



**United Nations Decade on Biodiversity**

**PRESS RELEASE**

## **Nature: Humanity at a Crossroads, UN Warns**

- *UN's Global Biodiversity Outlook 5 report outlines eight major transitions needed to slow, then halt nature's accelerating decline.*
- *Final report card on Aichi Biodiversity Targets, set in 2010: 6 of world's 20 goals "partially achieved" by 2020 deadline.*
- *Towards a landmark new global post-2020 biodiversity framework: GBO-5 synthesizes scientific basis for urgent action.*
- *Bright spots include: extinctions prevented by conservation, more land and oceans protected, fish stocks bounce back in well-managed fisheries.*

**15 September 2020** – Despite encouraging progress in several areas, the natural world is suffering badly and getting worse. Eight transformative changes are, therefore, urgently needed to ensure human wellbeing and save the planet, the UN warns in a major report.

The report comes as the COVID-19 pandemic challenges people to rethink their relationship with nature, and to consider the profound consequences to their own wellbeing and survival that can result from continued biodiversity loss and the degradation of ecosystems.

The *Global Biodiversity Outlook 5* (GBO-5), published by the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), offers an authoritative overview of the state of nature. It is a final report card on progress against the 20 global biodiversity targets agreed in 2010 with a 2020 deadline, and offers lessons learned and best practices for getting on track.

“This flagship report underlines that ‘humanity stands at a crossroads with regard to the legacy we wish to leave to future generations,’” said CBD Executive Secretary, Elizabeth Maruma Mrema.



Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

United Nations Environment Programme

413 Saint-Jacques Street, Suite 800, Montreal, QC, H2Y 1N9, Canada

Tel : +1 514 288 2220

Fax : +1 514 288 6588

secretariat@cbd.int

www.cbd.int



**Convention on  
Biological Diversity**

“Many good things are happening around the world and these should be celebrated and encouraged. Nevertheless, the rate of biodiversity loss is unprecedented in human history and pressures are intensifying. Earth’s living systems as a whole are being compromised. And the more humanity exploits nature in unsustainable ways and undermines its contributions to people, the more we undermine our own well-being, security and prosperity.”

“As nature degrades,” Ms. Mrema continued, “new opportunities emerge for the spread to humans and animals of devastating diseases like this year’s coronavirus. The window of time available is short, but the pandemic has also demonstrated that transformative changes are possible when they must be made.”

“The decisions and level of action we take now will have profound consequences -- for good or ill -- for all species, including ours.”

With respect to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, set in 2010, the analysis based on the 6th set of national reports to the CBD and the latest scientific findings shows that seven of 60 “elements” — success criteria — within the 20 targets have been achieved and 38 show progress. In the case of 13 elements, no progress was made, or a move away from the target was indicated, and for two elements the level of progress is unknown. The report concludes that, overall, of the 20 targets, six of them (9, 11, 16, 17, 19 and 20) were partially achieved by the 2020 deadline.

By partially met, GBO5 refers to targets where at least one distinct element has been met. For example, the elements of Target 11 regarding the proportions of lands and seas protected was met, but the elements related to the quality of protected areas were not. Similarly, for Target 19, biodiversity knowledge has improved but it has not



**Black-footed ferret:** One of up to seven mammal species spared from extinction thanks to conservation efforts in the past decade, and one of up to 16 mammal species spared since 1993, according to a new paper. The authors also identify up to 32 bird species that owe their continued existence to conservation measures in the last 27 years (including up to 18 in the past decade). Bolam, F.C, Mair, L., Angelico, M., Brooks, T.M, Burgman, M., McGowan, P. J. K & Hermes, C. et al. (2020). How many bird and mammal extinctions has recent conservation action prevented? *Conservation Letters*, e12762. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/conl.12762>  
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been widely shared or applied. For Target 20, official development assistance doubled but resources did not increase from all sources.

The national reports to the CBD (available via <https://bit.ly/GBO5media>) offer evidence that the types of transitions needed moving forward are beginning; that virtually all countries are taking steps to protect biodiversity. GBO5 cites several exemplary national actions and programmes, in the absence of which conditions would certainly be worse (extinctions would be higher for example). In addition, for example, deforestation rates continue to fall, eradication of invasive alien species from islands is increasing, awareness of biodiversity appears to be increasing.

