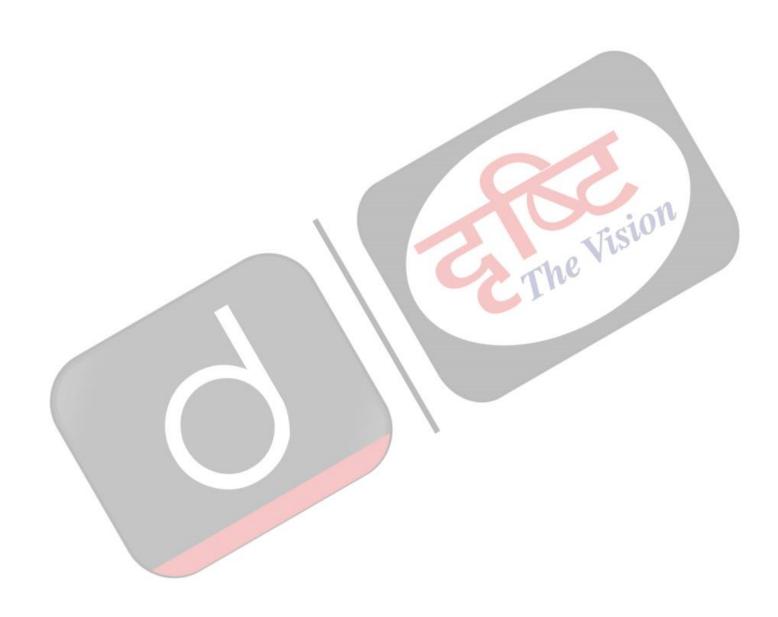


# **UN Report on Species Extinction**



# Question of survival

A 1,800-page Global Assessment Report, compiled by a UN agency from more than 1,500 academic papers, says that the world's life support systems are in trouble. Here are the report's key findings:



#### Extinction

1 million species face the risk of extinction – many within decades

**5,00,000** plants and animals currently have "insufficient habitat for long-term survival"

40% of amphibian species are threatened with extinction, along with 33% of reef-forming corals and 33% of marine mammals

 Loss of pollinators caused by intensive farming is putting \$235-\$577 billion worth of annual crop output at risk



# Consumption

1/3rd of all land is used to make food

 Food cultivation uses 75% of all fresh water on Earth

25% of man-made emissions come from agriculture, the vast majority of them from meat production

50% of all new agricultural land is taken from forests

93% of marine fish stocks are either overfished or fished to the limit of sustainability

One-third of all fishing is said to be illegal or unreported



# **Pollution**

 Humans dump up to 400 million tonnes of heavy metals, toxic sludge and other waste into oceans and rivers each year

75% of land, 40% of oceans and 50% of rivers "manifest severe impacts of degradation" from human activity

 Plastic production has increased 10-fold since 1990

 Pollution from fertilizers has led to the formation of 400 low-oxygen 'dead zones' in coastal waters, covering more than 2,45,000 sq km



#### Climate

5% of Earth's species are at risk of extinction if the temperature rises just 2°Celsius – still within the targets of the Paris climate deal

 Business as usual is predicted to warm Earth 4.3°Celsius by 2100. Were that to happen, one-sixth of all species could be wiped out

 Many of the policies that scientists hope could limit temperature rise by 2100 to 1.5°Celsius would also help human beings to preserve biodiversity



■ The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) has released the **UN report on species extinction**. It is estimated that up to 1 million of the estimated 8 million plant and animal species on Earth are at risk of extinction within decades.

Significance of the report

- The assessment is the most accurate and comprehensive review yet of the damage people are inflicting on the planet. And they warn that **nature is declining at "unprecedented" rates** and that the changes will put people at risk.
- The report identified a range of risks, from the disappearance of insects vital for pollinating food crops, to the destruction of coral reefs that support fish populations that sustain coastal communities, or the loss of medicinal plants.
- Decline of native species in most major land-based habitats by at least 20%, mostly since 1900.
- It emphasizes that **business and financial concerns are also threatened**. We are eroding the very foundations of our economies, livelihoods, food security, health and quality of life worldwide.
- Key global threats: human's use of land and sea resources, climate change, pollution and invasive species.
- Ocean ecosystems degrading as temperatures rise towards 2 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels. Loss of coral reefs to warming and acidifying oceans could cause a collapse in commercial and indigenous fisheries.

### Some of the report's notable findings

- **Damage extent:** 75% of the land environment and 66% of the marine environment impacted due to anthropogenic activities.
- Loss of pollinators: Up to \$577 billion in annual global crops are at risk from pollinator loss. Insect pollinators are unfortunately an excellent example of the problems caused by human activities."There's a newly coined phrase for insect declines the 'windshield effect'.
- Increased risk of floods and hurricanes because of loss of coastal habitats and protection.
- Pollution and waste
  - Plastic pollution has increased tenfold since 1980.
  - 300-400 million tons of heavy metals, solvents, toxic sludge and other industrial waste are dumped into the world's water systems.

#### **Conclusion**

- Biodiversity and nature's contributions to people are our common heritage and humanity's most important life-supporting 'safety net.' But our safety net is stretched almost to breaking point.
- Humans as both the cause of the threat and a target of its risks. As humanity demands ever more food, energy, housing and other resources, they say, it's also undermining its food security and long-term prospects.
- The essential, interconnected web of life on Earth is getting smaller and increasingly frayed.
- Profound economic and social changes would be needed to curb greenhouse gases quickly enough to avert the most devastating consequences of a warming world.

#### **IBPES**

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) is an independent intergovernmental body, established by member States in 2012.

**Objective of IPBES:** Strengthen the science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, long-term human well-being and sustainable development.

#### The windshield effect

Also, the windscreen phenomenon is a term given to the anecdotal observation that people tend to find fewer insects smashed on the windscreens of their cars now compared to a decade or several decades ago. This effect has been ascribed to major global declines in insect abundance.

