



WHAT IS BIODIVERSITY?

Biological diversity refers to the variety of life on Earth and the natural patterns it forms. It is vital to protect the vast array of species which our planet has, but in striving for human development, this often takes a backseat. In fact, according to the United Nations Environmental Programme, human activity is pushing one million species of plants and animals towards extinction.

This is the largest loss of life since the dinosaurs.

NATURE IS DECLINING AT AN UNPRECEDENTED RATE

With species biodiversity and nature declining at an unprecedented rate, extinction is a very real possibility for many life forms on our current track. Species which we might seem to have vast numbers of are at risk, including giraffes, oak trees, parrots, cacti and even seaweed.

This loss of biodiversity threatens every life on earth, not just those species which are close to extinction. Fish provide 20 per cent of animal protein to about 3 billion people. Over 80 per cent of the human diet is provided by plants. As many as 80 per cent of people living in rural areas in developing countries rely on traditional plant-based medicines for basic healthcare.

A rise of **2 degrees Celsius** in global temperatures would mean

99%



of coral reefs would vanish

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Global Assessment Report, found that 'around 1 million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction, many within decades. This is more than ever before in human history.'

With this in mind, the United Nations Biodiversity Conference in December 2022 (or COP15) ended with a global agreement to halt this degradation with the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), outlining worldwide actions to be taken to secure our life support system.

The Report identifies the following five key drivers of the nature crisis:

1. Changes in land and sea use: The ways in which we use land and sea have huge impacts on biodiversity. Changing the way we utilise them can relieve the pressure





WHAT IS BIODIVERSITY?

2. **Climate change:** Rising global temperatures could threaten as many as one in six species at the global level.

3. **Pollution:** Air, soil and water pollution are on the rise globally, and reducing this while managing chemicals and waste is key to combating the nature crisis. In addition, the use of pesticides are the main cause of plant and insect decline.

4. **Direct exploitation of natural resources:** Preventing and reversing the degradation of land and oceans can prevent the loss of one million endangered species. Through their spiritual relationship with land, indigenous people are recognised as the guardians of biodiversity. In many parts of the world, Indigenous People are at the forefront of conservation, as noted by Territories of Life - a report in part supported by UNEP.

5. **Invasive species:** Invasive Alien Species are those which have begun to grow outside of their usual habitat. They can cause the decline, or even extinction of the native species in these environments.

WE FACE A HUGE CHALLENGE, BUT WE HAVE A ROADMAP

Sustainable Development Goal 15 'Life on Land' aims to 'Protect, restore and promote

sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.' It strives to safeguard our Earth's natural areas so humans, and other species can continue to enjoy them through future generations.

The landmark UN Biodiversity Agreement contains 23 action based targets to be reached by 2030 to pave the way for further targets to be achieved by 2050.

To fund these goals, the Global Environment Facility will set up a Special Trust Fund – the GBF Fund to ensure adequate, timely flow of funds from developed countries to developing countries.

It is vital that we achieve these targets within the timescale in order to protect biological diversity, while developing as a planet. As United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) Executive Director, Inger Andersen, said: "Success will be measured by our rapid and consistent progress in implementing what we have agreed to. The entire UN system is geared to support its implementation so we can truly make peace with nature."

To learn more about SDG15: Life on Land, please go here.