“The actions that have been taken need to be significantly scaled up, move from being project driven and become more systemic and broadened,” says Ms. Mrema. “Also, the gaps in national ambition and action need to be filled. The information in part III of GBO-5 is about doing this and provides examples of the types of actions that needed going forward.”

The report calls for a shift away from “business as usual” across a range of human activities. It outlines eight transitions that recognize the value of biodiversity, the need to restore the ecosystems on which all human activity depends, and the urgency of reducing the negative impacts of such activity:

- The ***land and forests*** transition: conserving intact ecosystems, restoring ecosystems, combatting and reversing degradation, and employing landscape level spatial planning to avoid, reduce and mitigate land-use change.
- The ***sustainable agriculture*** transition: redesigning agricultural systems through agroecological and other innovative approaches to enhance productivity while minimizing negative impacts on biodiversity.
- The sustainable ***food systems*** transition: enabling sustainable and healthy diets with a greater emphasis on a diversity of foods, mostly plant-based, and more moderate consumption of meat and fish, as well as dramatic cuts in the waste involved in food supply and consumption.
- The sustainable ***fisheries and oceans*** transition: protecting and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems, rebuilding fisheries and managing aquaculture and other uses of the oceans to ensure sustainability, and to enhance food security and livelihoods.
- The ***cities and infrastructure*** transition: deploying “green infrastructure” and making space for nature within built landscapes to improve the health and quality of life for citizens and to reduce the environmental footprint of cities and infrastructure.
- The sustainable ***freshwater*** transition: an integrated approach guaranteeing the water flows required by nature and people, improving water quality, pro-

tecting critical habitats, controlling invasive species and safeguarding connectivity to allow the recovery of freshwater systems from mountains to coasts.

- The sustainable *climate action* transition: employing nature-based solutions, alongside a rapid phase-out of fossil fuel use, to reduce the scale and impacts of climate change, while providing positive benefits for biodiversity and other sustainable development goals.
- The biodiversity-inclusive *One Health* transition: managing ecosystems, including agricultural and urban ecosystems, as well as the use of wildlife, through an integrated approach, to promote healthy ecosystems and healthy people.

As nations negotiate a new pact to guide global biodiversity efforts in the 2020s, GBO5 synthesizes abundant evidence of biodiversity's global decline, based on an extensive range of sources, including:

- 6<sup>th</sup> National Reports to the CBD from Convention's member Parties
- Four previous GBO reports (2001, 2006, 2010, 2015)
- Assessments by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), including the landmark Global Assessment (2019) and regional assessments (2018)
- Recent research and indicators updated since the IPBES Global Assessment
- Reports from other international bodies, including: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and others
- Plant Conservation Report (Global Strategy for Plant Conservation targets, 2011-2020)
- Two Local Biodiversity Outlooks\* (presenting the perspectives and experiences of indigenous peoples and local communities on the current biodiversity crisis, and their contributions to the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020). The second edition of the [Local Biodiversity Outlooks will be launched](#) at a separate event on the 16th September 2020 (details below).

GBO-5 underlines the urgent need to act to slow and end further loss, and highlights examples of proven measures available to help achieve the world's agreed vision: "Living in harmony with nature" by 2050.

WWF's Living Planet Report, released on 10 Sept, documenting the precipitous fall in monitored populations of mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and fish between 1970 and 2016, further underlines the urgency to act.

GBO-5 reports financing for biodiversity (public, private, domestic and international), was up in some countries, roughly constant in others for the past decade, and resources available for biodiversity through international flows and official development assistance roughly doubled. In all, an estimated annual \$78-91 billion is available, but “estimates of biodiversity finance needs are conservatively estimated in the hundreds of billions of dollars.”

“Moreover, these resources are swamped by support for activities harmful to biodiversity,” the report says. “These include \$500 billion in fossil fuel and other subsidies that potentially cause environmental harm, \$100 billion of which relate to agriculture.”

