



World Wildlife Day 2020
Sustaining all life on earth

Concept note

Wild species of animals and plants are an integral part of the world's biological diversity and have the greatest resonance with the general public. The ecosystems where wildlife* are found and interplay with the physical environment, such as forests, wetlands, plains, grasslands, coral reefs and deserts, represent another aspect of biological diversity, together with genetic diversity.

The vast array of interactions among the various components of biodiversity makes the planet habitable for all species, including humanity. The tapestry of life on our planet is the outcome of over 3.5 billion years of evolutionary history. The richness of species and ecosystems have sustained human civilization and development for millennia, from providing food and nourishment, material for handicraft and construction to the very air we breathe.

Yet, in spite of, or precisely because of, the perceived limitlessness of the nature and natural resources, their ability to sustain humankind and contribute to sustainable development has been severely impacted by unregulated or poorly managed human activities. Biodiversity is increasingly being altered by humans and the very existence of an increasing number of species is under threat .

The loss of species threatens our sources for food, fuel, medicines, housing, clothing and many other resources, and opportunities for development, recreation and tourism. According to the 2019 IPBES Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, approximately 25% of species are already threatened with extinction and the natural ecosystems have declined by 47% on average.

It is clear that we urgently need to bend the curve of species and biodiversity loss before we reach the tipping points from which we may not recover, with dramatic consequences for all life on the planet.

The year 2020, known as a 'biodiversity super year', will host several major events that place biodiversity at the forefront of the global sustainable development agenda. It provides a unique opportunity to deliver transformative progress for the conservation and sustainable use of wildlife for other global sustainable development challenges that can be addressed with nature-based solutions.

* For the purpose of World Wildlife Day, wildlife means wild animals and plants species.

The theme of World Wildlife Day 2020, “*Sustaining all life on earth*”, encompasses all wild animal and plant species as a component of biodiversity as well as the livelihoods of people, especially those who live closest to nature. It also underlines the importance of sustainable use of natural resources in support of the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including Goal 14 (Life Below Water), , Goal 15 (Life On Land), Goal 1 (No Poverty) and Goal 12 (Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns).

On World Wildlife Day 2020 we will celebrate wildlife as a component of biodiversity in its many beautiful and varied forms, raise awareness of the multitude of benefits of wildlife to people, the threats it is facing, and the urgent need for governments, civil society, private sector and individuals to add their voices and take actions to help conserve wildlife and ensure sustainable use before it's too late.

The Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and other UN system organizations, Member States, biodiversity-related conventions and civil society, are unrolling a series of global and national events and social media activities around World Wildlife Day 2020, including a high-level event at the UN Headquarters in New York on 3 March.

The Secretariats of CITES and the Convention on Biological Diversity, UNDP and UNEP are also collaborating with the Jackson WILD to organize a World Wildlife Day Film Showcase to galvanize the power of media and catalyze change for wildlife and biodiversity conservation. The winning films will be highlighted during the WWD2020 event at UN Headquarters.

The CITES Secretariat is also teaming up with the International Fund for Animal Welfare to organize a WWD2020 International Youth Art Contest.