



EXPERT GROUP MEETING

SDG 15: PROGRESS AND PROSPECTS

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1. It is important to acknowledge that the overall state of nature and 'life on land' continues to decline at a dangerous rate, despite some positive signs related to our responses.
 - In 2016, the WWF Living Planet Index, which is drawn from population trends of almost 15,000 populations of vertebrates, has recorded a 58% decline since 1970, with little sign that the rate of decline is slowing. This trend is supported by almost all other indicators of Biodiversity, including the Red List Index, the Biodiversity Intactness Index, Mean Species Abundance etc
 - Recently WWF, the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) along with a number of partners, undertook an Integrated Assessment Modelling exercise, to ascertain if it was theoretically possible to halt and reverse the loss of nature based under plausible population and economic scenarios for the future. And if so, what actions could lead to halting and reversing the loss of nature. The outputs of these models are currently being prepared for publication and will also be contained in the IPBES Global Assessment.
 - The good news is that preliminary analyses show that it is in fact possible to 'bend the curve' in the loss of biodiversity even with a global human population of around 9 billion by 2050 and 10-12 billion people by 2100. And, with concerted global effort, it is even possible to start to bend this curve before 2030.
 - However, reliance on increased conservation efforts alone (i.e. focussing mostly protected and other area based conservation efforts) is unlikely to 'bend the curve' of nature loss before 2030 or even 2050. Bending the curve on nature loss before 2030 requires significant efforts on the drivers of nature loss including increasing agricultural productivity, sustainable production and trade, reduction in food waste and diet shifts to healthier, and lower meat, diets.
 - I should emphasise that these analyses are preliminary and as soon as they are ready for publication these can be made available for more detailed examination.

2. The biggest constraint to achieving SDG 15 is the lack of political profile and cohesive action, and yet it underpins the achievement of almost all the other SDG's

- SDG15 is often seen as being of secondary importance compared to issues such as poverty, hunger, peace & security, and even climate change, that are perceived to have greater immediate political relevance
- However, the systemic links between land and ecosystem degradation and risks such as political instability, conflict, forced migration, vulnerability to volatile weather events and food and water security, are becoming far clearer and better understood. These links are clearly described in a number of recent World Bank and UN Reports, in the last two years.
- WWF also recently published a report detailing the links between Sustainability, Stability and Security.
http://wwf.panda.org/knowledge_hub/all_publications/?316560/sustainability-security-stability
- The report does not imply a simple cause and effect relationship but rather implies that environmental degradation and climate changes are among the prominent factors that lead to states being susceptible to instability and potential conflict.
- The report also noted that global military spending has been growing and is now at USD1.7 Trillion per annum, the highest levels since the end of the cold war. This is more than 75 times greater than what we are spending on stabilising Climate Change.
- We need to build on this growing understanding to radically escalate the political relevance of SDG 15 and more clearly and powerfully articulate the risk of inaction and how this will impact the achievement of other SDG's which are currently seen to be more political relevant.
- A second significant constraint to the achievement of SDG 15 is the fact that our efforts to stabilise the loss of nature and life and land are far too fragmented.
- It is no longer useful to treat climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation separate challenges.
- These challenges are completely interlinked and require a far more unified and cohesive response. This means more integrated strategic analysis planning, integrated target setting and integrated reporting at a national level.

3. The next years up the year 2020 provide a unique opportunity develop an ambitious, unambiguous, more unified, and politically relevant, response towards halting and starting to reverse the loss of Nature by 2030.

- Five of the 12 targets under SDG15 run until 2020 due to integration with the Aichi targets on Biodiversity.
- The development of the new 10year strategic framework for CBD and the replacement of these 2020 SDG targets provides a unique opportunity.
- These targets should be replaced by new targets to 2030 that describe an unambiguous and focussed ambition to halt and start to reverse the decline in Nature by 2030.
- Such an ambitious and unambiguous target would complement the current target 15.3 to achieve land degradation neutrality by 2030, as well as the Paris Agreement ambition to limit climate change to well below 2 degrees Celsius, above pre-industrial levels.

- Such a set of unambiguous targets on Biodiversity, Land Degradation and Climate need to be seen as complementary and integrated set of mutually reinforcing targets. This means optimising nature and land benefits delivered in our climate actions, and optimising climate benefits from land and biodiversity restoration.
 - Such an unambiguous target on biodiversity should include an ambitious and clear area-based target for protected and other conservation areas (e.g. 30% by 2030), but will need to go beyond this to clearly address the drivers of biodiversity loss, in particular sustainable food production, trade and consumption.
- We will need to build on the momentum generated by Non-State Actors under the climate agenda and build a more integrated Non-State Actor movement on Climate, Land Degradation Neutrality and Nature. This would include developing clear Science-Based Targets on Land and Nature that are aligned to global targets.
- Finally, this time also provides us with an opportunity to develop a more robust, transparent and accountable implementation mechanism on halting and reversing the loss of nature. Building on the existing National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan (NBSAP) model and learn from the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) model from the UNFCCC, the new mechanism should allow countries to more clearly measure and report countries' commitments and contributions towards global targets
- Importantly, this new mechanism should not only be confined to countries domestic efforts but, should also report on their international environmental footprint related to a country's trade and investment activities. WWF is in discussion with some governments to trial such a system.