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World governments fail to deliver on 2010 biodiversity target

World leaders have failed to deliver commitments made in 2002 to reduce the global rate of biodiversity loss by 2010, and have instead overseen alarming biodiversity declines. These findings are the result of a new paper published in the leading journal *Science* and represent the first assessment of how the targets made through the 2002 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) have not been met.

Compiling over 30 indicators – measures of different aspects of biodiversity, including changes in species' populations and risk of extinction, habitat extent and community composition – the study found no evidence for a significant reduction in the rate of decline of biodiversity, and that the pressures facing biodiversity continue to increase. The synthesis provides overwhelming evidence that the 2010 target has not been achieved.

“Our analysis shows that governments have failed to deliver on the commitments they made in 2002: biodiversity is still being lost as fast as ever, and we have made little headway in reducing the pressures on species, habitats and ecosystems”, said Dr Stuart Butchart, of the United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre and BirdLife International, and the paper's lead author.

“Our data show that 2010 will not be the year that biodiversity loss was halted, but it needs to be the year in which we start taking the issue seriously and substantially increase our efforts to take care of what is left of our planet.”

The indicators included in the study were developed and synthesised through the 2010 Biodiversity Indicators Partnership – a collaboration of over 40 international organisations and agencies developing global biodiversity indicators and the leading source of information on trends in global biodiversity.

Among these indicators was the Ecological Footprint, which measures the aggregate demand that human activities, through consumption of resources and emission of carbon dioxide, place on ecosystems and species.



“A better understanding of the connections between the Ecological Footprint and biodiversity loss is fundamental to slowing, halting and reversing the ongoing declines in these ecosystems and in populations of wild species,” said Dr. Alessandro Galli, senior scientist for Global Footprint Network and co-author of the study.

Among the drivers of threats to biodiversity are human demands for food, water, energy and materials, according to Galli. Such threats include climate change, pollution, habitat loss, as well as overexploitation of resources and species.

“Since 1970, we have reduced animal populations by 30%, the area of mangroves and sea grasses by 20% and the coverage of living corals by 40%”, said the United Nations Environment Programme’s Chief Scientist Prof Joseph Alcamo. “These losses are clearly unsustainable, since biodiversity makes a key contribution to human well-being and sustainable development, as recognised by the UN Millennium Development Goals.”

The results from this study feed into Global Biodiversity Outlook 3, the flagship publication of the CBD, to be released in Nairobi on May 10th, when government representatives from around the world will meet to discuss the 2010 target and how to address the biodiversity crisis.

“Although nations have put in place some significant policies to slow biodiversity declines, these have been woefully inadequate, and the gap between the pressures on biodiversity and the responses is getting ever wider”, said Dr Butchart.

The study recognised that there have been some important local or national successes in tackling biodiversity loss, including the designation of many protected areas (e.g. the 20,000 km² Jurueua National Park in Brazil), the recovery of particular species (e.g. European Bison) and the prevention of some extinctions (e.g. Black Stilt of New Zealand).

But despite these encouraging achievements, efforts to address the loss of biodiversity need to be substantially strengthened, and sustained investment in coherent global biodiversity monitoring and indicators is essential to track and improve the effectiveness of these responses.

“While many responses have been in the right direction, the relevant policies have been inadequately targeted, implemented and funded. Above all, biodiversity concerns must be integrated across all parts of government and business, and the economic value of biodiversity needs to be accounted for adequately in decision making. Only then will we be able to address the problem”, said Ahmed Djoghla, Executive Secretary to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

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Notes for Editors

Journal article: Butchart S et al (2010) “Global Biodiversity: Indicators of Recent Declines” Science Vol XXX Pages XXX.

Copies of the Science paper may be received from the AAAS Office of Public Programs. Tel.: +1-202-326-6440; E-mail: scipak@aaas.org

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Research Centre, Center for Applied Biodiversity Science, Global Footprint Network, University of Virginia, Institute for Environmental Protection and Research Environment – ISPRA, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, European Bird Census Council, University of Queensland, University of Cambridge, National Center for Atmospheric Research, WWF International, Centre for Invasion Biology and Cape Research Centre (South African National Parks), UNESCO, TRAFFIC International, University of British Columbia, National Centre for Biological Sciences (Tata Institute of Fundamental Research), The Nature Conservancy, USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, American Bird Conservancy, Stellenbosch University, University of Bath, and the Al Ain Wildlife Park & Resort.

