GDN Global Development Network

USFQ UNIVERSIDAD SAN FRANCISCO DE QUITO

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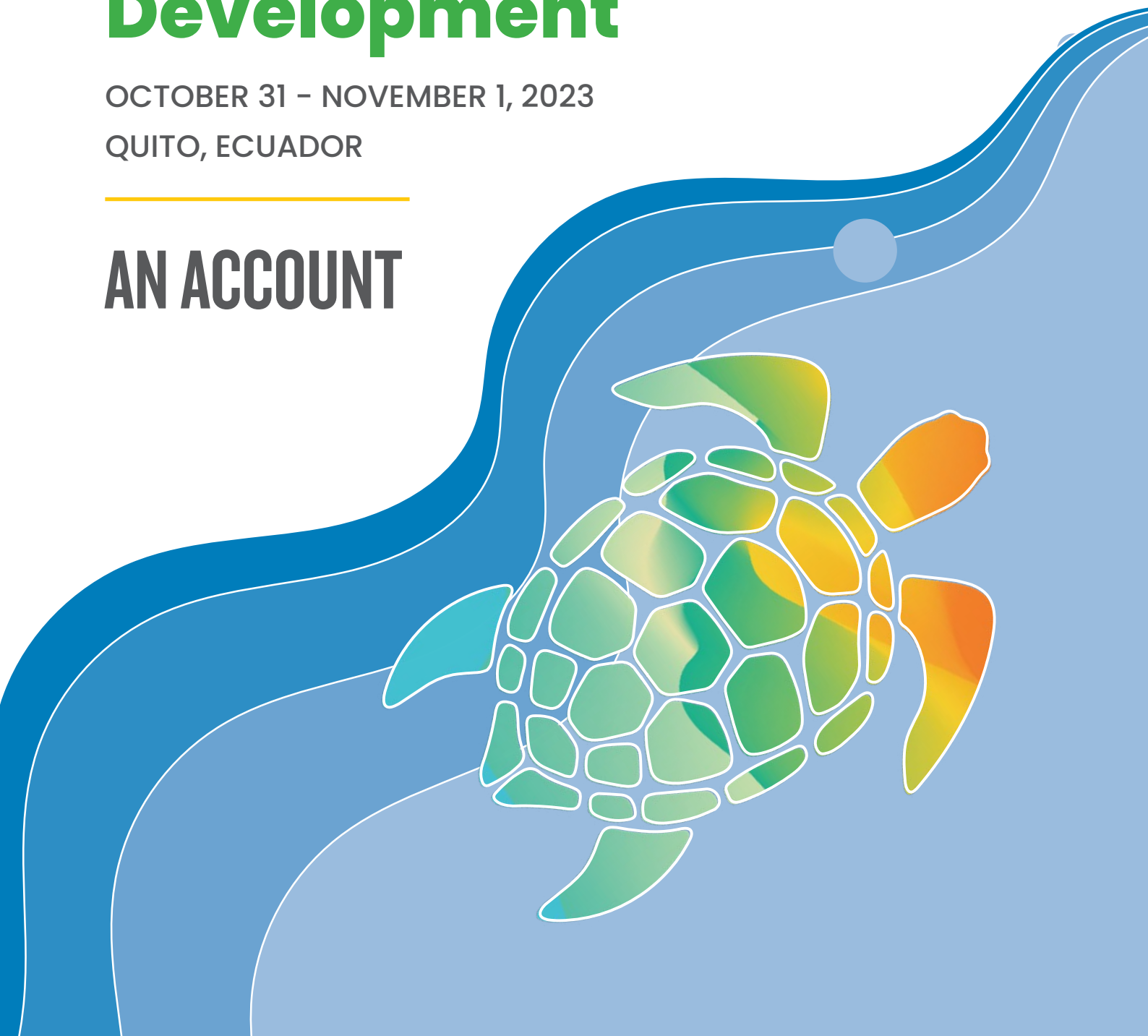
Global Development Conference on

Biodiversity and Sustainable Development

OCTOBER 31 - NOVEMBER 1, 2023

QUITO, ECUADOR

AN ACCOUNT



THE GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

A LEGACY WITH A CAUSE

The Global Development Conference is the Global Development Network's (GDN) flagship event held in a different region and on a different theme every year.

It **hosts high-level, inclusive, evidence-based debates on current development challenges** and priorities, with most **participants from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs)**, which is its trademark. This event provides promising and established researchers with an **opportunity to disseminate their work, share their ideas**, and foment **Global North-South interactions** between academics and policymakers aiming to foster a global network. It thus contributes to strengthening their capacity and professional visibility.

Moreover, the conference offers new, **Southern perspectives on sustainable development issues** mostly debated in high-income countries and reinforces cooperation and development effectiveness.

WHY THIS CONFERENCE?

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, growth, or tackling climate change.[1]

The focus on this topic is motivated by a few observations and alarming data and developments:

1. Nature is closely related to health, food, water, disaster prevention, wellbeing, economic development and, of course, the environment and climate change. It has been degrading at a faster pace than ever before. Biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation have widely been recognised and yet the last set of global targets, agreed in 2010 in Aichi (Japan)[2], 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 last Biodiversity COP in Montreal and the landmark new

1 Dasgupta, P., Levin, S., 2023, Economic Factors Underlying Biodiversity Loss
2 Convention on Biological Diversity, 2010, Aichi Biodiversity Targets

Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)[3], as well as the more recent high seas treaty, 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: *"The biosphere, upon which humanity as a whole depends, is being altered to an unparalleled degree across all spatial scales. (…) Nature can be conserved, restored and used sustainably while other global societal goals are simultaneously met through urgent and concerted efforts fostering transformative change. The direct drivers of change in nature with the largest global impact have been (starting with those with the most impact) changes in land and sea use, direct exploitation of organisms, climate change, pollution and invasion of alien species. Those five direct drivers result from an array of underlying causes, the indirect drivers of change, which are, in turn, underpinned by social values and behaviours (…) The rate of change in the direct and indirect drivers differs among regions and countries."*[4]

3. More than half of the world's **Gross Domestic Product (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 GDP 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.

