2010 species pledge set to fail: conservationists

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A soldadinho-do-araripe, a bird from the family of Manakins is seen in Brasilia. The soldadinho-do-araripe is one of the species in critical danger of extinction. The world's paramount authority on species loss has warned that pledges to roll back the threat to biodiversity by 2010 were running into the sand.

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The goal set by UN parties under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to reduce biodiversity loss by 2010 "clearly will not be met," Jean-Christophe Vie of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) told AFP.

In its new report, issued on Thursday, the Swiss-based IUCN said Earth

was hurtling towards a mass extinction.

Out of 44,838 species on the IUCN's famous "Red List", 869 are considered to be extinct or extinct in the wild, it said.

This tally rises to 1,159 if 290 critically endangered species that are tagged as possibly extinct are included.

Nearly one third of amphibians are at risk of being wiped out through habitat loss, fungal infection and other risks.

More than one in eight birds are threatened with extinction, with Brazil, Indonesia and oceanic islands spearheading the peril. Nearly a quarter of mammals, especially hunted species in Asia, face a similar threat.

"Overall, a minimum of 16,928 species are threatened with extinction," IUCN said in a press release.

"Considering that only 2.7 percent of the 1.8 million described species have been analysed, this number is a gross underestimate, but it does provide a useful snapshot of what is happening to all forms of life on Earth."

The IUCN analysis, Wildlife in a Changing World, was issued just before a deadline governments set themselves to evaluate their success in achieving the 2010 target.

Vie, deputy head of the IUCN's species programme, called on governments to tackle the biodiversity crisis with the same urgency with which they tackled its economic crisis.

"Economies are utterly dependent on species diversity. We need them all, in large numbers. We quite literally cannot afford to lose them."

He added: "Governments should put as much effort, if not more, into saving nature as they do into addressing the economic and financial sectors."

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