

Biodiversity meeting begins with funding plea

October 8 2012



A photo released on August 20 by the Biodiversity Conservation Programme (BCP) shows a new species of owl (*Ninox Philiippensis Camiguin Sur*) found in Camiguin island. A major UN meeting designed to safeguard the world's natural resources began Monday with appeals to ensure that biodiversity does not become a victim of the global financial crisis.

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More than 170 countries are meeting in the Indian city of Hyderabad over the next 12 days under the United Nations' [Convention on Biological Diversity](#) (CBD), an offshoot of the 1992 Earth Summit in [Rio de Janeiro](#).

UN environmental experts have warned that the world has as little as a decade to fend off a [species extinction](#) that also poses a threat to humanity.

And more than two decades after the Rio summit, the CBD's executive secretary Braulio Ferreira De Souza Dias said that it was still a struggle to persuade governments to put [biodiversity](#) at the centre of development agendas.

"Biodiversity should not be perceived only as a problem, but rather, for what it really is: a crucial asset which underpins sustainable development and is closely linked to many social and [economic issues](#)," he told delegates.



An alligator is seen at the National Biodiversity Institute on May 31 in Heredia, Costa Rica. Nearly half of amphibian species, a third of corals, a quarter of mammals, a fifth of all plants and 13 percent of the world's birds are at risk of extinction, according to the "Red List" compiled by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

"Yes, we are facing times of financial crisis, but times of crisis are the best opportunities to make substantive changes in the way we do business.

"Expenditures on biodiversity should not be seen as costs—they should be seen as investments that will pay back with significant environmental, social and [economic benefits](#) for all our societies."

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International Union for the [Conservation of Nature](#) (IUCN).

The last CBD conference in Nagoya, Japan, adopted a 20-point plan in 2010 to turn back biodiversity loss by 2020.

But it has been a battle since then to find the hundreds of billions of dollars needed to fund such a commitment at a time when the developed world finds itself in economic difficulties.

Jayanthi Natarajan, India's environment minister, said failure to fund the protection of biodiversity would mean a higher price to pay in the long term.

"Expenditure on biodiversity needs to be looked at actually as an investment that will reap benefits for us and our future generations," the minister said.

"The present global economic crisis should not deter us, but on the contrary encourage us to invest more towards amelioration of the natural capital for ensuring uninterrupted ecosystem services, on which all life on Earth depends."

Countries pledged under the Millennium Development Goals to achieve a "significant reduction" in the rate of plant and animal loss by 2010, but the UN admits the goal has been missed by some distance.

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Citation: Biodiversity meeting begins with funding plea (2012, October 8) retrieved 23 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-10-biodiversity-funding-plea.html>

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