4. At the same time, there seems to be broader recognition that the interactions between environmental, 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. There is increasing mainstreaming of the biodiversity agenda. The implementation of the recently agreed **30x30 target** 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.

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 organisation like GDN and its conference partners are 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 Convention on Biological Diversity Secretariat, 2022, Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

4 Brondizio, E.S., Settele, J., Díaz, S. and Ngo, H.T., 2019, Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

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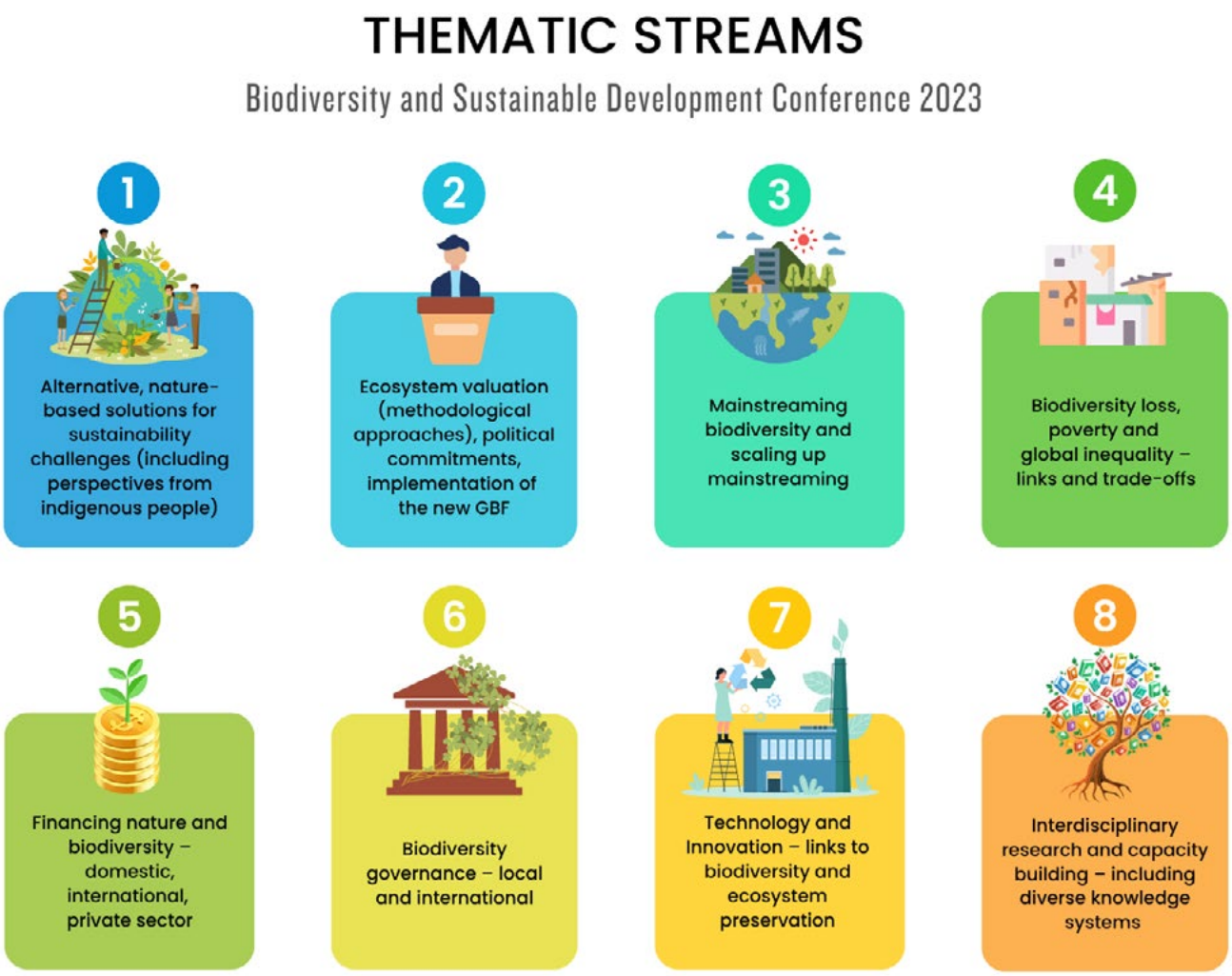
GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE 2023: AN OVERVIEW

GDN's 23rd Global Development Conference (GDC) took place from **October 31 – November 1, 2023** in **Quito, Ecuador** on the theme of **Biodiversity and Sustainable Development** that drew experts, researchers, and practitioners from various fields, across the globe to come together and share their knowledge, experience, and insights on the crucial issues of biodiversity and development. It was organised in collaboration with **Universidad San Francisco de Quito (USFQ)** and **Future Earth** at the university campus of USFQ.

This fully hybrid conference was attended by **357 participants** from around the world - 161 in-person and 196 online, from 70 countries including Ecuador. Given that one of GDN's primary objectives is to increase the involvement of women researchers and scientists, we welcomed around **165 women participants** (46% of total participation)!

