

Biodiversity in the world

16 days before the start of COP 13 of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Cancun, the CBD Alliance collects numbers on the state of the world's biodiversity.

The COP 13 of the CBD comes in a very complex context for the planet and with a gigantic challenge for humanity. According to the *Global Biodiversity Outlook 4*, prepared by the CBD Secretariat, pressures on biodiversity will continue to increase at least until 2020, with a consequent deterioration of biodiversity. The major problems our biodiversity is facing are: loss, degradation and fragmentation of natural habitats; overexploitation of biological resources; pollution, in particular the accumulation of nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus in the environment; impacts of invasive alien species on ecosystems and the services they provide to people; climate change and acidification of the oceans, associated with the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

This is how we will arrive at the meeting to be held in Cancun from 4 to 17 December this year:

- In **agriculture**, pollution produced by nutrients used as fertilizers continues to have significant effects. Indicators of agricultural land biodiversity continue to deteriorate, although the rate of deterioration is slowing down.
- **Deforestation** in several tropical areas of the world continues to increase and fragmentation and degradation of habitats such as grasslands, wetlands and river basins continue.
- The number of invasive alien species continues to grow worldwide and also increase their impacts on biodiversity. Very few of the programs aimed at eradicating invasive species from land areas have been successful.
- About 30% of **fish stocks** are overexploited. There is a general downward trend in maintaining fishing activities within biologically sustainable levels. Overexploitation seriously affects marine biodiversity, driving collapse and local extinction of species, and reducing the total biomass of predatory fish species by 52% between 1970 and 2000. Dynamite and trawling and other destructive fishing practices affect Coral reefs, seagrass beds, cold water corals and sponge beds. The use of non-selective gear leads to the capture of large numbers of non-target species, estimated at about 40% of the world's total catch, including more than 600,000 marine mammals and 85,000 turtles per year.
- The pressures on **coral reefs**, both terrestrial and marine, are increasing. The percentage of reefs rated as threatened increased by nearly 30 per cent in the decade ending in 2007. Over-fishing and destructive fishing methods constitute widespread threats to almost 55 per cent of reefs. Coastal development and pollution from land-based sources affect about a quarter of the reefs each. About one-tenth of the reefs are affected by pollution from marine sources.
- The average **extinction risk** for birds, mammals, amphibians and corals shows no signs of decline. Short-term future projections for the risk of species extinction as a result of projected habitat loss generally reveal a worsening situation. The Living Planet Indexⁱⁱ of the WWF shows a decline of 58

per cent of monitored species between 1970 and 2012 with greatest losses in freshwater environments. If current trends continue to 2020 vertebrate populations may decline by an average of 67 per cent compared to 1970.

- There is **little support** to ensure the long-term **conservation of local crop varieties** in the face of changes in agricultural practices and market preferences which tend, in general, to limit the genetic stock. Wild relatives of domesticated species are increasingly threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation and climate change, and few protected areas or management plans address these threats. The greatest erosion of traditional crops and their related wild species occurs in cereals, followed by vegetables, fruits and nuts and legumes.

- The **genetic diversity of domesticated cattle** is eroding, with more than one-sixth of the breeds being evaluated for extinction.

- The **melting** of the sea ice is affecting the basic components of life in the Arctic Ocean, causing changes that affect the length and breadth of food chains. These changes affect everything from ice-dependent algae to birds, fish, marine mammals and human communities that depend on sea ice for transportation, food, economic opportunities and cultural activities.

- Important habitats for **ecosystem services**, such as wetlands and forests, continue to lose and degrade. For example, in 2011 the UK National Ecosystem Assessment concluded that about 30% of ecosystem services were deteriorating, largely as a result of deterioration in the extent and conditions of habitats providing such services.

- In general terms, the **deterioration of traditional knowledge** continues, as illustrated by the loss of linguistic diversity and the large-scale displacement of indigenous and local communities. Since the nineteenth century, 21 northern languages have been extinguished and ten of these extinctions occurred after 1990, one extinction in Finland, one in Alaska, one in Canada and 18 in the Russian Federation. This trend has been reversed in some places due to a growing interest in traditional cultures and the participation of local communities in the governance and management of protected areas and the recognition of the importance of areas conserved by communities.

It is possible to change these trends

Alongside this reality, there are also successful examples of ecosystem protection and sustainable use of natural resources by youth groups in the city and in the countryside, intentional communities, indigenous peoples and local communities, and many other actors who Work for a life in harmony with Mother Earth.

