

I nternational Year of Biodiversity

Nagoya Summit & Beyond

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Importance of Biodiversity

In 1992, the Convention on Biological Diversity, or CBD, was opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. The CBD was the first legally binding international treaty to comprehensively cover all aspects of biodiversity – genes, species and ecosystems – and was created in response to the increasing pressures that humans were placing on life on Earth. It has three main objectives: the conservation of biodiversity, its sustainable use, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources.

Achieving these objectives is deeply important because the variety of organisms on Earth and the ecosystems they create help make the planet uniquely habitable for humans. Our food, fuel and medicines, and much of our fiber and building material all have biological origins. Biological goods support such diverse industries as agriculture, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, pulp and paper, horticulture and construction.

Moreover, ecosystems provide human beings with a range of services that would be extremely costly or impossible to replace. These include purification of air and water, detoxification and decomposition of wastes, stabilization and moderation of Earth's climate, moderation of floods, droughts, temperature extremes and the forces of wind, generation and renewal of soil fertility, nutrient cycling, pollination of wild plants and crops, and control of pests and diseases. Local ecosystems also play an important role in the spiritual life of many cultures, providing them with aesthetic or religious fulfillment.

Because of the many benefits we obtain from biodiversity, preserving it is also central to sustainable development and poverty alleviation strategies. This is particularly true when we consider development sectors such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries and tourism. Around 1.6 billion people worldwide depend on forest biodiversity, including non-wood forest products, for their survival and livelihood. And yet 13 million hectares of the world's forests are lost due to deforestation each year. One billion people depend on fish as their sole or main source of animal protein, while fish provided more than 2.6 billion people with at least 20% of their average per capita animal protein intake. And yet 80% of examined world marine fish stocks are fully exploited or overexploited. Around 30 million people in the poorest and most vulnerable coastal and inland communities entirely depend on coral reefs for their livelihoods. And yet 60% of coral reefs could be lost by 2030 through fishing damage, pollution, disease, invasive alien species and coral bleaching.

From 2002 to 2010: Biodiversity Target

The clear connection between biodiversity and human well-being is why world leaders attending the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development agreed to the 2010 target of slowing biodiversity loss worldwide by the end of the decade as a contribution to

poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth. The 2010 target was then incorporated into the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and 2010 was declared the International Year of Biodiversity.

Moreover, consecutive meetings of G-8 environment ministers endorsed the 2010 target and called for increased engagement at the highest political levels in the fight to preserve biodiversity. The so-called "Potsdam Initiative," "Kobe Call for Action for Biodiversity" and "Carta di Siricusa" or "Syracuse Charter" on biodiversity helped put biodiversity loss on the agenda at G-8 summits in Heiligendamm in 2007, Hokkaido/Toyako in 2008 and L'Aquila in 2009, with further attention being paid to biodiversity at the 2010 G-8 and G-20 summits in Canada.

However, this past May, the third edition of *Global Biodiversity Outlook* (GB03) showed that the 2010 target has not been met (*Chart*). Based on 120 national reports from parties to the CBD as well as the scientific literature, GB03 warns that today species continue to go extinct at up to 1,000 times the natural background rate. The report also warns that massive further loss of biodiversity is projected to occur before the end of this century and that ecosystems are approaching tipping points beyond which irreversible degradation will take place, with dire consequences for human well-being.

In September in New York, heads of state at the 65th session of the United Nations General Assembly took note of these deeply worrying trends. At a first-ever high-level segment of the UNGA on biodiversity, the leaders of the world called attention to the need to redouble international efforts to slow and eventually reverse biodiversity loss. This important event set the stage for the CBD's 10th Conference of the Parties (COP10) in October in Nagoya, Japan.

Nagoya Biodiversity Summit

Over the last two weeks of October, some 18,000 participants gathered in Nagoya to finalize and adopt the international community's strategic plan for the 2011-2020 period. This was done with the participation of all stakeholders, including youth, local and indigenous authorities, the private sector, parliamentarians and cooperative agencies. Several key events were held to engage specific groups. A City Summit adopted a plan of action on cities and biodiversity as well as an Urban Biodiversity Index. A meeting of parliamentarians, convened in partnership with GLOBE International, helped involve legislators in the finalization of the strategic plan and in actions for the future. A dialogue between the chief executive officers of companies and ministers was held in the context of the CBD's Business and Biodiversity Initiative, along with the Messe Nagoya, an international technological fair on biodiversity. Moreover, a high-level segment helped generate political momentum amongst ministers and heads of state.

In concurrence with COP10, the G-77 and China also adopted a Multi-Year Plan of Action for South-South Cooperation on Biodiversity for Development. In addition, COP10 saw the launch of the Rio Convention's

Ecosystems and Climate Change Pavilion, which allows parties and organizations to profile activities linking biodiversity conservation, sustainable land management, and climate change mitigation and adaptation, especially at national and sub-national levels. The pavilion will also be held at COP16 of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Cancun, Mexico, at the end of 2010, as well as in 2011 at COP10 of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in South Korea and at UNFCCC COP17 in South Africa, with its momentum carrying through to the 2012 World Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).