The 2010 Biodiversity Indicators Partnership (www.twentyten.net) is a global initiative to track progress towards achieving the "2010 biodiversity target" to significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010. It is co-ordinated by the United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), based in Cambridge, UK, with funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The 2010 BIP is a collaboration of over 40 international organisations and agencies developing global biodiversity indicators and is the leading source of information on trends in global biodiversity. The three main objectives of the 2010 BIP are: to generate information on biodiversity trends that is useful to decision makers; to ensure improved global biodiversity indicators are implemented and available; and to establish links between biodiversity initiatives at the regional and national levels to enable capacity building and improve the delivery of the biodiversity indicators. 2010 BIP Partners are Biodiversity International, BirdLife International, CITES Secretariat, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Fisheries Centre, University of British Columbia, Global Footprint Network, Global Invasive Species Programme, International Nitrogen Initiative, International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), The Nature Conservancy, TRAFFIC International, United Nations Global Environment Monitoring System Water Programme (UNEP GEMS/Water), United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), University of Queensland, Wetlands International, World Health Organization, WWF, Zoological Society of London. Associate Indicator Partners: Alliance for Zero Extinction, Conservation International, International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), NatureServe, Royal Botanical Gardens Kew, Sapienze Universita di Roma, Terralingua. Affiliates: ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Programme (CBMP), Columbia University Center for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN), Countdown 2010, ECORA, Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), Land Degradation in Drylands (LADA), Nordic Biodiversity Indicators 2010 (NordBio 2010), Streamlining European 2010 Biodiversity Indicators (SEBI2010), Tebtebba Foundation, The Economics of Ecosystems & Biodiversity, Tour du Valat, United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment & Health (UNU-INWEH), Water Footprint Network.

The UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre is the biodiversity assessment and biodiversity policy support arm of the United Nations Environment Programme, the world's foremost intergovernmental environmental organisation. The Centre has been in operation for over 25 years, providing objective, scientifically rigorous products and services to help decision makers recognise the value of biodiversity and apply this knowledge to all that they do. The Centre's core business is locating data about biodiversity and its conservation, interpreting and analysing that data to provide assessments and policy analysis, and making the results available to both national and international decision makers and businesses.

BirdLife International is a global alliance of conservation organisations working in more than 100 countries and territories that, together, are the leading authority on the status of birds, their habitats and the issues and problems affecting them.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), established in 1972, is the voice for the environment within the United Nations system. UNEP acts as a catalyst, advocate, educator and facilitator to promote the wise use and sustainable development of the global environment. To accomplish this, UNEP works with a wide range of partners, including United Nations entities, international organisations, national governments non-governmental organisations, the private sector and civil society.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF), established in 1991, unites 178 countries in partnership with international institutions, non-government organisations and the private sector to address global environmental issues while supporting national sustainable development initiatives. Today the GEF is the largest funding organisation of projects to improve the global environment. An independent financial organisation, the GEF provides grants for projects related to biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, the ozone layer, and persistent organic pollutants. Since 1991, GEF has achieved a strong track record with developing countries and countries with economies in transition, providing US\$8.3 billion in grants and leveraging US\$33.7 billion in co-financing for over than 2,200 projects in more than 165 countries.

The 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 and sustainable use of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits from utilization of genetic resources. With 193 Parties, the Convention has near universal participation among countries committed to preserving life on Earth. 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.

2010 International Year of Biodiversity The United Nations declared 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity (IYB) to raise awareness about the crucial importance of biodiversity, to communicate the human costs of biodiversity loss, and to engage people, particularly youth, throughout the world in the fight to protect all life on Earth.

Initiatives will be organized throughout the year to disseminate information, promote the protection of biodiversity and encourage countries, organizations, and individuals to take direct action to reduce biodiversity loss. The focal point for the year is the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. www.cbd.int/2010/welcome/