is often due to external forces beyond their control. Some of the most **deprived regions** have large populations living on the **margins of society**, and it is for these specific groups that we can do most.

Interviewer: But poverty is not just an issue for **developing countries**, is it? We have thousands **sleeping rough**² every night in cities like London and New York, and **street children** in a lot of big cities around the world.

Delrio: I agree, and I accept that children and adults who **live on the streets** are in **desperate need**, and that these social conditions **breed crime**. But so much depends on **the global economy**. Right now, we have a **golden opportunity** to **combat poverty**. Perhaps we cannot **eradicate**³ poverty altogether, but we can certainly **alleviate**⁴ poverty, and that is our challenge.

Interviewer: Mr Delrio, thank you very much.

¹ an important difference between the ideas, opinions, or situations of two groups of people

² in the open, without shelter ³ get rid of completely ⁴ make less serious

C Other global problems

Thousands of people seek **political asylum** in other countries every year. Most are genuine **asylum seekers**, but some are **economic migrants** looking for a better life. Hundreds of people **took to the streets** to demonstrate about third-world **debt repayments**. A terrible **earthquake** hit the region last year. The **death toll** was massive. The **sexual exploitation** of children is a **world-wide problem**, as is **child labour**.

Exercises

39.1 Complete the collocations.

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| 1 a rise in the number of asylum | 6 people who rough |
| 2 to deplete the ozone | 7 a massive toll |
| 3 bad social conditions crime | 8 to be in desperate |
| 4 increasing amounts of greenhouse | 9 to people out of poverty |
| 5 a golden to combat poverty | 10 below the poverty |

39.2 Match sentences 1–5 with sentences a–e.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 There was a big protest against child labour. | a) There is some evidence to suggest that fish stocks are beginning to rise slightly in the North Sea. |
| 2 There is new evidence of a widening gulf between the wealthy and more deprived sectors of society. | b) People wanting to come to this country to escape poverty should be welcomed. |
| 3 There has been some small success in tackling marine pollution. | c) Large numbers of people took to the streets yesterday to demonstrate against the increasing employment of children in appalling conditions. |
| 4 The problem of street children in big cities has become a global crisis. | d) A worldwide study of young people who sleep rough has raised universal alarm. |
| 5 A spokesperson for one of the biggest charities said access for economic migrants should be made easier. | e) Figures published today indicate that the divide between the rich and the poor is getting bigger. |

39.3 Fill in the gaps in this announcement.



Environment Concern is a new magazine for people interested in (1) politics. The first issue includes an article on what happened to local crops when the earthquake (2) Santa Graziela last year. Another feature looks at the problems which (3) repayments are causing for (4) countries and how this affects people who live on the (5) of society there. We appreciate that there is no simple (6) to the problem of poverty in today's world but we have asked four experts what *they* would do to (7) poverty. Their answers make stimulating reading.

39.4 Answer these questions about the collocations in A.

- What will happen if crops fail in an important agricultural area?
- Name two fossil fuels.
- Name three types of natural disaster.
- What might a devastating flood do to an area?
- What could governments do in response to a devastating famine?
- What are green politics concerned with?
- What is the cause of rising sea-levels?
- Why are exhaust fumes an increasing problem?

FOLLOW UP

There are many articles on global problems in the *New Internationalist* magazine. Choose one from their website (www.newint.org/) and note any interesting collocations that you find. The magazine also has special articles written in an easy style for learners of English. Go to its *Teaching Global Issues* page.