

Media Release

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More than 190 Governments Prepare to Take Tough Decisions to Stop Biodiversity Decline Worldwide

- **Governments need to ramp-up efforts to stop biodiversity decline in light of pessimistic reports.**
- **Time running out on global efforts to meet biodiversity targets with 2/3 still off-track.**
- **Countries to focus on the value of biodiversity to engage other economic sectors as means of halting degradation.**
- **Ability to achieve the SDGs and the Paris Agreement is at stake.**

Cancún, 1 December 2016 - At a critical meeting opening today, the United Nations will call on decision makers from more than 190 countries to step-up efforts to halt the loss of biodiversity and protect the ecosystems that support food and water security and health for billions of people.

At the UN Biodiversity Conference in Cancún, Mexico, parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) begin two weeks of discussions in the shadow of data and reports showing that around two-thirds of the global Aichi Biodiversity Targets are currently not on track to be met by the 2020 deadline, with serious consequences for human well-being, unless enhanced efforts are made in the last four years of the decade.

The Aichi Targets specify actions to protect and sustainably use the entire variety of life on our planet. The targets address issues ranging from the loss of natural habitats, sustainable agriculture and declining fish stocks, to access and sharing of the benefits from the use of genetic resources, indigenous knowledge and awareness of the values of biodiversity.

Achievement of the Aichi Targets will be critical for achieving the three other historic global agendas agreed last year, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Ahead of the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD more than 120 ministers of environment, agriculture, forestry, fisheries and tourism will discuss the mainstreaming of biodiversity into their activities by ensuring the alignment of wider Government policies, programmes and plans consistent with the need to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity.

"If we are going to save biodiversity, we need to work with these sectors that depend on biodiversity and whose activities have a considerable impact on the variety of life on our planet." Dr. Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, CBD Executive Secretary said.

"Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and tourism are important sectors whose activities need to take biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into account in a coherent manner."

"Governments have made ambitious commitments to achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, but these declarations need to be matched with actions at the national level," Erik Solheim, Chief of UN Environment said. "If countries do not ensure that national targets are set and achieved, their ambition will only remain on paper."

Sir Robert Watson, Chair of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) said, "The Aichi Targets must be achieved, because biodiversity and ecosystems services are central to human well-being."

"The continued loss of biodiversity and degradation of ecosystem services will undermine our ability to achieve many of the SDGs, in particular those on poverty alleviation, human health, as well as food and water security."

The meeting will review the progress that has been made towards the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, the achievement of the Aichi Targets, as well as related means of implementation. It will also identify actions needed to meet the Targets at the national level.

One of the major challenges countries still face is aligning national plans with the generally more ambitious global targets. For example, progress is being made towards achieving Aichi Target 11 with protected areas increasingly being designated. However, only half of the countries have set national targets that are at least as ambitious as the Aichi Targets.

Rafael Pacchiano Alamán, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources of Mexico said, "Mexico is firmly committed to achieving Aichi Target 11, which we expect to meet in advance, as we are making every effort to ensure that by 2018, 17 per cent of land areas and 10 per cent of Mexico's maritime and coastal areas are under protection."

"The government of President Enrique Peña Nieto welcomes the representatives of all the countries participating in The UN Biodiversity Conference and wishes that these two weeks of work to be fruitful for the future of humanity."

Mainstreaming Biodiversity

The CBD calls on countries to integrate conservation and the sustainable use of biodiversity into relevant sectoral or cross-sectoral plans, programmes and policies - a process often referred to as biodiversity mainstreaming.

As proposed by Mexico, as host to the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, agriculture, forestry, fisheries and tourism, will be discussed at the conference. All heavily depend on biodiversity and healthy ecosystems, and at the same time often have a severely negative impact on them. Mainstreaming biodiversity within these sectors is essential to ensure their continued economic viability and to stem the loss of biodiversity.

The meetings of the Convention and its Protocols will decide on some of the most pressing issues for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, including:

Marine Life

Governments will address the marine agenda, with discussions about new reports on the impact of marine debris and underwater noise on biodiversity. Additional research on Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBASs) on the high seas will also be presented.

Ecosystem Restoration

Discussions will also take place on adoption of an action plan and the mobilization of resources for ecosystem restoration towards achieving Aichi Targets 5, 12, 14 and 15; Targets 4 and 8 of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation, as well as other internationally-agreed goals and targets, such as the land degradation neutrality goal under the UN Convention to Combat Desertification.

Bio-synthetics

The emerging field of synthetic biology, in the context of the three objectives of the CBD, will also be addressed at the meeting. There are several applications where components, organisms and products of synthetic biology such as bioenergy, agriculture, pharmaceuticals and chemical production may interact with biodiversity with both positive and negative impacts at different levels, including genetic, species and ecosystems.

Pollinators

The 'Thematic Assessment of Pollinators, Pollination and Food Production' by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) will also be discussed. The two-year study, the first ever assessment issued by IPBES, found that as much as \$577 billion in annual global crop production is directly attributable to animal pollination, with three-quarters of the world's food crops relying, at least in part, on pollinating insects and other animals, many of which are now facing population decline and extinction.

The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-Sharing

Governments will look at the steps for further implementation of these protocols to the Convention, with a focus on ways to promote capacity-building and enhance national implementation. Progress towards achievement of Aichi Target 16, which deals with the Nagoya Protocol, will be a particular focus.

NOTES TO EDITORS

The UN Biodiversity Conference takes place at the Moon Palace Resort in Cancun Mexico, from 2 to 17 December with its High Level Segment taking place from 2 - 3 December 2016. Other meetings of the Convention and its Protocols: from 4 December 2016.

About 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 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 so far, 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, 170 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 91 Parties.

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About The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

IPBES is an independent intergovernmental body, established by member States in 2012. It provides policymakers with objective scientific assessments about the state of knowledge regarding the planet's biodiversity, ecosystems and the benefits they provide to people, as well as the tools and methods to protect and sustainably use these vital natural assets. To some extent IPBES does for biodiversity what the IPCC does for climate change. www.ipbes.net

About SEMARNAT

Semarnat is the Mexican Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources. Its mission is to incorporate criteria and instruments that ensure the optimal protection, conservation and sustainable use of Mexico's natural resources.

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