GBO-5 highlights that action on biodiversity is essential to address climate change, long-term food security and health. The time for action on all these issues is now - the global community must seize the opportunity to build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic in order to reduce the risk of future pandemics.

GBO-5 also underlines the importance of biodiversity for achieving the high-level, agreed Sustainable Development Goals established in 2015, and the 2016 Paris Agreement and, at the UN's Nature Summit on 30 September, GBO-5's findings will be taken up by heads of State and Government.

GBO-5 will also have an important impact on CBD's ongoing process to create a set of new global biodiversity targets for 2021-2030, as part of a post-2020 framework for the Convention.

That framework, now under negotiation, will be considered at CBD's 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP-15), Kunming, China - postponed as a result of the coronavirus pandemic from October 2020 to 2021.

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## **Comments**

“As we emerge from the immediate impacts of the pandemic, we have an unprecedented opportunity to ‘build back better’, incorporating the transitions outlined in this Outlook and embodied in an ambitious plan to put the world on track to achieve the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity. Part of this new agenda must be to tackle the twin global challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss in a more coordinated manner, understanding both that climate change threatens to undermine all

other efforts to conserve biodiversity; and that nature itself offers some of the most effective solutions to avoid the worst impacts of a warming planet.”

- **António Guterres**, Secretary-General, United Nations

“Now, we must accelerate and scale-up collaboration for nature-positive outcomes – conserving, restoring and using biodiversity fairly and sustainably. If we do not, biodiversity will continue to buckle under the weight of land- and sea-use change, overexploitation, climate change, pollution and invasive alien species. This will further damage human health, economies and societies – with particularly detrimental effects on indigenous peoples and local communities. We know what needs to be done, what works and how we can achieve good results. If we build on what has already been achieved, and place biodiversity at the heart of all our policies and decisions – including in COVID-19 recovery packages – we can ensure a better future for our societies and the planet.

- **Inger Andersen**, Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

“We need global, swift and transformative action to halt the decline of our planet’s biological diversity and the loss of wild species of fauna and flora across ecosystems. The fifth edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook can arm decision-makers with the facts and knowledge needed to move towards meeting these urgent challenges.”

- **Ivonne Higuero**, Secretary-General, CITES

“Our dependence on nature is more evident today than ever. The GBO-5 is a call for action to reverse biodiversity loss and ensure our health, wellbeing and prosperity. The report highlights the rapid global decline of wetlands that affects water availability, as well as the 40% of the planet’s species which live in these ecosystems. Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands are committed to wetland conservation and wise use as a key element of the post-2020 biodiversity framework.”

- **Martha Rojas Urrego**, Secretary General, Convention on Wetlands

“The 5<sup>th</sup> Global Biodiversity Outlook, launched just before the first UN Biodiversity Summit, paints a stark message – that we are continuing to lose biodiversity, our essential planetary safety net. We are not on track to meet most of Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and we know that the loss of nature poses grave consequences for us all. However, there are reasons for hope. The report shows that we are on track to have at least 17% of terrestrial protected areas and 10% marine protected areas by the end of 2020 – a remarkable accomplishment from where we were a decade

ago. This tells us we can do more, and we must do more, in the coming decade of action.”

- **Achim Steiner**, Administrator, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

As the Chair of IPBES, I welcome the 5th edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook. IPBES is proud to have contributed to GBO-5, in particular through our Global Assessment of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. GBO-5 includes, among several new sources of evidence, an interesting analysis of the 6th national reports provided by countries on the state of their biodiversity. Sadly, GBO-5 confirms that none of the 20 Aichi Targets have been fully achieved. GBO-5 calls for transformative change in eight areas and IPBES is currently preparing two directly relevant reports: one on transformative change, and the other on ways to simultaneously achieve the SDGs related to water, food, health, energy, climate and biodiversity. Together I believe that they will form a strong body of knowledge to further inform the work of the CBD in the post-2020 era. It is my great hope that all of the evidence, expertise and options now available to Parties at CBD COP 15 will finally raise the level of awareness about the severe and ongoing reduction of biodiversity and raise both the level of ambition and the resources needed to address this tragedy.

