

Nations need to get serious about biodiversity loss or risk missing global targets

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Credit: Adam Oswell / WWF Cambodia

Faced with dramatic declines in nature, governments must come prepared to urgently implement their collective commitments to global biodiversity conservation and dramatically raise their individual

ambitions at the upcoming meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The meeting comes as nations are already on pace to miss internationally-agreed biodiversity targets set to come due at the end of the decade.

In 2010, 196 countries agreed to a series of efforts to improve the condition of major natural systems including freshwater, forests and oceans as well as supporting wildlife around the world. When countries meet from 4-17 December in Cancun, Mexico, only 5 per cent of countries will be on track to meet the convention's objectives – collectively known as the Aichi targets.

"Countries are missing the mark on the Aichi targets," said Deon Nel, Global Conservation Director of WWF International, "The world has an agreement and a collective plan on how to reverse [biodiversity loss](#), but this has not yet been translated into the right level of ambition and commitment by individual countries."

Ambition to support nature is still woefully low and biodiversity conservation remains a fringe issue in national economic planning. Countries, for the most part, remain content with exploiting the environment for short-term economic solutions, while eroding its longer-term potential to sustainably provide food, employment and support economic and human development.

A recent WWF report projects that by 2020, the same year that the Aichi targets are due, average wildlife population sizes could decline by two-thirds from their 1970 levels. The Living Planet Report 2016 also points to the promise of international agreements like CBD to support biodiversity and the human population that relies on nature for its well-being.

"In less than one generation, we will have reduced wildlife population

sizes to unimaginable levels, not to mention damage done to forests, oceans and freshwater. We can't reverse these trends in four years, but we need to come to Cancun with the goal of moving the bar in a different direction," said Nel.

Governments in the Cancun meeting need to find ways to more effectively implement the global agreement. To do so, major efforts are required to include biodiversity into strategic decisions on agriculture, fisheries, forestry and tourism. The importance of nature should also be more strongly integrated into national sustainable development plans, economic policy and national budgets, so that the real value of biodiversity can be properly understood.

"Last year, the world came together powerfully to set global plans on climate change and sustainable development. These agreements will not be met if we do not get serious about biodiversity conservation," said Nel. "Biodiversity is the third leg of the stool in building a sustainable and climate resilient planet. It is now time that governments get serious and show a similar level of commitment toward biodiversity conservation."

Countries meeting in Cancun should also demonstrate that they are prepared to meet their promise to redirect subsidies that are harmful to biodiversity as well as meet pledges to double international financing to [biodiversity conservation](#) that were meant to be achieved last year.

Provided by WWF

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