Several community conservation initiatives like the ICCAs^{iv} (Indigenous Peoples' and Community Conserved Territories and Areas) play a key role in conserving and enhancing agricultural biodiversity, for example, through careful selection and cultivation of traditional crop varieties and livestock breeds, intercropping with natural and secondary forests, and use of long fallow periods and rotation of diverse crops to ensure soil fertility and regeneration.

Without any support from the state, 15 families in Minga Pora - Paraguay, who are part of the Community Conservation Initiative^{vi} (CCRI) have managed to protect a small area of 46 hectares through productive agro-ecological practices and selling surplus production at the local market. They have preserved native plant species and plan to use this oasis of biodiversity to restore larger areas in the future.

The intentional community of Tamera in Portugal has managed to regenerate a large area of degraded land eroded by olive monocultures through water retention landscapes, which have allowed a short cycle of water to be generated and there are natural water steams even in the driest times of the year. The

population produces a large amount of their food thanks to this system and the local fauna and flora have returned because they find a healthy ecosystem in the middle of the degradation in the valleys of Alentejo.

Thanks to examples such as these, the fourth edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook also presents data on the reversal of negative trends:

- In some marine regions, such as the North-East Atlantic, exploitation rates have been reduced, and depleted stocks have recovered.
- There are countries making progress in reducing their emission of pollutants, including measures to reduce the use of pesticides (Belgium), phasing out the use of certain harmful products (Mongolia) and the establishment of pollution monitoring systems (Myanmar).
- The land area of the planet protected for biological diversity conservation is steadily increasing and the designation of marine protected areas is accelerating. Almost a quarter of the countries have already exceeded the goal of protecting 17% of their land area.
- Restoration activities are being developed for some depleted or degraded ecosystems, in particular wetlands and forests, in some cases at very ambitious scales such as in China. The abandonment of agricultural land in some regions of Europe, North America and East Asia is facilitating 'passive restoration' on a major scale.
- Various revitalization efforts are being carried out in different regions and there is strong evidence to show the interest of indigenous peoples in revitalizing and promoting their languages and cultures. The revitalization programs are mostly grassroots movements that carry out various activities, such as intensive summer courses, use of language in local schools and special courses aimed at adult education.

"The response to a life in harmony with Mother Earth is in all the community initiatives that are manifesting every time stronger in the whole world even without official help from states or international agencies. However, COP 13 represents an important space for them to be manifested and recognized as viable alternatives that are already bearing fruit, but also as a space to take measures that limit and eliminate the threats to which they are constantly subject. The CBD Alliance will be present at the meeting advocating for country authorities to reach ambitious and concrete agreements to halt perverse incentives in agriculture as well as misleading and dangerous activities such as monoculture plantations; to agree on decisions that will prevent advances in synthetic biology to become new threats to peoples and biodiversity; to continue the recognition of the role of indigenous peoples, local communities and women in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity; to work on the establishment of real compliance mechanisms with sanctions for those countries that do not comply with the commitments; and to provide support to those initiatives that have long worked for the planet's biodiversity," said Gadir Lavadenz, general coordinator of the CBD Alliance.

The CBD Alliance will be present at COP 13 as a space for civil society and we will be presenting proposals and concerns and monitoring decisions that are directed by interests of merely capital and in the opposite direction to the objectives of the Convention: the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources.

As CBD Alliance, we invite journalists and citizens to contribute to this important event for everyone. How can you contribute? Participating at COP 13; making advocacy work; disseminating information; making different choices of consumption in your private life; linking groups; staging protests and peaceful

demonstrations and more. If you want to perform any of these actions with the CBD Alliance, you can write to email: gadirlavadenz@gmail.com or through our social networks.

Who we are

The CBD Alliance is a network that includes more than 400 organizations, communities and academics concerned about biodiversity. Our main task is to build bridges and ensure cooperation among stakeholders to ensure that the objectives of the CBD are met and that our biodiversity and her rights are recognized.

More information:

To know more about the work of the CBD Alliance at COP 13 and member organizations visit: <http://www.cbdalliance.info/> and follow us on: Facebook as CBD COP 13 or CBD Alliance and Twitter as @CBD_Alliance.

Press contact:

Cecilia Navarro, tel. 52 55 54540678, email: cbdalliance.prensa@gmail.com

ⁱⁱ www.livingplanetindex.org/

^{iv} <http://www.iccaconsortium.org/>

^{vi} <http://globalforestcoalition.org/category/community-conservation-resilience-initiative/>