The speakers included representatives from United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); Conservation International, Ecuador; Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); WWF-Ecuador; African Development Bank (ADB); Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (IISUNAM); Trade, Development and the Environment Hub (TRADE Hub); Municipality of Quito; Fundación Bunge y Born, Argentina; The Nature Conservancy; The World Bank; Inter-American Development Bank (IDB); Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI), and more.

Of all the speakers (including those in Plenary and Parallel sessions), **70% were from Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs)**. The conference proposed to address the following thematic streams:



PARTNERS AND FUNDERS

The conference was organised in collaboration with **Universidad San Francisco de Quito (USFQ)** and **Future Earth** and supported by **Agence Française de Développement**; the **French Ministry for the Economy, Finance and the Recovery**; the **Hewlett Foundation**; and the **World Bank**.

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THE CONFERENCE IN WORDS

Biodiversity and Sustainable Development: The Agenda for Science and Policy

The threat of climate change to development is now widely understood: less recognised is the impact of the biodiversity crisis. The 2023 Global Development Conference highlighted the ecological foundation of our economies, livelihoods, and well-being. It demonstrated the crucial role of effective collaboration among various sectors of society in identifying "nature-positive" solutions for sustainable development.

"Truly sustainable economic growth and development means recognising that our long-term prosperity relies on rebalancing our demand of nature's goods and services with its capacity to supply them. It also means accounting fully for the impact of our interactions with nature across all levels of society."

With these powerful words, **Partha Dasgupta** of the University of Cambridge launched his independent review of the economics of biodiversity, commissioned by the UK Government and published in 2021. In a similar way to the Stern Review of 15 years earlier, which warned of the costs of inaction on climate change, Dasgupta's final report explores the dangers of biodiversity loss – declines in the variety and abundance of species and ecosystems – and what can be done to preserve the ecological underpinnings of our economies, livelihoods and well-being.

The Dasgupta Review was published before the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in December 2022, which culminated in a new international agreement. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), agreed at COP15, spells out a plan to preserve nature and make sure it is a long-term engine of jobs and growth that also reduces carbon emissions.

Key commitments include, by 2030, to:

- protect 30% of the Earth's lands, oceans, coastal areas and inland waters – the '30x30' aspiration
- reduce the annual government subsidies that encourage environmentally wasteful activities by $500 billion
- cut food waste by half

The 2023 Global Development Conference focused on what these ambitions mean for public policy, business practices and civil society. The meeting, which brought together researchers, policymakers and practitioners from diverse backgrounds around the world, especially the Global South, was organised with Future Earth and hosted by the Universidad San Francisco de Quito, Ecuador. This location felt particularly appropriate given Ecuador's status as one of the world's megadiverse countries – those that harbour the majority of the Earth's species and a high number of which are endemic.

THE CHALLENGE OF BIODIVERSITY LOSS FOR DEVELOPMENT

The Earth is experiencing a dangerous decline in nature as a result of human activity. According to the **Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), one million species of flora and fauna – almost a quarter of the global total – are threatened with extinction due to deforestation, habitat loss, overexploitation, pollution and climate change.**

This loss of biodiversity has far-reaching consequences, including the disruption of ecosystem services, such as pollination, soil regeneration and carbon sequestration, which are critical for human well-being.

But a change of direction is possible. As **Odile Conchou** of the Agence Française de Développement said opening one of the conference plenaries, the GBF has set the path to ***"a world living in harmony with nature by 2050"*** and now it is time to act. That requires local, national and global cooperation among public policymakers, the private sector and civil society.

Adequate financing is essential to ensure protection of biodiversity, conservation of ecosystems and to avoid excessive depletion of natural capital (the world's stock of natural assets). It is also critical for the alignment of these goals with the other objectives of sustainable development: tackling poverty, inequality and climate change.

POVERTY, INEQUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Several conference sessions focused on the links and possible trade-offs between biodiversity loss, climate change, poverty and global inequality. For example, **Luciano Andriamaro** of Conservation International, Madagascar, noted that **many communities depend on the ecosystem services which are being altered by the climate crisis, and that resource exploitation is also causing biodiversity loss**. And **Deshni Pillay** of the South African National Biodiversity Institute looked at the **benefits of maintaining her country's ecological infrastructures, which have the potential to create jobs and improve food and water security**.

Independent consultant **Ivan Borja** described the need to **raise agricultural productivity in Ecuador**. This will not only increase farmers' incomes, but also discourage the further loss of natural forests that harms both the climate and biodiversity. **Hajer Kratou** of

Ajman University took a more macro perspective, exploring the **effects of biodiversity loss on inequality in 60 countries over a 25-year period**. Her analysis confirms the devastating impact of deforestation on the access to food and water for the most vulnerable communities.

Food systems and the balance between production and conservation were discussed at length during the conference, including in a conversation between **Jyotsna Puri** of the International Fund for Agricultural Development and **Elena Lazos Chavero** of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico. They emphasised the **importance of putting biodiversity concerns at the heart of the agriculture and fisheries sectors** and, in particular, the **need to address the one-third of food production that goes to waste, largely in the Global North**. There are difficult issues here around ownership of land and production, when one-third of food is produced by smallholders and the rest by transnational corporations.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Another recurring theme at the conference was the importance of working with local communities, including **indigenous peoples who constitute 5% of the world's population** but live in the places that encompass **80% of the world's biodiversity**. **Girma Kelboro Mensuro** of the University of Bonn argued that in the tropics, people and nature ***"belong together"*** and interact more closely. For indigenous communities, he explained, biodiversity is more than a source of resources: it is also their history and belonging – ***"culture defines nature and nature affects culture."***

How to respond in terms of policy-making is a challenge. **Laila Thomaz Sandroni** of the Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research pointed out that although ***'indigenous peoples and local communities'*** are cited 16 times in the GBF, their **inclusion is based in policies that are often led by other actors and institutions**. The framework, she added, reflects increasing awareness, but it does not contemplate entirely changing pre-existing power asymmetries: the main instruments to protect 30x30 are the same ones that have produced injustices in the past.

