



Press Brief

Forest Biodiversity

Why is this important?

Forests contain an immense variety of life forms, which provide many vital services to human beings. They play significant economic, social, and cultural roles in the lives of about 1.6 billion people, especially those of indigenous and local communities. These benefits are under great pressure as humans are destroying forest biodiversity at an alarming rate. Each year 13 million hectares of forest are converted to other uses or lost through natural causes.

Forests offer much more than just timber. Along with food, fibre and other natural products, they provide the plants that are the basis of many traditional medicines and Western pharmaceuticals. They help to limit climate change by preventing vast amounts of carbon from reaching the atmosphere. Forests also regulate local temperatures, protect drinking water supplies and alleviate land degradation and desertification.

Over two thirds of all known terrestrial species live in forests. This great diversity of trees, plants, animals, fungi and micro-organisms, and the complex interactions among them, are what makes forests so valuable to humanity.

Yet many human activities greatly weaken forests and reduce the services they provide to us. They include: the conversion of forests to agricultural land, overgrazing, unsustainable management, introduction of invasive alien species, infrastructure development, mining and oil exploitation, man-made fires, pollution and climate change.

Biodiversity plays an important role for effective and long-term carbon storage in forests. Therefore, it is crucial that biodiversity be appropriately considered in the forthcoming efforts for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD-plus) under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.¹ The potential to simultaneously address the biodiversity crisis and climate change is unprecedented. At the same time, poorly designed REDD-plus efforts could damage forest biodiversity and in the process threaten the continued provision of ecosystem services for human well-being.



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What news to expect in Nagoya?

COP10 should adopt a new Strategic Plan with revised targets for forest biodiversity to be achieved by 2020. These may include targets to:

- halve [or bring close to zero] the rate of loss, degradation, and fragmentation of forests
- manage all areas under forestry sustainably
- protect at least 15% of terrestrial areas, including forests, through comprehensive, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of effectively managed protected areas
- enhance the resilience of forests and other ecosystems, and the contribution of biodiversity to carbon stocks, through conservation and restoration, including restoration of at least 15% of degraded ecosystems.

To achieve such targets the collaboration of the forest sector will be critical.

At COP 10, governments and other relevant organizations will discuss ways to ensure that any actions for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD-plus) support the implementation of the CBD Programme of Work on Forest Biological Diversity. To this end, Parties will discuss the role of the CBD in developing REDD-plus biodiversity safeguards and mechanisms to monitor the impacts of REDD-plus on biodiversity.

Parties will furthermore discuss how REDD-plus efforts could best provide benefits not only for forest biodiversity, but also to indigenous and local communities while respecting their rights.

During COP 10, on 26 October, a high level meeting on Forest Conservation and Climate Change will be held. The outputs of this meeting are expected to have a significant impact on the forest-related COP decisions.

¹ With reference to decision 5/CP.15 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), REDD-plus refers to “policy approaches and positive incentives on issues relating to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries; and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries”. The acronyms REDD and REDD-plus are used for convenience only, without any intention to pre-empt ongoing or future negotiations under the UNFCCC.

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