



# THE UN & YOU

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## One Million Plants and Animal Species Threatened with Extinction

IPBES' 2019 Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

Have you ever noticed that plants and little creatures that were part of your growing up years are no longer to be seen? A part of God's creation has vanishing before our eyes because of farming, hunting, pollution and climate change. According to the 2019 Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, **nearly one million\* species are at risk of becoming extinct** within decades because of the impact of humans on nature. (Our planet has 8.1 million animal and plant species.) The UN report states, "Biodiversity in plant and animal life in the world – in terms of species, habitats and genetics – leads to ecosystems that are healthier, more productive and better able to adapt to challenges like climate change, and human activity is threatening the fate of species around the world like never before." It is a threat to human wellbeing in all regions of the world. Some of the highlights:

- 680 vertebrate species have been driven to extinction since the 16<sup>th</sup> century
- 9 percent of all domesticated breeds of mammals used for food and agriculture have become extinct by 2016, with 1000 more breeds still threatened.

- More than 40 percent of amphibian species and 33 percent of all marine mammals are threatened.
- Since 1980, greenhouse gas emissions have doubled, raising the average global temperature by 0.7 degrees Celsius, leading to climate change impacts on nature – ecosystems to genetics.
- Pollinators of 75 percent of crops (\$500 billion worth) are being threatened.
- 23 percent of land is degraded and less productive.

Human life is inextricably linked with natural ecosystems. "Biodiversity and nature's contributions to people are our common heritage and humanity's most important life-supporting 'safety net'. But our safety net is stretched almost to breaking point," says Professor Sandra Diaz of Argentina. The ecosystems and all species are essential for the interconnected web of life on Earth. UN biodiversity experts are warning us that the "the very foundations of our economies, livelihoods, food security, health and quality of life worldwide" are being eroded as a result of human activity. It is a direct threat to human well-being. It is stated that key indirect drivers

are increased population and per capita consumption, technological innovation, issues of governance and accountability.

The current negative trends in biodiversity and ecosystems will certainly undermine the global efforts to achieve sustainability through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The negative trends will impact 80 percent of the assessed targets of SDGs related poverty, hunger, health, water, cities, climate, oceans and land (SDGs 1, 2, 3, 6, 11, 13, 14 and 15). 'Loss of biodiversity is not only an environmental issue, but also a developmental, economic, security, social and moral issue as well.'

This report was prepared by 150 leading international experts from 50 countries, with additional contributions from 250 experts and presented to representatives from 132 Governments for approval from April 29 - May 4, 2019. It will serve as a guideline for Global

Policy makers; for it synthesizes evidence for the effectiveness of a wide variety of actions that governments and other sectors of society can implement to halt the biodiversity crisis. It is heartening to take note of how the report acknowledges the contribution indigenous and local knowledge and practices can provide to halt the decline of biodiversity and to live in harmony with nature. Scientists call for "transformative" measures, like overhauling international trade, massive investments in forest and green energy and changes in individual behavior. We need a paradigm shift, a radical environmental action. But will our policymakers rise up to the need of the hour? Are we ready to make the changes?

Here is a link to an old video on biodiversity:  
<https://youtu.be/wXJiHr8jWBs>

*\*(About 25 % of species are threatened with extinction on average across many animal and plant groups, except insects. Around 10% of insects are threatened with extinction. There are around 2.5 million animal and plant species that are not insects. And 25% of 2.5 million is 0.5 million. There are about 5.5 million species of insects and 10% is 0.5million. This works out to be one million threatened animal and plant species.)*