Marla Emery, co-chair of the **IPBES assessment report on the sustainable use of wild species**, cited an example of the potential conflicts between scientific solutions to environmental threats, and the livelihoods of indigenous peoples. **Wind turbines built in Norway on the ancestral lands of the Sami people** have become a huge controversy, setting demand for renewable energy against the rights of reindeer herders to preserve their culture.

TARGETS AND MEASUREMENT

Among the GBF's key elements are **four goals for 2050** and **23 targets for 2030**. In world affairs, these now sit alongside the net-zero commitments of the Paris Agreement on climate change, and the **169 targets of the Sustainable Development Goals**.

Whether such targets are an effective way to make change happen was heavily debated at the conference. The balance of opinion seemed to be that they are a *"necessary evil."* **Vanessa Ushie** of the African Development Bank suggested that they enable a

global coordination effort: ***"we need more research, knowledge and engagement from different actors in society, and integrated targets might help the private sector to understand."*** Plenty of other systems of measurement might also prove useful for addressing biodiversity loss. One is the **International Union for Conservation of Nature's Global Ecosystem Typology**, which aims to identify the ecosystems that are most critical for biodiversity conservation, research, management and human well-being. Another, introduced by Alison Fairbrass of the University College London, assesses countries' performance on ***"strong environmental sustainability."*** This measure is based on scientific standards that represent the situation at which natural capital can maintain its functions over time.

An overarching theme of discussions around all these targets and measures was the need to address a continued failure to value nature in a way that has a real impact on human behaviour. As an August 2023 **article in Nature** began, ***"Twenty-five years since foundational publications on valuing ecosystem services for human well-being, addressing the global biodiversity crisis still implies confronting barriers to incorporating nature's diverse values into decision-making."***

This problem was central to Partha Dasgupta's review. He argued that gross domestic product is no longer fit for purpose when it comes to judging the economic health of nations. It is, he concluded, based on a faulty application of economics that does not include depreciation of assets, such as the degradation of the biosphere.

At the conference, **Simon Levin** of Princeton University and Dasgupta's co-author of a recent study of economic factors underpinning biodiversity loss, talked about ***"inclusive wealth."*** This concept encompasses not just physical and human capital but natural capital too. And it not only considers natural capital's total stock, but also its distribution across humanity – while recognising that ***"we are embedded in Nature."*** It can be used to identify the institutional reforms that need to be introduced to manage global public goods, such as the oceans, the atmosphere and tropical rainforests.

Dasgupta and Levin's conclusion serves as a call to action: ***"Humanity's embeddedness in nature has far-reaching implications for the way we should view human activities – in households, communities, nations, and the world."*** It was a theme that echoed throughout the conference and in the closing remarks by GDN President, **Jean-Louis Arcand**.

Arcand urged continued collaboration to achieve ***"nature-positive"* development**. This has to happen at all levels: between the public and private sectors, local and global perspectives, the natural and social sciences, and between researchers and policy-makers.

Getting Nature-Based Solutions into the Mainstream in the Urban Century

Efforts to reverse biodiversity loss are critical in cities to which people increasingly flock in pursuit of better lives. *"Nature-based solutions"* offer the means to preserve nature in urban environments, whilst also combating pollution, climate change, poverty and inequality. But as speakers at the 2023 Global Development Conference explained, these solutions need to be brought firmly into the mainstream of public policy, business practices and civil society discussions.

"In a world where cities are growing and expanding at an unprecedented rate, it becomes increasingly clear that we must make strategic investments in green urbanisation to ensure a sustainable future… To keep our cities healthy, clean and prospering, biodiversity must be a priority and financing must follow."

These are the words of **David Cooper**, acting executive secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, on World Cities Day in October 2023. His call to action coincided with his appearance at the 2023 Global Development Network conference in Quito, Ecuador, where researchers, policy-makers and practitioners from diverse backgrounds came together to discuss the threat that the loss of the variety and abundance of species and ecosystems poses to sustainable development. A central focus of the event was the potential of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which seeks to drive actions that will protect 30% of the Earth's lands, oceans, coastal areas and inland waters by 2030, and achieve *"a world living in harmony with nature by 2050."*

In the context of the urban environments, in which two-thirds of the global population are likely to live by mid-century, the key to delivering on the latter objective lies in *"nature-based solutions."* These elements of green infrastructure might include trees, plants, wetlands, parks and open spaces that generate oxygen, take in carbon, mitigate air pollution, absorb rainfall and provide wildlife habitat. In general, they promote both a healthy environment and the well-being of inhabitants.

This blog presents key policy lessons from the GDN conference on how to bring nature-based solutions into the mainstream and our cities for a more sustainable future.

URBAN FUTURES

The importance of preserving species and ecosystems is not just an issue about oceans and tropical rainforests. At the opening plenary of the conference, **Thomas Elmqvist** of Stockholm University noted an emerging consensus: in our *"urban century,"* the **health of the Earth depends on the coexistence of rapidly growing cities and the natural world**.

