

Global Biodiversity Outlook 3





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Foreword



Foreword by the United Nations Secretary-General

In 2002, the world's leaders agreed to achieve a significant reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010. Having reviewed all available evidence, including national reports submitted by Parties, this third edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook* concludes that the target has not been met. Moreover, the Outlook warns, the principal pressures leading to biodiversity loss are not just constant but are, in some cases, intensifying.

The consequences of this collective failure, if it is not quickly corrected, will be severe for us all. Biodiversity underpins the functioning of the ecosystems on which we depend for food and fresh water, health and recreation, and protection from natural disasters. Its loss also affects us culturally and spiritually. This may be more difficult to quantify, but is nonetheless integral to our well-being.


Current trends are bringing us closer to a number of potential tipping points that would catastrophically reduce the capacity of ecosystems to provide these essential services. The poor, who tend to be most immediately dependent on them, would suffer first and most severely. At stake are the principal objectives outlined in the Millennium Development Goals: food security, poverty eradication and a healthier population.

The conservation of biodiversity makes a critical contribution to moderating the scale of climate change and reducing its negative impacts by making ecosystems -- and therefore human societies -- more resilient. It is therefore essential that the challenges related to biodiversity and climate change are tackled in a coordinated manner and given equal priority.



In several important areas, national and international action to support biodiversity is moving in a positive direction. More land and sea areas are being protected, more countries are fighting the serious threat of invasive alien species, and more money is being set aside for implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity.

However, these efforts are too often undermined by conflicting policies. To tackle the root causes of biodiversity loss, we must give it higher priority in all areas of decision-making and in all economic sectors. As this third *Global Biodiversity Outlook* makes clear, conserving biodiversity cannot be an afterthought once other objectives are addressed -- it is the foundation on which many of these objectives are built. We need a new vision for biological diversity for a healthy planet and a sustainable future for humankind.


BAN Ki-moon
Secretary-General
United Nations

Message from the Executive Director of UNEP

A new and more intelligent compact between humanity and the Earth's life-support systems is urgently needed in 2010—the UN's International Year of Biodiversity. This was the year when governments had agreed to substantially reduce the rate of biodiversity loss: this has not happened. Instead of reflecting, governments, business and society as a whole need to urgently renew and recommit to this enterprise if sustainability is to be realized in the 21st century.

The Global Biodiversity Outlook-3 contains the sobering facts and figures while pin pointing several key reasons as to why the challenge of conserving and indeed enhancing biodiversity remains unmet. One key area is economics: many economies remain blind to the huge value of the diversity of animals, plants and other life-forms and their role in healthy and functioning ecosystems from forests and freshwaters to soils, oceans and even the atmosphere.

The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity, hosted by UNEP, is a major exercise aimed at bridging understanding and driving action in this area. It will complement the GBO-3 in advance of the Convention on Biological Diversity meeting in Nagoya later in the year. Already some compelling and catalyzing facts are emerging.

- ❖ Annual losses as a result of deforestation and forest degradation alone may equate to losses of US\$2 trillion to over US\$4.5 trillion alone. These could be secured by an annual investment of just US\$45 billion: a 100 to 1 return.

Many countries are beginning to factor natural capital into some areas of economic and social life with important returns, but this needs rapid and sustained scaling-up.

- ❖ In Venezuela, investment in the national protected area system is preventing sedimentation that otherwise could reduce farm earnings by around US\$3.5 million a year.
- ❖ Planting and protecting nearly 12,000 hectares of mangroves in Vietnam costs just over US\$1 million but saved annual expenditures on dyke maintenance of well over US\$7 million.

Mainstreaming the economics of biodiversity and the multi-trillion dollar services of the ecosystems which it supports into development, decision-making can make 2010 a success.



Other 'litmus tests' include bridging the gap between science and policy-makers by perhaps the establishment of an Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. Public awareness will also be key: de-mystifying terms such as biodiversity and ecosystems is one challenge. The other is to make the link between biodiversity and livelihoods and the important role of biodiversity and natural systems in meeting other sustainability challenges such as climate change, water scarcity and agriculture.

