

DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN CIVIL SOCIETY CALL TO ACTION TO HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT

“HALT AND REVERSE BIODIVERSITY LOSS AND PUT NATURE AND ECOSYSTEMS ON A PATH TO RECOVERY BY 2030”

The COVID19 crisis has demonstrated that humanity is placing too much pressure on the natural world and has laid bare profound inequalities in societies. Deforestation, wildlife trade and conversion of land for highly intensive and unsustainable agriculture and livestock production, are destroying ecosystems and increasing interactions between wildlife and humans, opening the door to infectious disease outbreaks. **The rapid loss of nature, ecosystems and biodiversity is therefore not only threatening our environment but also health, diets, development, social equity and human rights.** From the air we breathe to the food we eat, we all rely on biodiversity for well-being and survival.

Unsustainable food systems are at the very heart of many challenges to nature, climate, and public health. Three-quarters of the land-based environment are significantly altered by human actions, and approximately 70 percent of global freshwater is used for agriculture. Due to overfishing, only 66% of marine fish stocks were within biologically sustainable levels in 2017 (a decrease from 90% in 1990). The massive loss of biodiversity reduces the ability of ecosystems to sequester carbon, increasing the impact of climate change. Furthermore, healthy soils and ecosystems support community resilience and disaster risk reduction, and act as natural buffers against the impacts of extreme weather events. Yet, we have already lost 70% of wetlands, and about half of the world's forests and mangroves. The impacts of biodiversity loss are especially felt by the world's poorest and most vulnerable and marginalized communities. Indigenous peoples, small scale food producers, peasant farmers and artisanal fishers depend on biodiversity for their food and livelihoods, and many act as custodians of ecosystems' health.

Biodiversity is therefore essential not only for poverty and inequality eradication, but also for social justice and human rights, including the rights to food, water, human health and a healthy environment. Women, girls, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups are particularly affected by climate change and environmental degradation, not being the perpetrators and yet paying the highest price. Young people and children's health and nutrition also suffer from intensified environmental degradation, and while not responsible for the crisis, they will inherit a damaged planet. This injustice further exacerbates poverty, widens income gaps and other inequalities, increases the care burden often borne by women and girls and leads to exploitative practices and gender-based violence. The loss of biodiversity, climate change and growing scarcity of natural resources therefore undermine not only environmental but also human security, leading to conflicts, which in turn have devastating consequences for both people and the planet. It is therefore our duty to set the nature on a path to recovery and preserve the planet for our children and future generations.

CALL TO ACTION

We must take action now to set nature, ecosystems and societies on the path to recovery, to build a safe, healthy and equitable future for people and the planet. Together, we can reset our relationship with nature and secure a resilient carbon-neutral, nature-positive world.

We call on the Heads of State ahead of UNGA75 to make bold and ambitious decisions to halt and reverse biodiversity loss and put nature and ecosystems on a path to recovery by 2030 by:

1. Embracing a green, sustainable and just post-COVID19 recovery, protecting and regenerating nature as a sustainable foundation for a healthy and just society, and equitable economy, in line with [WHO Manifesto](#).
2. Transitioning to sustainable carbon-conscious agriculture, fisheries and forestry by harnessing agro-ecology, food sovereignty and alternative livelihoods. Eliminating subsidies harmful to nature, climate and health, without compromising on food security and nutrition for all.
3. Strengthening resilience to climate change and environmental degradation of the poor and vulnerable. Ensuring fair and equitable distribution of and access to natural resources as a condition for social and gender equality, while investing in public services that ease the burden of care for all in society.
4. Halting the loss of and restoring natural habitats, while applying a human rights-based approach and respecting indigenous people and local communities' human, land, water and tenure roles and rights.
5. Ensuring that the benefits from biodiversity including healthy and nutritious diets and fresh water are equitably shared by all people.

SIGNATORIES¹:



Contact:

Should you wish to join the Call to Action, please contact Masha Lekic at mlekic@wwfint.org

¹ Drafted in coordination with World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)