One strategy for guiding cities towards the goal of conserving nature for biodiversity and human well-being is to facilitate a planning process based on positive visions for urban

systems among stakeholders. Elmquist outlined the **Urban Nature Futures Framework**, a way of developing alternative visions and scenarios for the management of nature in cities based on three sets of values.

First, there is ***"urban nature for nature."*** This is based on the intrinsic values of biodiversity and supports, for example, the rewilding of urban parks with native species. Second, there is ***"urban nature for society,"*** which is based on utilitarian values of what is best for human well-being and which encourages nature-based solutions, such as green infrastructure, green roofs and artificial wetlands to improve climate, air and water quality, and physical and mental well-being. And third, there is ***"urban nature as culture."*** Based on relational values – the values of interactions between people and nature, and those among individuals in society – this is manifested in parks, botanical gardens and urban agriculture, and is celebrated in festivals and art.

MAINSTREAMING BIODIVERSITY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Several GDN conference sessions focused on the need to broaden discussions on the values and benefits of nature to as wide an audience as possible and at all levels of society, from local to global. **Gabriel Quijandría** of the International Union for Conservation of Nature explained that such ***"mainstreaming"*** means **integrating biodiversity considerations into decision-making processes and policies in key areas like poverty reduction, climate change mitigation, and trade and international cooperation**. It also applies to sector-specific plans in agriculture, fisheries, forestry, mining, energy, tourism and transport.

But as many participants recognised, mainstreaming is a complex and challenging task. It might range from talking to local communities about the **importance of river dolphins in the food chains and freshwater ecosystems of Ecuador** – as described by **Jessica Pacheco** of WWF-Ecuador – to persuading international investors of the **benefits of investing in bonds, trust funds and other financial instruments promoting conservation** – as referred to by **Camilo Santa** of the Inter-American Development Bank.

The OECD has produced a ***"blueprint for action"*** on biodiversity mainstreaming, the central message of which is for governments to ***"establish a strong social and business case."*** That proposes a **national assessment of ecosystem services and their full social benefits**, including monetary values, where feasible, and a database of evidence on the drivers, pressures and state of biodiversity. The report also recommends developing targeted messages for stakeholders and working together to identify solutions, an idea that was echoed repeatedly during the conference.

RESEARCH, POLICY AND EDUCATION

Bridging the gap between research and policy is a core GDN objective – and there was much discussion at the conference about how this can be achieved most effectively in the areas of the biodiversity crisis and sustainable development. As ever, there is a need for more research. The natural sciences need to keep improving our understanding of ecosystems and the social sciences need to show us how human behaviour, social

structures and institutions influence conservation efforts – and how to build capacity for research and policy impact in low- and middle-income countries.

All agreed that a huge educational effort is needed, not just with students and the general public, but with policy-makers. **Gabriel Quijandría** highlighted a key challenge of mainstreaming the environment and biodiversity in public policies: ***"When you discuss the proposals with a cabinet of decision-makers in the public sector, no one goes against the idea of protecting biodiversity. The problem lies in implementing the proposals. The idea of approaching the issue is limited by the budgets, the bureaucracy and the idea of changing things."***

But there is hope of change. The words of **Carolina Rosero Cordero** of Conservation International Ecuador in the opening plenary offer a suitable call to action: ***"We need to be ambitious and dedicated, and collaborate across all sectors to address biodiversity and development issues. And we all need to work together – non-governmental organisations, business enterprises, academia, civil society organisations and governments, while integrating indigenous people and communities into policy-making and implementation."***

Preserving Biodiversity: Trade and Finance for Nature-Positive Development

Businesses and financial institutions face serious risks around biodiversity loss: not only do they depend on nature's resources, they are also seen as responsible for extensive damage to the environment. The 2023 Global Development Conference explored the implications of biodiversity loss for the private sector, highlighting the critical need for guidance to shift its focus to *"nature-positive"* development.

What can be done to address the global biodiversity crisis and deliver *"nature-positive"* solutions for sustainable development? This was the central theme of the 2023 Global Development Network (GDN) conference. Researchers, policymakers and practitioners from across the world came together at the event in Quito, Ecuador, to discuss this conundrum – and potential solutions.

Advocating dramatic action to address potentially devastating losses of flora and fauna might rely on a moral case about respect for species and the intricate relationships between them. We are all part of that global ecosystem, after all. It might equally focus on self-interest, however. The natural world provides numerous essential ecological services, including food, medicine and clean water, without which humanity would be in dire straits.

The latter argument should certainly work well with private sector organisations, which increasingly need to account for both their impact on the natural world and their reliance on its resources in the form of raw materials and other inputs for production processes. The material risks to business that are associated with biodiversity loss are a critical matter for both companies and investors.

What's more, emerging evidence not only shows that ***"biodiversity risk"* affects the prices of privately issued financial assets, such as equities**, research also suggests that it hurts sovereign credit ratings in places where ***"partial ecosystems collapse"*** has harmed fisheries, tropical timber production and wild pollination. **Financial markets are no longer ignoring nature**.

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

One sector with a particularly substantial impact on nature is food and agriculture. As the **World Bank** notes, *"**it is the foundation of food security, yet extremely vulnerable to climate change and a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions as well as habitat and biodiversity loss.**"* Managing the trade-offs between ecological conservation and providing enough for everyone to eat is one of the big challenges for nature-positive development.

