

Forum: Special Conference on Environmental Sustainability

Issue: Achieving a significant reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss

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Introduction

A biologically diverse Earth contains a variety of lives within a globe; the different species of animals and plants. These different species live in a specific ecosystem in which they adapt to. All cultures that exist in the world are aware of the importance of the nature and the need to conserve and maintain it. However, although some species extinction may happen naturally, human activities have caused an imbalance between the diversity and are responsible for most of the species extinction. Many conservation strategies have been brought up some have been taken into action. The rate of the species extinction still maintains at a rate of hundreds to thousands of times higher before human came to be so numerous. In addition, the destruction of ecosystems such as rain forests over the last twenty years has increased at an incredible rate. Thus, it is said to be obvious that mankind is destroying this heritage, forcing thousands of species to lose their habitats. Today, as one may see, the number of species endangered by human activities and the number of habitats being destroyed, fragmented or changed are constantly growing which results in ecosystems destabilization and imbalance.

Definition of Key Terms

Biodiversity

A variety of different species of animals, plants, microorganisms that live in a specific ecosystem that exist in the environment, creating a balanced environment.

Ecosystem

A particular area which acts as a habitat for plants and living organisms which they are capable of surviving and adapting to.

General Overview

Causes of biodiversity loss

There has been many causes of biodiversity loss which may include, global warming, pollution, over-harvesting, and over-fishing. These are all induced by human activities.

Loss of habitats and population change

In Europe only 15% of the land is recorded as undisturbed. Particularly in Southeast Asia, forests deforestation and river pollution have become major problems. The increase of the human population greatly affects the degradation of natural resources, and can negatively affect areas that are important for biodiversity conservation as habitats.

Patterns of production and over-consumption

The increase of energy and resources consumption has negatively impacted ecosystems, which has led to the issue of biodiversity loss. In today's economy, high levels of energy and resources consumption are encouraged, which only has only resulted in the failure of conserving the biodiversity.

Military Events

Military forces can also be one of the causes to biodiversity loss due to the impacts they have made on the environment. For example, during the Vietnam War, US destroyed the entire Vietnamese rainforest ecosystem. In Congo, military forces killed gorillas and other species of animals as they dominated the land and claim the gorillas' habitats as their land.

Impacts of biodiversity loss

The loss of biodiversity can be tied to massive species extinction, a decline in ocean biodiversity, and an imbalance in the ecosystem.

Massive Species Extinction

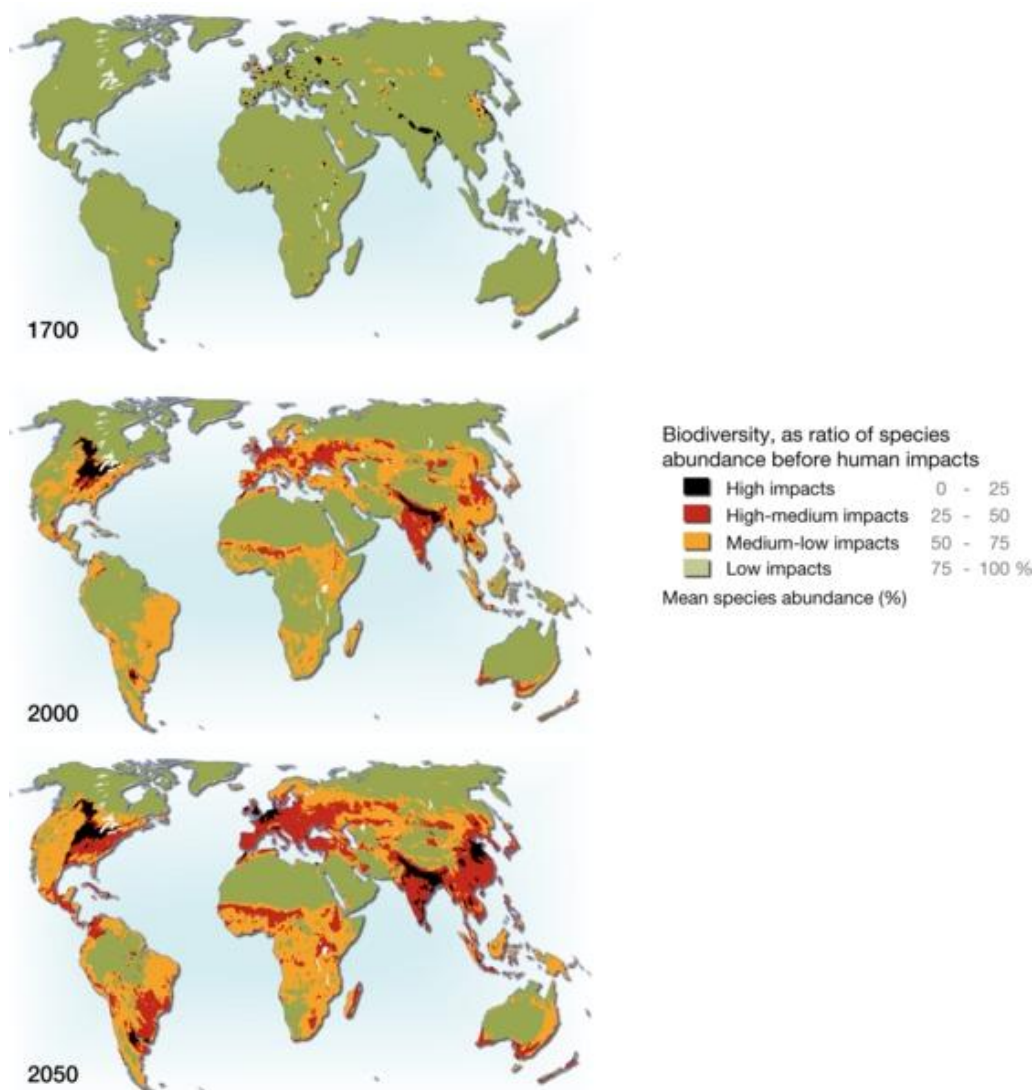
Many of our products, such as medicine, that we use and eat today are from endangered species. By the next century, it is estimated that, one-third to two-thirds of all species of plants and animals will face extinction. Due to human activities, 10%-30% of mammals, birds and other amphibian species are threatened with extinction. According to a 2006 WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) report, the species populations have declined by about one-third from 1970 to 2003. Many scientists predict that by 2020, one-fifth of species that remain alive today may be extinct.

