



PRESS RELEASE

IPBES Global Assessment underscores need for transformational change to safeguard life on Earth

- *Landmark Global Biodiversity Assessment shows alarming decline in nature and its vital contributions to people, a critical risk for the 21st century.*
- *Up to one million species currently face the threat of extinction, more than at any other time in human history.*
- *Report offers avenues for transformative change that tackle biodiversity, climate, oceans, health, economy, and sustainable development goals together. Also calls for the evolution of global financial and economic systems to build a sustainable economy within ecological and social boundaries.*
- *Seminal report provides scientific basis for a new global biodiversity framework, to be adopted in China in October 2020 at the next Conference of Parties (COP15) of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.*
- *Transformation and systems transition approaches are emerging across the world and show that sustainable ecological pathways are part of possible solutions for future.*

6 May 2019 – The world needs transformational change if life on Earth is to be safeguarded and people are to continue to receive the services and benefits that nature provides, according to a new report from an international team of leading researchers. Coming at a critical period for environmental action, the Global Assessment of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services is the first report of its kind in 14 years and provides indispensable scientific evidence on the health of the natural environment.

The Global Assessment is published by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), an independent intergovernmental body with 130 country members linked to a global scientific network. It is tasked with equipping decision makers with sound data and analysis on which to base policy choices.

“The Global Assessment offers a comprehensive view of the current conditions of global biodiversity, which is the essential infrastructure that supports all forms of life on Earth, including human life,” said CBD Executive Secretary Dr. Cristiana Paşca-Palmer, welcoming the release of the report Monday in Paris. “Building a bridge between science and policy-making is crucial at this time. Without clear



grounding in science-based evidence, the policies and decisions made at government and non-governmental level, including private sector, would not be able to tackle this challenge effectively,” she said.

The report finds that biodiversity’s decline threatens people’s basic needs. It states that “while more food, energy and materials than ever before are now being supplied to people in most places, this is increasingly at the expense of nature’s ability to provide such contributions in the future and frequently undermines nature’s many other contributions, which range from water quality regulation to sense of place.” It lists land use changes, climate change, pollution and invasive species among the main drivers of nature degradation.

There is clear evidence that current patterns of production and consumption are unsustainable, according to the report. “Goals for conserving and sustainably using nature and achieving sustainability cannot be met by current trajectories, and goals for 2030 and beyond may only be achieved through transformative changes across economic, social, political and technological factors,” it said.

The report notes that “transformative change can expect opposition from those with interests vested in the status quo, but such opposition can be overcome for the broader public good.” As one pathway to sustainability, it calls for “the evolution of global financial and economic systems to build a global sustainable economy, steering away from the current limited paradigm of economic growth.”

This timely and eagerly awaited report is the result of three years of work by 145 experts, from 50 countries. Researchers consulted 15,000 different information sources and drew extensively on indigenous and local knowledge to compile a comprehensive picture of the state of nature. The report was reviewed and approved by representatives of the world’s governments.

“The evidence is incontestable - our destruction of biodiversity and ecosystem services has reached levels that threaten our well-being at least as much as human-induced climate change,” IPBES Chair Sir Robert Watson said. “The loss of species, ecosystems and genetic diversity is already a global and generational threat to human well-being.”

Up to one million species currently face the threat of extinction, the report said, more than at any other point in human history. “Independent lines of evidence point to an imminent rapid acceleration in the global rate of species extinction, which is already tens – if not hundreds – of times higher than it has been on average over the last 10 million years,” it said.

The report identifies several courses of action to bring about the transformative change needed to reverse these alarming trends. These include stronger international cooperation, correcting perverse incentive structures, applying a more holistic approach to decision-making and strengthening implementation of environmental laws and policies.

The report identifies a number of nature-based solutions to broader societal changes, for example:

- Reducing deforestation, restoring forests, wetlands and other ecosystems, and agricultural practices that build soil organic matter could contribute more than a third of the total efforts needed by 2030 to keep global warming well below 2 degrees;

- Better use of biodiversity in agriculture (such as pollinators, natural enemies of pests and soil biodiversity) could increase yields while reducing the use of harmful chemicals;
- Protecting coral reefs and mangroves protects coastal areas from extreme weather events;
- Urban green spaces can improve mental and physical health.

The IPBES Global Assessment provides the most comprehensive analysis of the state of biodiversity and ecosystems since the 2005 Millennium Ecosystems Assessment and comes a critical moment. The report is a key input for the fifth edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook, due out next year. Its findings will inform the intergovernmental process under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to define a new global framework for biodiversity after 2020, when the current Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 comes to an end. The new framework is expected to be adopted by 196 countries who are members of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) at their 15th Conference of the Parties (COP 15) in October 2020 in Kunming, China.

Leading up to COP 15, a series of high-profile events focusing on biodiversity and healthy ecosystems are taking place around the world. Last month, Canada's Prime Minister Trudeau hosted a Nature Champions Summit that resulted in an urgent Call to Action. G7 environment ministers gathering in France are expected to adopt today a Charter on Biodiversity; a International Leaders Initiative for Biodiversity; and a study by OECD on the Finance, Economic and Business Case for Biodiversity Action.

The Trondheim Conference on the process for a post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework will take place in July in Norway. In September, UN Secretary-General António Guterres will convene a Climate Summit with a working track on nature-based solutions. Several key events are also scheduled for next year, including IUCN's World's Parks Congress in June, and an invitation to the General Assembly of the United Nations to host a Nature Summit of heads of state and government in September.

"The IPBES Global Assessment comes at an absolutely critical time for the planet and all its peoples", Dr. Paşca Palmer said. She further added: "the world is at the cross-road and human civilization is potentially facing an existential threat from the combined negative impacts of climate change and ecosystems destruction, and the associated economic costs and social disruption. The science has spoken loud and clear – on climate, on biodiversity, and on resources use. Solutions and tools are available to avert the crisis, but it requires a profound change in economic and policy paradigms. It requires leadership from the top and from the bottom, and above all it requires partnership and engagement to support just and inclusive transitions in full solidarity with the most vulnerable people, who should not be left behind."

A summary of the report and other resources for media are available at: <http://bit.ly/IPBESReport>

NOTES TO EDITORS

Biodiversity-related conventions

The five signatories to the statement on behalf of biodiversity-related conventions are: the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species

of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES); the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS); and the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention on Wetlands).

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

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, 171 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 116 Parties.

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