The GDN conference featured a plenary session on balancing production and conservation goals, at which **Jyotsna Puri** of the International Fund for Agricultural Development said: ***"We are already producing enough food for ten billion people, and the food industry***

contributes to a third of carbon emissions. We need to rethink the food production system to treat nature in its own right." **Elena Lazos Chavero** of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico added: ***"What we have to bring in the discussion of sustainable agriculture, food security and biodiversity is food justice and social equity."***

But is Big Food doing enough for sustainability? No, suggests the latest **Food and Agriculture Benchmark** from the World Benchmarking Alliance which ranks the 350 most influential companies in the sector on their environmental, nutritional and social impact. According to the data, the **vast majority of companies fail to recognise their responsibility to protect the Earth and feed the world's population in an equitable way**.

TRADE

International trade is another key area for trade-offs. **Trade can exacerbate biodiversity degradation, but it also has the potential to support conservation, sustainable use and restoration**. Leading a session on nature-positive trade for sustainable development, **Marianne Kettunen** of TRADE Hub said that **international cooperation and the alignment of trade policies with environmental regulations, removal of harmful subsidies and promotion of sustainable practices can help to address the biodiversity crisis**.

A report for the **UN Environment Programme** remarks that the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), adopted in December 2022, provides a fresh reference point for the relevance of trade policy to the biodiversity agenda. The increasing focus on the environment and sustainable development at the World Trade Organisation

also presents an opportunity to discuss where trade policy could support delivery of the agenda – and align it to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals – with sustainable trade as part of the solution.

FINANCE

What about interactions between nature and the financial system? As with climate change in recent years, biodiversity loss is increasingly recognised as a source of financial risk that may threaten financial stability. It thus falls within the mandates of central banks and financial supervisors. A report from the **Network for Greening the Financial System** recommends that these public authorities start to assess the degree to which financial systems are exposed to the risk, by **developing biodiversity-related scenario analysis and stress tests, and dashboards of biodiversity metrics**.

The report also calls for ***"the necessary financial architecture for mobilising investment for a biodiversity-positive economy."*** This challenge was extensively discussed at the conference, including reference to the ***"Summit on a New Global Financial Pact"*** convened in Paris by **President Macron** in June 2023. Its aim was "to lay the foundations for a renewed international financial system, creating the conditions for a financing breakthrough so that no country has to choose between reducing poverty, combating climate change and preserving biodiversity."

A key part of the financing agenda is creating new classes of nature-positive assets. These were discussed at a conference plenary on financing biodiversity conservation. **Camilo Santa** of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) cited a number of examples, including **Ecuador's *"debt-for-nature"* swap**, which involves selling ***"blue bonds"*** that will **funnel money into conservation of the Galapagos Islands**, one of the world's most precious ecosystems. This Ecuadorian case may be a model for other highly indebted but nature-rich countries. The IDB has also helped countries, such as Colombia and Costa Rica, to develop post-pandemic recovery strategies based on natural capital.

THE WAY FORWARD

The ultimate aim of all these projects and programs around biodiversity and sustainable development is to support a shift in global financial flows away **from nature-negative outcomes and toward nature-positive outcomes**. As was broadly agreed by participants at the GDN conference, that must involve **a combination of public and private sector initiatives**, as well as a **variety of carrots and sticks to encourage the required changes** in individual and collective human behaviour.

Much can be learned from our response to the threat of climate change. For example, the **Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures**, which galvanised corporate reporting on climate risks, has inspired the **Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD)**. The latter describes itself as ***"a market-led, science-based and government-backed initiative providing organisations with the tools to act on evolving nature-related issues."*** The TNFD has issued detailed guidance for business and finance on how to integrate nature into decision-making.

Governments are also beginning to draw lessons from the response to climate change by providing funding for nature conservation - for example, in **Brazil's National Green Growth Program** and the **European Green Deal**. And representing more of a stick than a carrot is the European Union's (EU) proposed nature restoration law. As with previous EU legislation to tackle climate change, this law would establish legally binding targets for forest, marine, urban and agricultural ecosystems.

Such initiatives effectively constitute self-imposed pressure on governments to deliver on conservation objectives – and they, in turn, will put pressure on the private sector and society as a whole.

In the end, the case for biodiversity protection can be made on the basis of the economic, social and health benefits of nature. **Nature-positive development is good for both people and the planet.**

These three articles were authored by Romesh Vaitilingam and originally published on GDN's GlobalDev Blog.

PHOTO CONTEST

The 2023 conference took a creative route by organising a photography contest titled, **'Biodiversity and Sustainable Development Through the Lens'**, in partnership with **WWF- Ecuador**. The contest invited photographs from enthusiasts, biologists, scientists, and naturalists from LMICs. We received **201 entries from 15 countries**, with each entry offering a unique perspective on the interconnection between biological diversity and human well-being. Spanning contest categories like **Biodiversity Loss, Preserving Biodiversity, Climate Change Impact** and **Drone-based Photography**, these captivating images ranged from celebrations of the diversity of life on planet Earth to poignant reflections on the impacts of human action and climate change.

The stunning photographs were exhibited at the conference venue in Quito. As attendees strolled through the conference venue, they were transported into a visual narrative that spoke volumes about the beauty, fragility, and urgency of conserving our planet's biodiversity. The photo exhibition emerged as one of the top-rated activities of the conference, captivating speakers and participants alike with its powerful storytelling and artistic expression.

Our Partner

We are honoured to have collaborated with **WWF-Ecuador** and deeply appreciate their dedication to advancing the cause of conservation through innovative initiatives like ours. We extend our heartfelt gratitude for their generous sponsorship of the photo exhibition and their unwavering commitment towards promoting activities that raise awareness about biodiversity conservation. Their support not only made the exhibition possible but also provided the prize for the winning entry.