Furthermore, the aquaculture has consumed 57 percent of fish meal and 87 percent of fish oil and with an enormous amount of ocean living organisms being captured throughout the world each day. Many marine species, such as sharks and whales, are killed because of overfishing, trade, and the demand for products such as whale oil. It is feared that with the

current rate of loss, the ocean may never recover due to pollution, global warming, over-fishing, and other human practices.

Destruction in Ecosystems

As forests are being destroyed by human activities, it causes thousands of species of plants and animals to lose their habitats. Millions of people now live in tropical regions, and it is believed that every second, a parcel of rainforest which is equivalent to the size of a football field disappears. These forests were once home to thousands of species of living organisms that could be found nowhere else in the world; this then, lead to species extinction due to the incapability of these species to adapt to and survive in another environment. The loss of one species may ruin an entire forest ecosystem of plants and animals as animals may depend on the extinct species as prey. Therefore, this caused the others to lose their food source.



Caption #1: The loss of biodiversity with continued human activities such as agricultural expansion, pollution, and climate change and infrastructure development.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1992	The Global Convention on Biological Diversity signed at the Earth Summit
2007	UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki Moon incorporated the 2010 Biodiversity target into the Millennium Development Goals
May 30, 2008	A new universal global alliance for biodiversity protection established in Bonn
June 2, 2008	UN Conference - Over 190 nations agreed on measures to reduce biodiversity loss by 2010
January 11, 2010	UN launched the International Year of Biodiversity
2010	Convention on Biological Diversity Meeting in Nagoya, Japan

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

Throughout the years, the United Nations have been fully concerned with the issue of biodiversity loss. In 1992, the Global Convention on Biological Diversity was signed at the Earth Summit. One of the significant events was in 2007 when the UN secretary general incorporated the 2010 Biodiversity target into the Millennium Development Goals. Many nations have agreed on taking measures to reduce biodiversity loss by 2010. The year 2010 is the International Year of Biodiversity which UN has launched on January 11, 2010. In this year, some targets would be, raising awareness, promoting solutions and strategies to reduce biodiversity loss, and encouraging individuals to take action.

- Oceans and law of sea, December, 2002 (**A/RES/57/141**)
- Sustainable fisheries, including through the 1995 Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, and related instruments, 2004 (**A/RES/59/25**)
- UN Convention on Biological Diversity, December 14, 2009 (**A/RES/64/203**)

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Shah, Anup. "Biodiversity." *Global Issues*. N.p., 1 Dec. 2009. Web. 16 Jan. 2010. <<http://www.globalissues.org/issue/169/biodiversity>>.

"UN Conference agrees Action on Biodiversity Loss." *EurActiv.com*. N.p., n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2010.
<<http://www.euractiv.com/en/climate-environment/un-conference-agrees-action-biodiversity-loss/article-172914>>.