

Event Concept Note (draft)

Biodiversity & Sustainable Development

Global Development Conference: November 2023

The GDN Global Development Conference is a prestigious event, held in a different region and on a different theme each year. It hosts high-level, inclusive, evidence-based debates on current development challenges and priorities, with a majority of participants from developing countries, which is its trademark. GDN's flagship event provides promising and established developing country researchers with an opportunity to disseminate their work, share their ideas, interact with world-renowned academics and policymakers and network globally. It thus contributes to strengthening their capacity and professional visibility. Moreover, it offers new, Southern perspectives on sustainable development issues mostly debated in developed countries and reinforces cooperation and development effectiveness.

While the conference will target a large contingent in person (up to 400 participants), it will continue to be held in hybrid mode, and thus include a virtual component to enable broader participation. This hybrid mode will allow flexibility and provide an opportunity to reach out to a much larger number of participants worldwide, keeping also costs and environmental concerns in mind.

Thematic Overview

In 2023, the Global Development Conference will focus on “**Biodiversity and Sustainable Development.**” Biodiversity is defined in the Convention on Biological Diversity as “the variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine, and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species, and of ecosystems” (CBD, 1992). Biodiversity and Sustainable Development are intrinsically linked, as the relevant literature has poignantly argued: “we are embedded in nature”¹. Mainstreaming biodiversity is no longer a luxury but an urgency: integrating actions or policies related to biodiversity into broader development processes or policies such as those aimed at poverty reduction, or tackling climate change.²

The choice is motivated by a few observations and alarming data and developments:

¹ Dasgupta Review

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/957292/Dasgupta_Review_-_Abridged_Version.pdf

² <https://ipbes.net/glossary/mainstreaming-biodiversity>

1. Nature is closely related to health, food, water, disaster prevention, wellbeing, economic development and of course the environment and climate change. And it has been degrading at a faster pace than ever before. Biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation have widely been recognized and yet the last set of global targets, agreed in 2010 in Aichi (Japan), to curb biodiversity loss have largely been missed and came to an end in 2020, without a new framework to replace them until 2022. Building on the momentum of the recent Biodiversity COP in Montreal and the increasing mainstreaming of the Biodiversity agenda, this is an opportune time to expand the debate, make it truly global and involve disciplines and academics not always part of the research, policy decisions or public debates on these issues that affect us all.
2. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services raised alarms on the worldwide deterioration of the biosphere and of its vital contributions to people. Humanity is faced with the highest extinction rate in our history, with 1 million animal and plant species currently threatened with extinction, many within decades. (IPBES, 2019).³ More than half of the world's GDP is moderately or highly dependent on nature, through the contributions of nature to people such as pollination, water quality, and natural materials. Degrading ecosystems could trigger a downward spiral of US\$2.7 trillion in global Gross Domestic Product by 2030. In other words, the links between biodiversity and sustainable development are numerous, though the debate has so far not broadened enough beyond specific disciplines (ecologists, biologists, some economists) and environmental ministries, especially in the Global South.
3. At the same time, there seems to be broader recognition that the interactions between ecological, social and economic aspects of the planet and of our lives should be getting more and more traction in academic and public policy debates, nationally and globally, in developed and developing nations alike. The recently agreed 30x30 target⁴ and the 2050 goal of 'Living in Harmony with Nature' will require a concerted effort of monitoring, assessing the value of various natural resources, understanding who stands to be impacted and how from further biodiversity loss or conversely from declaring some areas as protected, and local as well as much more global funding than what has been pledged.
4. Finally, biodiversity and development is also a theme which by default cuts across disciplines and sectors (and it should be an even wider discussion than currently), which an organization like GDN is well placed to facilitate. Moreover, this is clearly an area in which capacity building is necessary, especially in LMICs, which also stand to be most impacted by biodiversity degradation.

³ Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. E. S. Brondizio, J. Settele, S. Díaz, and H. T. Ngo (editors). IPBES secretariat, Bonn, Germany. 1148 pages. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3831673>

⁴ <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/cop15-ends-landmark-biodiversity-agreement>.

Conference sub-themes

With the above considerations in mind, the Conference proposes to address the following thematic blocks:

1. Financing Nature and Biodiversity
2. Valuation and preservation – methodological approaches and links
3. Mainstreaming biodiversity and scaling up mainstreaming
4. Biodiversity governance – local and international
5. Technology and Innovation
6. Interdisciplinary research & capacity building

Organization and Structure

The conference will last two and a half days. Events will include:

- Dynamic Plenary sessions and Keynotes by leaders in the field
- Parallel sessions in a range of formats to encourage broad participation
- Rapid fire presentation sessions of the latest research on biodiversity in developing countries
- Controversies
- Poster displays and presentations during breaks (competitively selected)
- Expo with resources from the conference organizers, session organizers and sponsors
- Art or essay competition by students on *Nature in 2050*
- Networking opportunities

A Call for Proposals will be issued for the following categories: research papers and panels. The Call for Papers is issued in two stages: abstracts and then full papers. All submissions will be first screened and shortlisted by members of the conference Organizing Committee (with representatives of the conference co-hosts) and the final selection will be made by the Scientific Committee. Some of the paper authors will be asked to submit research posters instead of full papers.

Relevant international research institutes, organizations and networks such as the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), IPBES, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations University – Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS in Bonn), the European Investment Bank (EIB), Future Earth, IDDRI, the European Climate Foundation, the Stockholm Resilience Institute, AFD, the International Institute for Sustainable Development, UNDP, UNCTAD, and others will be invited to contribute papers, speakers, sessions, dedicated exhibits and/or side events.

Scientific & Organizing Committees

A Scientific Committee is being formed with leading figures in the fields mentioned above. The Committee will help identify plenary speakers, validate conference themes and promote the event in their communities. They will also participate in the final stage of the selection of the shortlisted papers and session proposals received through the open calls. Some of the Scientific Committee members may of course also be speakers themselves at the conference. An Organizing Committee has also been constituted with representatives of the conference co-hosts who will play a key role in spearheading the event.

Key Audiences

The conference will target roughly 800 participants total (in person and online), drawn from a diverse group of researchers, evaluators, policymakers, representatives of international organizations, civil society, development practitioners and the private sector. In keeping with the trademark of the Global Development Conference, the majority of the participants will be from developing countries. At previous conferences, participants represented no fewer than 90 countries. Nobel prize laureates, high-level policymakers and opinion leaders from around the world have participated in the previous conferences. Naturally, the academic and policy communities in the host country and region actively participate in the conference and are over-represented, in relation to other regions. High-level dignitaries along with top academics and opinion leaders from the host country and region contribute and shape the debate together with their counterparts from around the world.

About the conference organizers

Global Development Network (GDN)

GDN is a public international organization headquartered in New Delhi, with offices in France and US, that supports high-quality, policy-oriented, social science research in developing and transition countries to promote better lives. It provides researchers and research institutions with financial resources, global networking, as well as access to information, training, peer review and mentoring. GDN acts on the premise that better research leads to more informed policies and better, more inclusive development. Through its global platform, GDN connects social science researchers with policymakers and development stakeholders across the world. Over the years, GDN has acquired expertise and a global pool of partners and committed resource persons involved in the management of research and research capacity-building activities that link economic analysis to environmental protection. This includes a pioneering program on natural capital accounting in LDCs; multidisciplinary research cutting across economics and other social and natural sciences, including an ongoing Biodiversity & Development Awards program; as well as outreach activities.

Additional partners and conference co-hosts are being confirmed.

Tentative Timeline