WINNING ENTRY

A Life Cycle in the Marine World

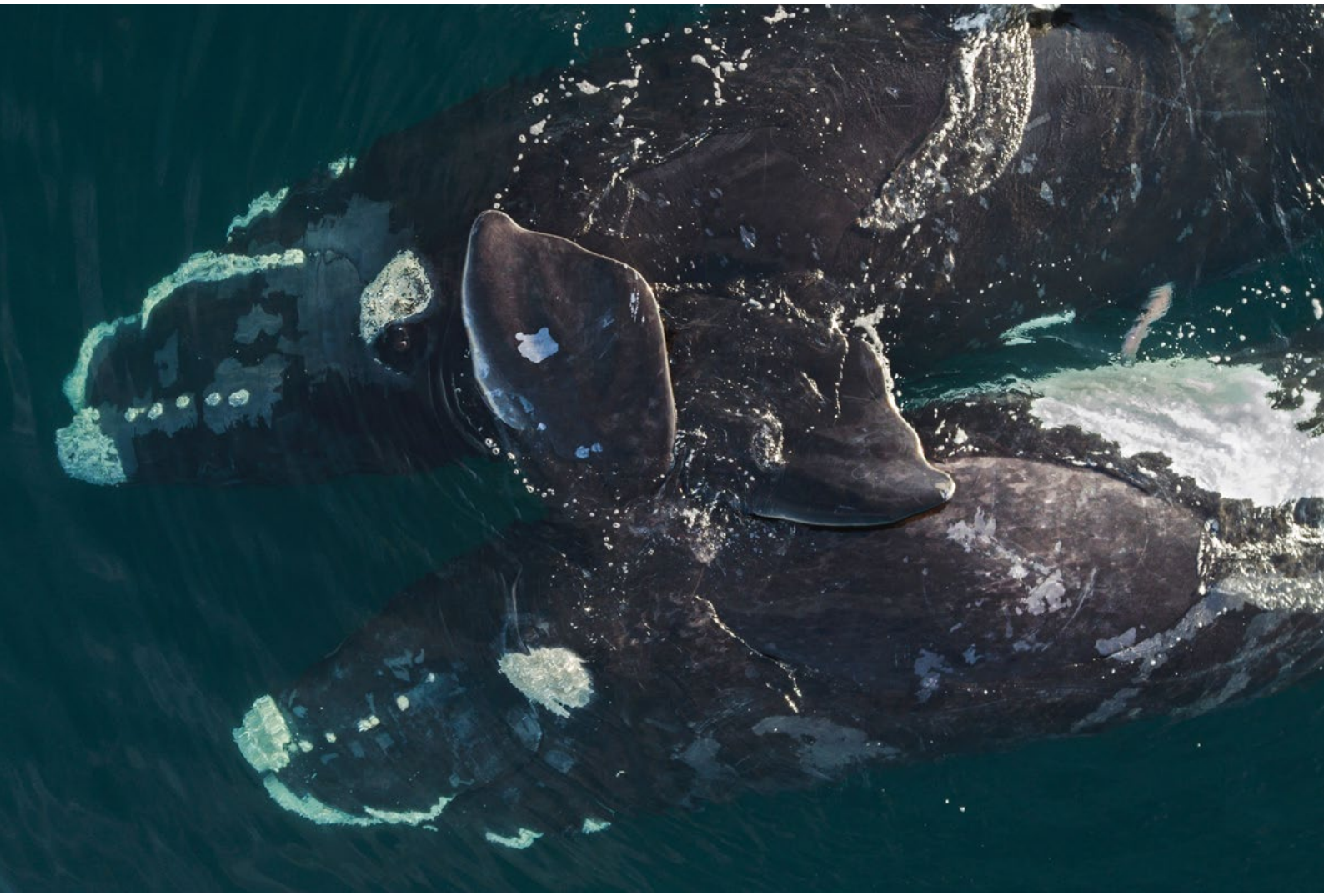
PHOTOGRAPHER: Santiago Sainz-Trápaga | Argentina

PRIZE: FIRST

CATEGORY: Drone-based photography

DESCRIPTION: A majestic dead whale has washed ashore, and petrels feed on the feast it provides for weeks. This scene reflects the crucial interdependence of species in marine ecosystems, where the death of a gigantic creature like the whale triggers a celebration of life for other species. This symbiosis highlights the importance of biodiversity and the vital role played by scavenger species in preventing waste accumulation and reintroducing essential nutrients into the food chain, thereby contributing to the balance and health of ecosystems.

FINALIST ENTRIES



Love is in the Ocean

PHOTOGRAPHER: Santiago Sainz-Trápaga | Argentina

PRIZE: SECOND

CATEGORY: Drone-based photography

DESCRIPTION: The image captures an emotional moment of love in the vast expanse of the ocean: two majestic Southern right whales mating. Their colossal bodies intertwined in an aquatic dance reflect the profound bond between these marine giants. This union symbolises love in marine life and the generation of new lives in the ocean, reminding us of the importance of preserving and safeguarding these crucial moments in nature. Each new whale that will come will be a gift from the sea for the future of our oceans.

The Gold is More Precious than the Nangaritza River

PHOTOGRAPHER: Fabián Castillo | Ecuador

PRIZE: THIRD

CATEGORY: Drone-based photography

DESCRIPTION: Currently, informal miners, supposedly legal with permits from ARCOM and the Ministry of Environment, do and undo with the life of the Nangaritza River whatever they please, in the province of Zamora Chinchipe. However, for the authorities there is no contamination.

