

Press Brief: Biodiversity and Human Health

Biodiversity underpins ecosystem functioning and the provision of goods and services essential to human health and well-being. Ecosystems, including our food production systems, depend on a whole host of organisms, such as primary producers, herbivores, carnivores, decomposers, pollinators, pathogens, natural enemies of pests. Biodiversity is a key environmental determinant of human health. Unfortunately, biodiversity loss is happening at unprecedented rates. This poses a fundamental risk to the healthy and stable ecosystems that sustain all aspects of our societies, and threatens human health.

Biodiversity loss can destabilize ecosystems, promote outbreaks of infectious disease, and undermine development progress, nutrition security and protection from natural disasters. For example, access to a sufficiency of a nutritious variety of foods is a fundamental determinant of health. This was confirmed in the joint 2015 report by the Convention on Biological Diversity and the World Health Organization (WHO), *Connecting Global Priorities: Biodiversity and Human Health*, which notes that a diversity of species, varieties and breeds, as well as wild food and medicinal sources (fish, plants, bushmeat, insects and fungi) underpins dietary diversity, good nutrition and health. The inexorable links between biodiversity, ecosystems, the provision of these benefits and human health are deeply entrenched in the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, and are central to our common agenda for sustainable development.

What happened at the UN Biodiversity Conference?¹

Through High Level Segment and COP agenda item discussions on mainstreaming biodiversity into the health sector, with active participation by the WHO, Parties reconfirmed strong interlinkages between human health and biodiversity, including through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Furthermore, Parties welcomed the guidance on integrating biodiversity considerations into One Health approaches (designing and implementing programmes, policies, legislation and research in which multiple sectors communicate and work together to achieve better public health outcomes) and encouraged Parties, and invited other governments/relevant organizations to make use of the guidance. Parties also invited all stakeholders to consider integrating One Health policies, plans or projects, and other holistic approaches in their national biodiversity strategies and action plans, national health plans, and other instruments including those under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Important Links

- Decision 14/4. Health and biodiversity: www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-14/cop-14-dec-04-en.pdf
- Health and biodiversity programme of work: www.cbd.int/health
- *Connecting Global Priorities: Biodiversity and Human Health*: www.cbd.int/health/SOK-biodiversity-en.pdf
- One Health Approach (World Health Organization): www.who.int/features/qa/one-health/en/
- CBD guidance on integrating biodiversity considerations into One Health approaches: www.cbd.int/doc/c/501c/4df1/369d06630c901cd02d4f99c7/sbstta-21-09-en.pdf

¹

Fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity; Ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety; Third meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing; 17-29 November 2018