The end result of the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit was a 2011-2020 biodiversity strategy which emphasizes that biodiversity loss is interlinked with a range of issues, from poverty to climate change, water scarcity, growth in demand, development and international conflict, and therefore can no longer be treated as a stand-alone issue. It urges parties to mainstream the preservation of biological goods and ecosystem services into governmental decision-making and society at large, including economic systems and markets.

In addition, the new biodiversity strategy incorporates a 2050 biodiversity vision, a 2020 biodiversity target and sub-targets, and contains a means of implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Importantly, the 2020 targets were designed to be both achievable and more measurable than the 2010 target, and are based on a clear underlying logic consistent with the available scientific evidence, including the scientific review of biodiversity projections prepared for GBO3. These are the so-called SMART targets – goals that are at once strategic, measurable, ambitious yet realistic and time-bound. These global targets are meant to serve as guidance for countries who will then tailor them to their individual circumstances, which can vary quite a bit from nation to nation. Countries will be asked to set concrete national targets and to develop appropriate assessment criteria for achieving them.

The parties also finalized and adopted an international protocol on access and benefit sharing. Eighteen years after the convention was born at the Rio Earth Summit, its third objective has finally been made operational: the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the use of genetic resources. The Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing establishes a new North-South relationship through a genuine partnership between the owners and users of genetic resources, making it an indispensable tool in achieving the MDGs.

Beyond Nagoya

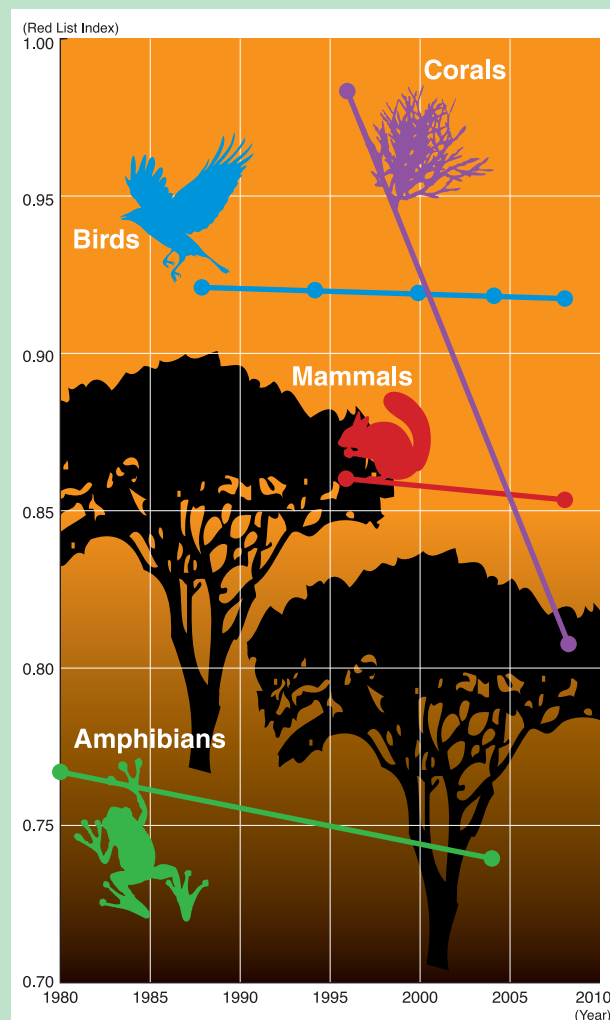
The closing ceremonies of the International Year took place in December in Kanazawa, Ishikawa Prefecture, and paved the way for the 2011 International Year of Forests. Moving beyond 2010, the challenge we now face is to effectively turn the 2011-2020 strategic plan adopted at COP10 into a living, breathing document that will produce concrete action over the years to come. Specifically, we need our 193 CBD parties to translate the new strategic plan into national and sub-national strategies. Moreover, we need the Nagoya Protocol to enter into force before the next COP in India in October 2012.

Having achieved a historic international consensus at the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit on what needs to be done to save life on Earth, we cannot afford to let this opportunity slip by. We cannot afford to let inaction at this crucial moment compromise the future of billions of people alive today and the countless other people who will populate the planet in the future. All sectors of society and all sectors of government need to be actively involved from now onward in the struggle to preserve biodiversity. Along with the future of millions of other species, the future of our own species is clearly at stake. **JS**

Red List Index

The Red List Index tracks the percentage of fully assessed species groups expected to survive into the future: in other words, whether the risk of extinction is increasing or decreasing over time. In all four of the groups assessed – warm-water corals, birds, mammals and amphibians – the downward slope of the line indicates that the risk of extinction is increasing. The status of coral species has declined most sharply, and amphibians are the group facing the highest extinction risk.

A Red List Index value of 1.00 indicates that all species in a group would be considered as being of least concern, that is, not expected to become extinct in the near future. At the other extreme, a value of 0 indicates that all species in a group have gone extinct. Note that a flat line on this graph would indicate that the risk of extinction was constant – if the rate of biodiversity loss were reducing, the lines should be moving upwards, indicating a reduced risk of extinction.



Source: International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

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