



BIODIVERSITY IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

Key advocacy messages



Introduction

Biodiversity is fundamental to human well-being, a healthy planet and economic prosperity for all. We depend on it for food, medicine, clean air and water, climate regulation as well as recreation and cultural inspiration, and it supports all systems of life on Earth.¹

Despite its fundamental role in sustaining life and economies, biodiversity is under unprecedented pressure due to human activities and environmental changes. Numerous scientific papers, such as the Global Biodiversity Outlook 5², the Global Assessment Report of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services³ and The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review,⁴ report that the world is facing a crisis due to significant biodiversity loss and the deterioration of ecosystems and their essential services, jeopardizing our livelihoods, economies and overall well-being.

The Europe and Central Asia region is home to an exceptional array of globally important but threatened species. Home to 4% of the global population, the region hosts 8 of the 14 world biomes and around 963 species threatened by extinction.⁵

This document, developed by the Issue-Based Coalition on Environment and Climate Change in Europe and Central Asia and the United Nations Environment Management Group (UN EMG), presents key advocacy messages that highlight the importance of integrating biodiversity considerations into development planning. Its goal is to support United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) and UN Resident Coordinators in promoting biodiversity mainstreaming during their engagements with governments and stakeholders across the region.

Accompanying these advocacy messages is a guidance document designed for UNCTs and Resident Coordinator Offices, offering practical advice on how to incorporate biodiversity into Common Country Analyses and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.



[1] <https://www.cbd.int/gbf/introduction/>

[2] <https://www.cbd.int/gbo5>

[3] <https://www.ipbes.net/global-assessment>

[4] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/final-report-the-economics-of-biodiversity-the-dasgupta-review>

[5] <https://iucn.org/our-work/region/eastern-europe-and-central-asia>

Key Messages

Biodiversity is essential for sustainable development

- Biodiversity and nature form the basis of our existence, providing us with products and services that directly impact our economy, society, health and wellbeing.
- Without biodiversity action, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) cannot be achieved. Taking action to implement the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) simultaneously means contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.⁶
- Biodiversity in Europe and Central Asia is unique, home to over 200,000 known species and an estimated total of 550,000, including those yet to be discovered. However, the region is grappling with environmental degradation, primarily driven by land-use changes, which are severely impacting biodiversity and ecosystem services, thereby jeopardizing nature's contributions to human well-being.⁷ 28% percent of species found exclusively in Europe and Central Asia are threatened, highlighting the severity of the crisis.⁷ This biodiversity richness is increasingly at risk, with land-use changes driving severe degradation. To mitigate this, urgent action is needed to mainstream biodiversity into policy and development planning.

Safeguarding biodiversity makes economic sense

- At the global level, nature and biodiversity provide an estimated economic benefit of \$170–190 trillion annually. In Europe, ecosystem services play a critical role in maintaining environmental stability, health, and economic resilience. For example, regulating ecosystem services that regulate air quality saved the European Union an estimated EUR 10.4 billion in healthcare costs in 2019.
- This illustrates the interdependence of economic development, social well-being and environmental integrity.⁸ Regulating services account for 65% of the total global ecosystem service value but are often overlooked in fiscal systems. Cultural services, include recreational, heritage, spiritual, and educational functions, and represent the experiential and intangible benefits derived from ecosystems. Although difficult to quantify, recreational and tourism-related ecosystem services alone contribute approximately 18% of the total ecosystem value.
- Regulating ecosystem services maintain environmental stability through regulation of climate, air and soil functions upon which our society depends. For instance, the role of trees and plants in capturing and retaining pollutants is financially significant.
- Economic valuation of ecosystem services represents one way of expressing and communicating their importance to decision makers. However, it should be used in combination with other forms of information, including biophysical (e.g., erosion control, pollination) and social impact indicators (e.g., employment, aesthetic and spiritual values). While economic valuation is a powerful tool for communicating the importance of biodiversity, it should complement, rather than replace, ecological and social considerations in decision-making.

[6] As a reference, the following Technical Note offers a summary of linkages between SDGs and Aichi Biodiversity Targets: <https://www.cbd.int/development/doc/biodiversity-2030-agenda-technical-note-en.pdf>

[7] https://files.ipbes.net/ipbes-web-prod-public-files/downloads/spr_2b_eca_digital_20180622.pdf

[8] <https://web-assets.bcg.com/2a/f5/e95293214c29877c11251290ebca/2020-09-the-biodiversity-imperative-for-business-final2-002.pdf>

Biodiversity is a cross-sectoral issue

- Biodiversity mainstreaming requires cross-sectoral coordination, ensuring that environmental considerations are systematically integrated into national and local governance structures. It represents an important opportunity to promote policy coherence at all levels. Biodiversity and related actions must be fully mainstreamed into policies and practices at all levels, including in the areas of economic development, poverty reduction, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and public health, as well as in sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, forestry, tourism, water resources and education. UN agencies like the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) have developed strategies for mainstreaming biodiversity across agricultural sectors.
- In particular, in line with GBF target 10,⁹ it is essential to manage areas dedicated to agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries, forestry and livestock production using biodiversity-friendly practices. This approach is crucial for sustaining nature's contributions to human well-being, including food security, nutrition and the flow of ecosystem services.
- Climate change has been recognized as one of the main drivers of change in nature and impacts on living organisms. Climate change is, for example, expected to reduce biodiversity by leading to more uniform plant, bird and mammal population across Europe, which weakens ecosystem resilience. In line with GBF target 8,¹⁰ synergies between climate and biodiversity action should be reinforced. For instance, climate change adaptation can reduce risks to ecosystems and their capacity to provide key ecosystem services, while also increasing their resilience to climate change impacts.
- The intersection of human rights and biodiversity conservation is increasingly recognised as pivotal for sustainable development as biodiversity loss threatens communities' well-being worldwide, particularly that of indigenous Peoples, women, youth and vulnerable communities. Biodiversity loss undermines not only the right to a healthy environment but a broad range of human rights, underlining the importance of considering and promoting rights-based approaches in biodiversity action. Advancing rights-based approaches in biodiversity action also aligns with global commitments such as the UN Declaration on the Right to a Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment.

Large potential for collaboration across the board

- Biodiversity action must be collective, recognizing the roles of stakeholders across all sectors through a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.
- Advancing biodiversity action creates opportunities for cooperation and partnerships between multiple stakeholders. When supporting implementation of the GBF in the region, subregional platforms such as the Biodiversity Task Force of the Western Balkans¹¹ can be useful for strengthening capacities; facilitating access to and transfer of knowledge and experiences, technology and innovations; and fostering development of programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

[9]<https://www.cbd.int/gbf/targets/10>

[10] <https://www.cbd.int/gbf/targets/8>

[11]<https://iucn.org/blog/202405/achieving-global-goals-through-regional-collaboration-biodiversity-task-force-western#:~:text=Established%20as%20a%20collaborative%20platform,to%20conservation%20and%20sustainable%20development.>