Governments also need to rise to the challenge of Alien Invasive Species. By some estimates, they may be costing the global economy US\$1.4 trillion or more. In sub-Saharan Africa, the invasive witchweed is responsible for annual maize losses amounting to US\$7 billion: overall losses to aliens may amount to over US\$12 billion in respect to Africa's eight principal crops.

Last but not least, a successful conclusion to negotiations on an international regime on access and benefit sharing of genetic resources is needed. This is the missing pillar of the CBD and perhaps its financial mechanism: a successful conclusion would indeed make 2010 a year to applaud.

The arrogance of humanity is that somehow we imagine we can get by without biodiversity or that it is somehow peripheral: the truth is we need it more than ever on a planet of six billion heading to over nine billion people by 2050.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Achim Steiner'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large 'A' and 'S'.

Achim Steiner
**United Nations Under-Secretary General
and Executive Director, United Nations
Environment Programme**

Preface by the Executive Secretary of the CBD

The third edition of *Global Biodiversity Outlook* (GBO-3) comes at a critical period in the history of the Convention on Biological Diversity. It coincides with the deadline agreed in Johannesburg by world leaders to substantially reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010 as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth. To this end the United Nations has designated 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity. For the first time in its history, the United Nations General Assembly, during its 65th session, will convene a high level meeting on biodiversity with the participation of Heads of State and Government. Further during the tenth meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention, to be held in Nagoya, Aichi Prefecture, Japan, Parties will develop a new strategic plan for the coming decades including a 2050 vision and 2020 mission for biodiversity as well as means for implementation and mechanism to monitor and evaluate our progress towards our shared global objectives.

More than fifteen years after the Convention came into force, and when the international community is actively preparing for the Rio+20 summit, this is a time of reckoning for decision-makers committed to the global effort to safeguard the variety life on Earth and its contribution to human well-being. GBO-3 is a vital tool to inform decision-makers and the wider public, about the state of biodiversity in 2010, the implications of current trends, and our options for the future.

Drawing extensively from the approximately 120 national reports submitted by Parties to the Convention, GBO-3 makes it clear that we have much work to do over the months and years to come. No country has reported that it will completely meet the 2010 target, and a few Parties have unequivocally stated they will not meet it. Moreover, most Parties have reported that at least one, but in most cases several species and habitats within their national territories, were in a state of decline.

Most Parties have confirmed that five main pressures continue to affect biodiversity within their borders: habitat loss, the unsustainable use and overexploitation of resources, climate change, invasive alien species, and pollution. Many positive steps have been taken by the Parties to help address these issues. These include the development of new biodiversity-related legislation; the establishment of mechanisms for environmental impact assessment; participation in transboundary management or cooperation initiatives; and fostering community involvement in the management of biological resources.



At the same time, the fourth national reports give us a clear picture of the obstacles that need to be overcome to better implement the objectives of the Convention. These include limited capacity in both developed and developing nations, including financial, human and technical issues; the absence of, or difficulties in, accessing scientific information; limited awareness of biodiversity issues amongst the general public and decision makers; limited biodiversity mainstreaming; fragmented decision making and limited communication between different ministries or sectors; and the absence of economic valuation of biodiversity.

As this Outlook makes clear, it is essential that these obstacles are removed if we are to make progress in tackling biodiversity loss. It is increasingly urgent that we make such progress, as the consequences of current trends have implications that jeopardize many of the objectives shared by the wider UN family to change the world for the better. We have an opportunity, equipped with the knowledge and analysis contained in this document and its underlying sources, to move biodiversity into the mainstream of decision-making. Let us, individually and collectively, seize this opportunity, for the sake of current and future generations as indeed biodiversity is life, biodiversity is our life.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ahmed Djoghlaoui'.

Ahmed Djoghlaoui
Assistant Secretary-General
and Executive Secretary
Convention on Biological Diversity



Executive Summary

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