- **Ana María Hernández**, Chair, Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)

“The Global Biodiversity Outlook report underscores that global efforts have failed to address the growing global biodiversity crisis or achieve agreed targets. Urgent action and real commitment are needed to reverse the trends of biodiversity loss and the threat of extinction of as many as one million species, including migratory species of wild animals.”

- **Amy Fraenkel**, Executive Secretary, Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)

"We cannot afford to ignore the findings of this major report. Despite some progress, the loss of nature continues unabated, highlighting not only a failure of our moral duty to preserve Earth's diversity of life, but also the undermining of the very natural systems that support human health and the global economy. Importantly, the report also tells us that halting and reversing biodiversity loss is entirely possible, by protecting more of the remaining natural spaces, curbing wildlife overexploitation and, crucially, reforming the way we produce and consume food. "World leaders must take decisive action now - not later - to set nature on the path to recovery this decade and secure a nature-positive economy. They will have an

important opportunity to raise ambition at the UN Summit on Biodiversity later this month ahead of the UN biodiversity negotiations next year.”

- **Marco Lambertini**, Director General, WWF International

“It is very important to see a global report highlighting the limited progress made in recent years towards the global biodiversity targets pointing to the need to step up our efforts [collectively and holistically] to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity. The report confirms the findings of various other reports, including FAO’s 2019 report on The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture. As the adoption of its Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors shows, we are more committed than ever to work for fair, healthy and sustainable agri-food systems.”

- **Qu Dongyu**, Director-General, The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

“The news of our slow progress in achieving the 20 Aichi biodiversity targets set for 2020 should give us pause, coming as it does during the worst global pandemic in nearly 100 years. Reckless land use change is now not only leading to the loss of biological diversity; it is enabling the emergence of new infectious diseases in which alien viruses spread from the wild to humans. The Global Land Outlook 5 is clear about where to focus our attention to live in harmony with nature. But we have one shot – a decade – to make swift progress and with impact. The choices of our action or inaction are as stark as they are clear. Let us choose actions for a greener future where ecosystems thrive.”

- **Ibrahim Thiaw**, Executive Secretary, UN Convention to Combat Desertification

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### **GBO 5: By the Numbers**

**33%** Proportion of people in the most biodiverse countries with high awareness of both the values of biodiversity and the steps required for its conservation and sustainable use.

**91** Number of countries applying global standards for integrating environment into national accounting -- roughly double the number from 2006



**\$500 billion** Value of government subsidies that potentially cause environmental harm,

**1.7** Number of “Earths” needed to regenerate the biological resources used by humanity from 2011 to 2016

**33%** Reduction in global deforestation rates comparing the last five years with rates in the decade to 2010.

**66%** Proportion of marine fish stocks in 2017 fished within biologically sustainable levels, down from 71% in 2010, with great variation among regions, and among stocks.

**163 million** Number of farms (29% of all worldwide) practicing sustainable intensification, on

**453 million** hectares of agricultural land (9% of the worldwide total).

**260,000 tonnes** Weight of the estimated 5.25 trillion plastic particles in the world’s oceans

**~200** Eradications of invasive mammals on island since 2010, benefitting an estimated 236 native terrestrial species, including 100 highly-threatened bird, mammal and reptile species such as the island fox and Seychelles magpie-robin

**60%+** Proportion of world’s coral reefs under threat, especially due to overfishing and destructive fishing

**43%** Area of key biodiversity areas covered by protected areas -- up from 29% in 2000.

**28-48** Estimated number of bird and mammal species prevented from going extinct thanks to conservation actions since 1993, when the CBD came into force, including 11 - 25 species since 2010.

