

UN summit: Don't repeat mistakes on nature, scientists warn

December 7 2022, by Wanjohi Kabukuru



A Maasai man walks with his livestock in search of grassland for them to graze, at Ilangeruani village, near Lake Magadi, in Kenya, Nov. 9, 2022. The conference known as COP15, which begins Tuesday, Dec. 6, hopes to set goals for the world for the next decade to help conserve the planet's biodiversity and stem the loss of nature. Credit: AP Photo/Brian Inganga, File

Scientists around the world are warning governments who will be gathering in Montreal this week for the United Nations biodiversity summit to not repeat past mistakes and are urging officials to "avoid trade-offs" between people and conservation needs in a report Monday.

The study published in the *One Earth* journal found that even though there has been an increase in investment in conservation over the last three decades governments "have not succeeded in bending the curve on biodiversity decline."

The conference known as COP15, which begins Tuesday, hopes to set the goals for the world for the next decade to help conserve the planet's biodiversity and stem the loss of nature. So far the world has failed to meet goals set at previous meetings.

The scientists proposed six areas for action for delegates working toward what's known as the global biodiversity framework. They include greater involvement of local communities and addressing both direct causes of nature decline such as the destruction of land and habitats as well as indirect causes such as climate change.

In the report scientists repeatedly called for officials to be "nature and people positive" in their approach, highlighting the need for solutions that are realistic and have support from local communities in order to best protect nature.



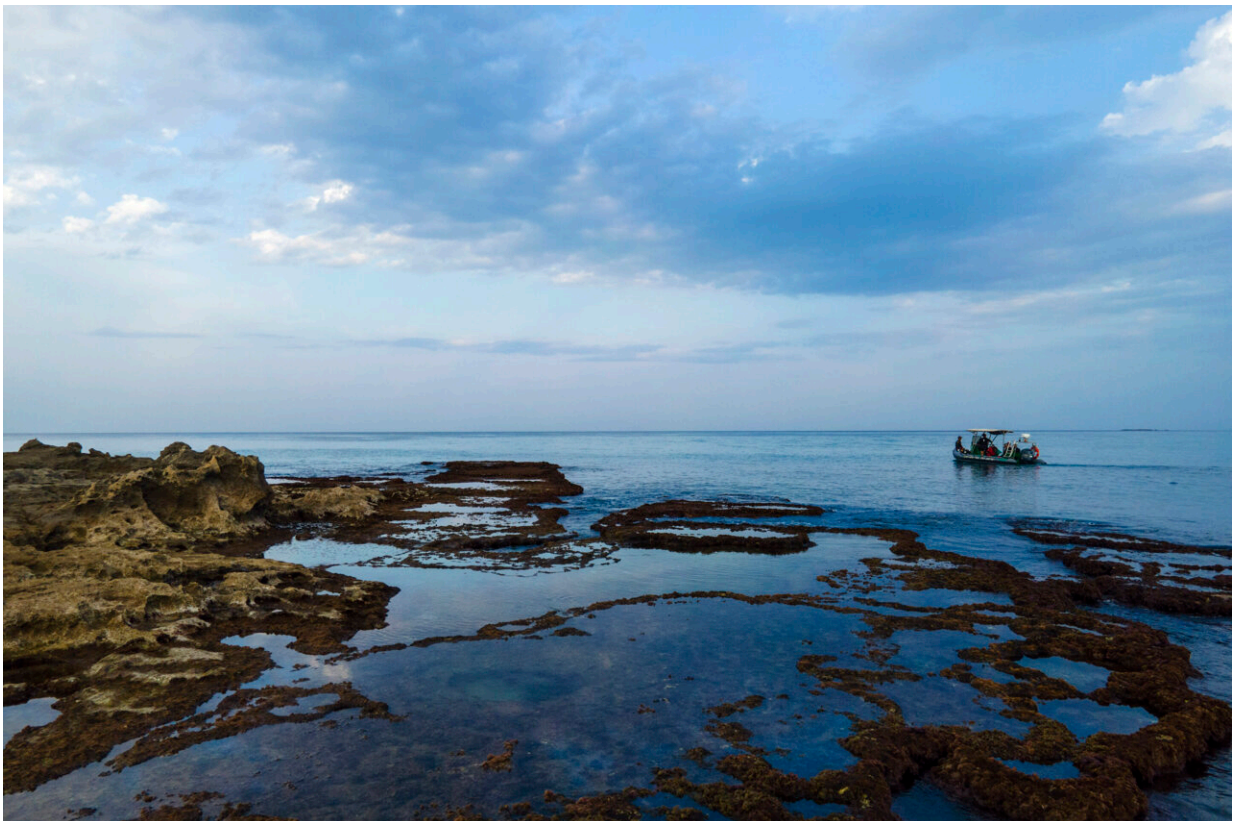
A hippopotamus cools off in a swamp under the midday sun as an egret looks for food behind, in Murchison Falls National Park, northwest Uganda, on Feb. 22, 2020. The conference known as COP15, which begins Tuesday, Dec. 6, 2022, hopes to set goals for the world for the next decade to help conserve the planet's biodiversity and stem the loss of nature. Credit: AP Photo, File

Instead of conserving areas by making them inaccessible to local people, the scientists said greater inclusion of communities and particularly Indigenous groups will be vital in curbing even more biodiversity loss.

Reducing [greenhouse gas emissions](#) which fuel [climate change](#) that leads to the loss of land and species also needs to be addressed, the scientists said.

"No amount of conservation or restoration actions may be effective in stopping biodiversity loss if the accelerating drivers of decline continue and intensify, as has been the case to date, especially in wealthier countries and among elites, who often express commitment to conservation action," said David Obura, who is one of the report authors and director of Coastal Oceans Research and Development for east Africa.

The growing demands of rich nations, in particular "excess consumption and unsustainable trade and investments" also need to be halted if groups are to be protected, co-author and University of Arizona professor Diana Liverman said. "Consumption footprints in richer countries consistently drive biodiversity loss in [poorer countries](#)," she added.



A boat, with marine protected areas officials, moves in Mediterranean Sea marine natural reserve of Rosh Hanikra in northern Israel, Oct. 26, 2022. Israel is blazing forward with a plan to protect sections of its 118-mile coastline, a measure experts say is crucial to maintain biodiversity and shield ecosystems from humanity. Credit: AP Photo/Ariel Schalit, File



A nomad herds his Himalayan goats and sheep in a remote area in Ladakh, India, Sept. 17, 2022. The conference known as COP15, which begins Tuesday, Dec. 6, hopes to set goals for the world for the next decade to help conserve the planet's biodiversity and stem the loss of nature. Credit: AP Photo/Mukhtar Khan, File

Outside experts' views of how the summit can be a success were in line

with the report's findings.

"The Montreal COP needs to send that signal that the [global economy](#) is transitioning to be nature positive," said The Nature Conservancy's Linda Kreuger who wasn't part of the report.

"Much of the conversation in Montreal is likely to revolve around money and specifically how much of it wealthier countries are willing to make available to support the conservation efforts of emerging economies."

Indigenous rights groups led by Survival International and Amnesty International agreed that [local communities](#) were central to protecting local biodiversity.

"Indigenous peoples are the best guardians of the natural world and an essential part of human diversity," said Fiore Longo of Survival International. "The best way to protect biodiversity is to respect the land rights of Indigenous peoples."

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