



# Final Report from 2016 Business and Biodiversity Forum

December 2 - 3, 2016

Moon Palace Hotel, Cancun, Mexico





The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Government of Mexico hosted the 2016 Business and Biodiversity Forum in Cancun, Mexico, from 2-3 December 2016. The event took place as part of the UN Biodiversity Conference.

Bringing together more than 300 experts from businesses, governments and NGOs, the 2016 Business and Biodiversity Forum focused on the mainstreaming of biodiversity within four specific sectors: agriculture, forestry, fisheries and tourism. The Forum highlighted the importance of biodiversity mainstreaming for achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the Sustainable Development Goals.





A word on mainstreaming...

Biodiversity mainstreaming is generally understood as ensuring that biodiversity, and the services it provides, are adequately factored into the policies and practices that have an impact on it. More specifically, mainstreaming includes integrating conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity into cross-sectoral plans that cover issues such as sustainable development, poverty reduction, trade and economic policies. Mainstreaming also includes sector-specific actions in such key sectors as agriculture, fisheries, forestry, mining, energy, tourism and transport. In all cases, it implies changes in development models, strategies, operations, and paradigms.

Such integration is not just important for biodiversity. Taking biodiversity consideration fully into account in business operations can be essential for the long-term viability of the businesses themselves.

*“A difference can be made once companies realize that there is a benefit to being responsible towards biodiversity: it adds value to the business and makes it more competitive.”*

Angela Pinhati, Industrial Director, Natura

*“There are many challenges. One is people believing that the Earth will provide us with unlimited resources.”*

Cuauhtémoc Ochoa,  
Undersecretary for Environmental  
Promotion and Regulation, SEMARNAT



The 2016 Business and Biodiversity Forum focused on the concept of mainstreaming biodiversity from the business point of view.

The first day of the Forum was dedicated to the theme of “**Biodiversity for Business**” and highlighted the importance of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity for economic development and well-being of societies. Biodiversity represents both risks and opportunities for businesses.

Four panel discussions unfolded to explore the topic further. The first focused on natural capital accounting and how its integration into corporate strategies, particularly through the Natural Capital Protocols, enables the valuation of biodiversity and the impact assessment of business activities. Natural capital is a critical asset, especially for developing countries where it makes up a significant share of total wealth. Natural capital accounting is also a useful tool for the productive and financial sectors to understand and measure their impacts on nature, and in particular to value impact.





Another session explored the links between climate change and biodiversity loss, and the role that biological diversity has both in climate change adaptation and mitigation. Damage from climate change impacts could have enormous effects on the global economy and the environmental support systems on which all businesses rely. Some specific environmental trends and underlying drivers have been identified and are already on the radar of many businesses. As a result, leading businesses are taking meaningful actions to address biodiversity, water scarcity and climate change vulnerability as a whole, but the majority of businesses is still far from linking climate change and other global issues to the conservation of biodiversity.

A third session discussed financing solutions for biodiversity. Available evidence indicates that a significant gap remains in finance for biodiversity conservation and management (between 130 and 440 billion US\$ annually, according to the High Level Panel on Global Assessment of Resources for Implementing the Strategic Plan). This global challenge requires increased efforts from all sources of financing, including the private sector. Although several efforts have been made by the private sector, the challenge still remains as to how the productive and financial sectors could better engage into biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. Financial institutions are also looking for more transparency on risk assessment with regard to biodiversity. The panel discussed in particular investment opportunities and innovative instruments to expand the involvement of businesses in biodiversity finance, such as for example green bonds.



The last panel addressed access and benefit sharing of genetic resources, and the opportunities and obligations of businesses under the Nagoya Protocol. Access to genetic resources and the sharing of benefits arising from their utilization deliver economic opportunities, thereby contributing to biodiversity conservation. Since businesses use genetic resources, whether from plants, animals or microorganisms, for the development of their products, they can ensure it is done in an equitable way while meaningfully contributing to sustainable development. It was pointed out that indigenous communities are often resource providers for businesses. Collaboration with businesses increases traceability in corporate supply chains while at the same time empowering local populations.

# The Business and Biodiversity Pledge

A highlight of the day was the signing ceremony of the **Business and Biodiversity Pledge**. Many of the business leaders participating in the Business and Biodiversity Forum took the opportunity to place their signature under the pledge promising to take action in support of biodiversity conservation.

In the pledge, businesses commit to measuring and valuing impacts and dependencies on biodiversity, to minimize the impacts, and to report on actions and achievements in this regard. With more than 130 businesses having signed on to this date, the pledge demonstrates that businesses are truly willing to contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity throughout their operations and supply chains.

The list of businesses that have signed the pledge can be accessed here:  
[www.cbd.int/business/signatories-and-supporters.shtml](http://www.cbd.int/business/signatories-and-supporters.shtml).







The second day of the Forum was dedicated to the theme of “**Business for Biodiversity**”. The discussions focussed on business practices that take into account conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

The day began with a keynote highlighting the role and potential of businesses to promote conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. The first parallel sessions focussed on sustainable consumption and production and supply chains. Assessing environmental impacts across the life-cycle is essential for businesses to effectively manage risk, capture opportunities, and create long-term competitive advantages. Of particular relevance is the role of businesses in fostering change through their supply chains.

A second session addressed innovative partnerships for biodiversity conservation. The need to focus on new schemes, as well as on facilitating business participation in the broader development and conservation agenda was in particular highlighted. Partnerships between businesses, governments, NGOs and other stakeholders are essential to scale up outcomes, achieve systemic change, address cumulative impacts, and ensure outcomes are scientifically sound and credible.



