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# Global Biodiversity Strategy

*Guidelines for Action to Save, Study, and Use  
Earth's Biotic Wealth Sustainably and Equitably*

WORLD RESOURCES INSTITUTE (WRI)

THE WORLD CONSERVATION UNION (IUCN)

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (UNEP)

*In consultation with*

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION (FAO)

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATION, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (UNESCO)

1992

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This report represents a timely, scientific treatment of a subject of public concern. Its sponsors take responsibility for choosing and focusing the study topics and guaranteeing its authors and researchers freedom of inquiry. The report's authors have also solicited and responded to the guidance of advisory panels and expert reviewers. Unless otherwise stated, however, all the interpretations and findings set forth here are those of the authors.

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# Foreword

All life on Earth is part of one great, interdependent system. It interacts with, and depends on, the non-living components of the planet: atmosphere, oceans, freshwaters, rocks, and soils. Humanity depends totally on this community of life—this biosphere—of which we are an integral part.

In the remote past, human actions were trivial when set against the dominant processes of nature. No longer. The human species now influences the fundamental processes of the planet. Ozone depletion, worldwide pollution, and climate change are testimonies to our power.

Economic development is essential if the millions of people who live in poverty and endure hunger and hopelessness are to achieve a quality of life commensurate with the most basic of human rights. Economic progress is urgent if we are not only to meet the needs of the people alive today but also to give hope to the billions born into the world over the next century. Better health care, education, employment, and other opportunities for a creative life are also essential components of a strategy for keeping human numbers within the planet's "carrying capacity."

Development has to be both people-centered and conservation-based. Unless we protect the structure, functions, and diversity of the world's natural systems—on which our species and all others depend—development will undermine itself and fail. Unless we use Earth's resources sustainably and prudently, we deny people their future.

Development must not come at the expense of other groups or later generations, nor threaten other species' survival.

The conservation of biodiversity is fundamental to the success of the development process. As this *Global Biodiversity Strategy* explains, conserving biodiversity is not just a matter of protecting wildlife in nature reserves. It is also about safeguarding the natural systems of the Earth that are our life-support systems; purifying the waters; recycling oxygen, carbon and other essential elements; maintaining the fertility of the soil; providing food from the land, freshwaters, and seas; yielding medicines; and safeguarding the genetic richness on which we depend in the ceaseless struggle to improve our crops and livestock.

Recent years have seen many major reviews of the world situation and of human needs. A decade ago, the *World Conservation Strategy* drew attention to the inseparable link between conservation and development and emphasized the need for sustainability. The report of the World Commission on Environment and Development—*Our Common Future*—brought this necessity home to a worldwide audience, whose governments examined the need for action in their *Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond*. Biennial *World Resources* and *Environmental Data* reports and annual *UNEP State of the Environment* reports have provided authoritative—and often disturbing—overviews of the state of the planet. Most recently, the successor and complement to the *World Con-*

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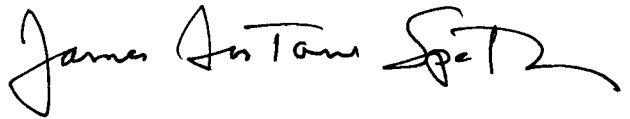
*ervation Strategy*, entitled *Caring for the Earth: A Strategy for Sustainable Living* has once more emphasized the need for the world community to change policies, reduce excessive consumption, conserve the life of the planet, and live within the Earth's carrying capacity.

The three organizations that jointly produced this *Global Biodiversity Strategy* have also been involved with these other major reports and reviews. In that process, we have become more and more aware that a report is useful only if it leads to action—more action and better action than would have been taken otherwise. That is precisely why this new *Strategy* is built around 85 specific proposals for action and why it spells out what should be done in sufficient detail for governments and non-governmental organizations to take up these proposals and develop them further.

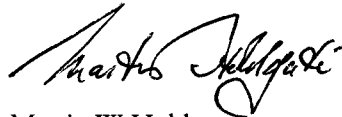
This *Strategy* appears at a time when representatives of many of the world's governments are negotiating a Convention on Biological Diversity. We offer this *Strategy* as a complementary initiative. We see it as a basis for the practical action that should be taken while the Convention is being ratified and entering into force. And we see it as an outline for the diverse actions that will need to be taken by governments and non-governmental organizations alongside and in support

of the Convention.

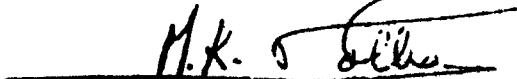
Our own organizations are already deeply involved in action to conserve biodiversity. This *Strategy* is as much for us as for other organizations and governments. We shall be further developing our own programs in its light. We will be monitoring its implementation and all our own work will reflect the assumption that successful action to conserve the diversity of life on earth is essential for a sustainable human future.



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