**1,940** Number of local domesticated animal breeds) considered to be at risk of extinction, out of 7,155, with risk status unknown for another 4,668 breeds

**164:** Number of countries that explicitly recognize women’s rights to own, use, make decisions and use land as collateral on equal terms with men

**27 million** Hectares of land under restoration activities – only 2% of the estimated potential

**128** Number of Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefits Sharing, 87 of them having ABS measures in place and competent national authorities established

**69** Number of countries with National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAP) adopted as whole-of-government policy instruments

**40** Number of Parties that involved indigenous and local communities in the preparation of their NBSAP

**1.4 billion** Number of species occurrence records freely accessible through the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF), a seven-fold increase over the decade

**\$9.3 billion:** Total value of annual international public biodiversity finance for biodiversity -- double the levels of the previous decade -- of which \$3.9 billion has biodiversity as a principle focus

More: click [here](#)

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## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

**GBO-5 Press Conference and Launch: 15 September 2020**  
**09:15h US Eastern Time (13:15 GMT / 14:15 in UK, 15:15 CET)**

**Webcast: [www.cbd.int/live](http://www.cbd.int/live)**

**Media will be able to submit questions via chat box or email: [GBO5@cbd.int](mailto:GBO5@cbd.int)**

**For interview requests and other info please contact:**

David Ainsworth, [david.ainsworth@cbd.int](mailto:david.ainsworth@cbd.int)  
Johan Hedlund, +1-514-287-6670 [johan.hedlund@cbd.int](mailto:johan.hedlund@cbd.int)  
Terry Collins, +1-416-878-8712, [tc@tca.tc](mailto:tc@tca.tc)

Documents and resources  
All at [bit.ly/GBO5Media](http://bit.ly/GBO5Media)

*Global Biodiversity Outlook 5, full report*

*Summary for policymakers*

*Forewords: UN Secretary-General, Executive Director of UNEP, Executive Secretary of CBD*

*Overview*

*Introduction*

*Progress Achieved In Implementing The Strategic Plan For Biodiversity 2011-2020*

*Assessment of progress towards the 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets*

*Future Outlook*

*Eight transitions to sustainable pathways:*

1. *Land and forests*
2. *Sustainable agriculture*
3. *Sustainable food systems*
4. *Sustainable fisheries and oceans*
5. *Cities and infrastructure*
6. *Sustainable freshwater*
7. *Sustainable climate action*
8. *Biodiversity-inclusive One Health transition*

*GBO5 primer and background*

*Photo and video resources*

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**Local Biodiversity Outlooks**

The Local Biodiversity Outlooks (2nd edition), a sister publication to the GBO5, assesses progress against all 20 of the Aichi Targets which characterised global ambitions between 2011 and 2020. It finds that the **contributions of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities have been too often neglected and marginalised and that failure to recognise and support these contributions is directly tied to**

**our global failure to meet the majority of them.** Target 18 on Traditional Knowledge is illustrative of this wider trend.

**Summary:** An [advance copy of LBO-2 summary is available](https://bit.ly/3i0ag85) in English at <https://bit.ly/3i0ag85>

**Launch:** LBO-2 will officially launch during the special virtual sessions of the SBSTTA meeting on 16 September. [View the official launch notification at https://bit.ly/31XhS5O](https://bit.ly/31XhS5O)

**Separate press briefing:** 23 September 2020. [Please register at https://bit.ly/3jEXSuS](https://bit.ly/3jEXSuS)

Additional information: [bit.ly/GBO5Media](https://bit.ly/GBO5Media)

Panellists and experts are available for interviews:

**Contact** Tom Dixon, Communications Manager, Forest Peoples Programme  
[tdixon@forestpeoples.org](mailto:tdixon@forestpeoples.org), +44 7876 397915

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## **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**

[www.cbd.int](http://www.cbd.int)

Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and entering into force in December 1993, the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty for the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of the components of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits derived from the use of genetic resources. With 196 Parties, the Convention has near universal participation among countries. The Convention seeks to address all threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services, including threats from climate change, through scientific assessments, the development of tools, incentives and processes, the transfer of technologies and good practices and the full and active involvement of relevant stakeholders including indigenous and local communities, youth, NGOs, women and the business community. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing are supplementary agreements to the Convention. The Cartagena Protocol, which entered into force on 11 September 2003, seeks to protect biological diversity from the potential risks posed by living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology. To date, 173 Parties have ratified the Cartagena Protocol. The Nagoya Protocol aims at sharing the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources in a fair and equitable way, including

by appropriate access to genetic resources and by appropriate transfer of relevant technologies. It entered into force on 12 October 2014 and to date has been ratified by 128 Parties.

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