



**MESSAGE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
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on the occasion of the launch of the report

“Safeguarding human health in the Anthropocene epoch”

For years now, those of us who work to protect biodiversity have been reminding the world of the important role that the variety of life on our planet plays in supporting human well-being. We know that our wealth and general well-being rests on the ecosystem services that are the product of rich biodiversity.

Today, a new report released by The Rockefeller Foundation-Lancet Commission on Planetary Health has underlined that human health rests on a healthy environment and rich biodiversity. The report “Safeguarding Human Health in the Anthropocene Epoch”, shows us how the health and well-being of future generations is being jeopardised by the unprecedented degradation of the planet’s natural resources and ecological systems.

The Commissions work, resting on a strong scientific consensus, warns that a rising population, unsustainable consumption and the over-use of natural resources will exacerbate health challenges in the future. The world’s poorest communities will be among those at greatest risk, as they live in areas that are most strongly affected and have greater sensitivity to disease and poor health.

The good news is that a range of beneficial policies and actions can be taken by governments, international organizations, researchers, health professionals and citizens. These policies are good for both health and the environment and include benefits from reduced air pollution, healthy diets with more fruit and vegetables, active transport (walking and cycling), reduced urban heat stress from green spaces, and increased resilience to coastal flooding from intact wetlands and mangroves.

However, to properly design these policies, some major gaps in evidence and the research must be bridged. This is where the biodiversity and health communities need to work together.

First, policies and initiatives need to be designed to promote the sustainable use of biodiversity. Leaders need to take initiatives to reduce the risks to health and vital ecosystems, and implement policies to reduce subsidies that block sustainable practices. They also need to encourage behavioral change, incentivize the private sector, support research, and promote public discourse.



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Governments should also look at developing bodies that monitor trends and develop policies and answer directly to the Head of State.

Environmental health needs must be integrated into health budgeting and purchasing. As we head into a period when environmental change may be unpredictable, health systems must be designed for resilience, planning for potential risks and adapting quickly to meet challenges and restore services.

Overall, we need to reorganize and expand our knowledge on Planetary Health. Substantial gaps in knowledge can be closed with the expansion of trans-disciplinary research, improved understanding of the links between health and environmental change and potential adaptation strategies, building integrated surveillance systems and reporting on progress nationally and internationally.
