

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) - Biological Diversity and its contribution to Sustainable Development

United Kingdom

Biodiversity is key to the survival of life on earth and its loss deprives future generations of irreplaceable genetic information and compromises sustainability. While land usage for large scale food production accounts for 30% of biodiversity loss globally, overexploitation for food, medicines and timber drives another 20%. Despite progress in some areas, natural habitats have continued to disappear and a vast number of species remain threatened of extinction due to human activities. The United Kingdom (UK) is a strong supporter of sustainable development that meets the needs of the present generation and also allows future generations enough resources to address their own requirements. However the country has shown limited progress thus far and remains a spectator to the continued decimation of forests and ecosystems the world over in the name of development. The country boasts of more than 70,000 known species of animals, plants, fungi and microorganisms. However assessments show that the UK has lost almost half of its biodiversity. 15% of species within the country are also threatened with extinction.

The UK is party to the proposed strategies to encourage mainstreaming of biodiversity across government and society in agreement with the 20 Aichi biodiversity targets of 2010. They are however on track to achieve 5 targets. UK is the world leader in scientific research and is developing the use of innovative technologies to inform biodiversity conservation. They have developed and implemented their own biodiversity strategies, additional measures and indicators which reflect their special responsibilities, needs, views and environmental circumstances. They have seen success in raising awareness and training of UK-based users of genetic resources and giving them access to resources. They have made significant progress in ensuring species and habitats of national and international importance through a network of marine and terrestrial protected areas. UK has been able to integrate biodiversity into their national and local planning processes. Biodiversity values have been integrated into a range of planning, accounting and reporting systems in the country.

The UK has announced many policies supporting biodiversity such as “The Darwin initiative” which supports developing countries to conserve biodiversity and reduce poverty. Another such policy is the 'Biodiversity 2020' which sets out the strategic direction for biodiversity for the next decade on land and at sea. The 'Blue belt programme' is an initiative to enhance marine protection, which has seen over 4.3 million square kilometers of ocean protected since 2016.

Researchers state that the world average of biodiversity loss needs to be at 90% in order to reach "Ecological meltdown", which could result in global starvation. The UK advocates for a UN sanctioned policy that gives permission to limit land usage and large-scale food production and increasing forest protection. Limiting land usage and urban spread would reduce habitat fragmentation which is one of the biggest threats to biodiversity loss. An increase in forests will allow animals to live and procreate in a safe habitat and such a policy will promote a huge increase in biodiversity.