The remaining four sessions of the day were dedicated to the mainstreaming of biodiversity into the productive sectors of agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and tourism.

Addressing the indirect and direct drivers of biodiversity loss requires a focus on sectors that both impact on biodiversity and are greatly dependent on it at the same time. Demand for the goods and services produced by these sectors is projected to increase over the coming decades as a result of population growth, increasing average wealth and other demographic changes. Mainstreaming biodiversity considerations across these sectors is essential in ensuring not only the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity but also the continued vitality of these sectors. There is a large potential for more biodiversity-friendly management measures in these sectors, and, to a large extent, biodiversity-based solutions have a significant part to play in these measures.

Major challenges to the mainstreaming of biodiversity into these sectors remain but the message is quite clear: Unless action is taken now to make agriculture, forestry, fisheries and tourism sustainable and resilient, environmental impacts will seriously compromise biodiversity and ecosystem services. This global challenge requires increased efforts from all sectors, including the business sector. It was in particular highlighted that diversification and better integration of production systems into complex ecological processes can create synergies with the natural habitat instead of depleting natural resources. In this regard, and overall shift towards sustainable consumption and production patterns is crucial.

*“It’s not the market that dictates supply and demand, but nature.”*

Pedro Álvarez Icaza,  
General Coordinator for  
Biological Corridors and  
Resources, CONABIO

*“It’s not about who will have to pay the cost of sustainability, but making transparent the cost of unsustainability.”*

Pavan Sukhdev, Director, GIST



# Key Messages

A blue-tinted landscape featuring a range of mountains in the background, partially covered in snow or light-colored rock. The mountains are reflected in a calm body of water in the foreground. The sky is a uniform light blue, and the overall scene is serene and minimalist.

# 1. Shifting from a narrative of risk to a narrative of opportunities

Environmental change, in large part driven by humanity's demand for resources, improving lifestyles and growing global population, is accelerating and generating new and emerging challenges, but also opportunities for business. Elaborating on the role and potential of businesses in preserving biodiversity is therefore key to ensure sustainable change.





## 2. Better collaboration across sectors is needed

In order to successfully mainstream biodiversity into business plans and processes, all relevant actors, including businesses, governments and NGOs, need to communicate better and enhance cross-sectoral collaboration. Truly transformational change will not be achieved otherwise. Industry associations and local governments play an important role in this context and are called upon to engage in establishing cross-sectoral partnerships.



# 3. Linking biodiversity to other global issues

Biodiversity is closely linked to major other environmental issues (e.g. climate change and water scarcity). Many businesses are relatively well aware of their impacts on water and air, and have taken action to address these impacts. However, the link to biodiversity is often not recognized. The concept of biodiversity and how it relates to other global issues are important in making a successful business case and scaling up business engagement.



# 4. Recognition of biodiversity as an economic asset

The link between conservation of biodiversity and economic activity is undeniable, while natural capital is recognized as a key element of sustainability and competitiveness. Many businesses emphasize the urgent need to develop tools that operationalize this concept and provide concrete support to corporate decision-making. Such tools need to be comprehensive, i.e. that should address not only biodiversity but also climate and sustainability as a whole. In this regard, the more widespread application of tools, supported by governmental policies, is crucial.



# 5. A governmental-led approach is needed

While some businesses report progress in terms of addressing sustainability issues, considerable work remains to be undertaken, in particular with respect to mainstreaming biodiversity along entire supply chains, including basic producers. For many sectors, the biggest biodiversity and ecosystem impacts are in their supply chains.

Despite the existing gap in adequate governmental policies, many businesses already initiated sustainability programs in their supply chains. However, the need for a more coherent and governmental-led approach was emphasized throughout the discussions.

In this regards, governments are asked to improve environmental regulatory frameworks to level the playing field among businesses. Voluntary standards and pressure from civil society can play a crucial role in pushing this agenda. There is a need for biodiversity standard-setting , monitoring and enforcement.

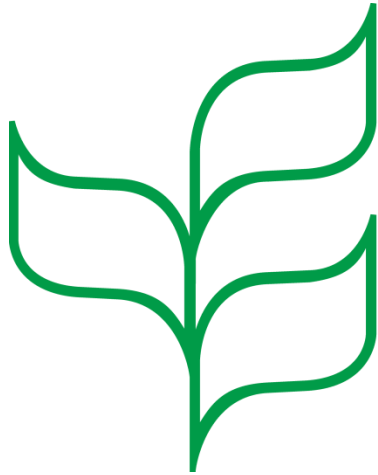


## 6. Delivering positive actions on biodiversity is possible

These messages provide a good basis for identifying next steps in taking business action on biodiversity. The expectations are high but the Business and Biodiversity Forum provided ample evidence that positive action on biodiversity is possible and that biodiversity is also an opportunity for business innovation. The need for businesses to mainstream biodiversity into their operations was recognized as essential to addressing environmental degradation.

However, it is generally agreed that biodiversity does not receive the attention it deserves. Strengthening the business case for biodiversity by making the link to the wider sustainability agenda and collaborating with other stakeholders - such as governments, NGOs, conservationists, scientists, consumers, producers, and the financial community - are key to ensuring better conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. The CBD Secretariat will continue to engage with its partners to achieve this.





# Convention on Biological Diversity

The Global Platform on Business and Biodiversity: <https://www.cbd.int/business>