Geoffroy´s Cats Fate

PHOTOGRAPHER: Santiago Sainz-Trápaga | Argentina

PRIZE: FIRST

CATEGORY: Biodiversity Loss

DESCRIPTION: In the rural regions of South America, the tradition of hanging dead animals on the fences of fields reflects the relationship between rural communities and the land. However, it can also contribute to biodiversity loss. Displaying felines as trophies involves hunting and poses a threat to their populations. Furthermore, by acting as a barrier to other animals, this practice disrupts ecological processes and challenges biological diversity, ultimately disturbing the natural balance and impacting wildlife in the region over the long term.

When the Earth Burns

PHOTOGRAPHER: Santiago Sainz-Trápaga | Argentina

PRIZE: SECOND

CATEGORY: Biodiversity Loss

DESCRIPTION: Lifeless. This is the outcome of forest fires and a poignant example of how our actions can trigger biodiversity loss. Forest fires disrupt natural habitats, obliterate vegetation, and endanger wildlife, thus contributing to the decline in biological diversity. This image serves as a reminder of the urgent need to preserve natural ecosystems and take responsible actions to safeguard the fauna and flora that rely on them.

Involution

PHOTOGRAPHER: Fabricio Pozo Paredes | Ecuador

PRIZE: THIRD

CATEGORY: Biodiversity Loss

DESCRIPTION: Al descender de la reserva entre el medio de variedad de flora y un aire puro, se deja ver el avance del ser humano sobre la tierra. La deforestación en varios sectores avanza, por ser reserva no se ve afectada, a diferencia de sus alrededores donde aun existen frailejones y una gran variedad de fauna y flora que ya se ve amenazada por el ser humano.

Let's Walk on the Beach

PHOTOGRAPHER: Santiago Sainz-Trápaga | Argentina

PRIZE: FIRST

CATEGORY: Preserving Biodiversity

DESCRIPTION: During the COVID-19 pandemic, residents of Puerto Madryn were prohibited from going to the beach. As a result, some flamingos began to appear, finding food in the intertidal area and moving freely to choose a new feeding site, which they continue to use today. The image reflects a respite that humans inadvertently granted to biodiversity, without interfering with their daily behaviour, and serves as a reminder of a challenging period in human history.

Nature's Architect

PHOTOGRAPHER: Mahesh Kamalakshan Pillai | India

PRIZE: SECOND

CATEGORY: Preserving Biodiversity

DESCRIPTION: The monsoons are when the baya weaver (*Ploceus philippinus*) breeds and raises its families, hence the monsoons are when its biological clock runs. Gaining a woman's favour might be a struggle for a male baya weaver. He needs to impress her with his "architectural" skills in order to gain the go-ahead. If she takes Le Corbusier's meticulousness to the evaluation, bad luck for him. The number of baya weavers, once widespread throughout India, is now progressively declining as grasslands are being lost and transformed into landscapes dominated by humans.

Before the Sun Sets

PHOTOGRAPHER: Santiago Sainz-Trápaga | Argentina

PRIZE: THIRD

CATEGORY: Preserving Biodiversity

DESCRIPTION: Its plumage, bathed in light, shines with a tranquil beauty as it dries. This poignant moment reminds us of the fragility of wildlife. In an increasingly vulnerable world, the solitude of this creature underscores the critical importance of conserving and safeguarding marine and coastal ecosystems. Each penguin represents a valuable piece in the biodiversity puzzle, and capturing this moment urges us to care for wildlife and its environment with renewed appreciation and urgency.

Vestiges

PHOTOGRAPHER: Paula Taraborelli | Argentina

PRIZE: FIRST

CATEGORY: Climate Change Impact

DESCRIPTION: When I went to visit the Ansenuza National Park (Córdoba, Argentina), northeast of the province of Córdoba, I found two very different scenarios. On the one hand, the beauty of the flamingos, their pinks, their whites in an immense blue. But then I came across the consequences of the great drought that has been hitting Argentina as a result of human hand, of land clearing. This drought deeply affected the levels of the lagoon, the level dropped greatly and has exposed 400 meters of extension from the coast.

Guayaquil Vulnerable to Climate Change

PHOTOGRAPHER: Fernanda Cortez | Ecuador

PRIZE: SECOND

CATEGORY: Climate Change Impact

DESCRIPTION: Con la pérdida de sus ecosistemas naturales como bosque seco, manglar, la ciudad de Guayaquil, se encuentra altamente vulnerable a sufrir los impactos del cambio climático, como aumentos de temperatura, subida del nivel del mar, nula protección costera, inundaciones, entre otros. Por ello, la importancia de preservar las áreas naturales protegidas y procurar más mecanismos como solución basada en la naturaleza para mitigar los efectos del cambio climático en las ciudades.

Calm

PHOTOGRAPHER: Anshu Gupta | India

PRIZE: THIRD

CATEGORY: Climate Change Impact

DESCRIPTION: Kashmir Floods, 2014. Lying in the Indus valley, the northern states of India are blessed by the flows of five rivers. Kashmir which lies in the northern end of the region witnessed unexpected rainfall in 2014 triggering floods in the Jhelum and Chenab rivers. Its capital city, Srinagar was mostly submerged. The infrastructure of the region, where several localities are built at a lower ground level served as the biggest challenge, as even when machines pumped out the water, it inadvertently came back. Thus, the region stayed submerged until the river and flood water receded by itself.

THE JURY

Adriana Claudia Sanz

Her passion for this activity has led her to actively work with organisations related to nature photography (such as the Argentine Association of Nature Photographers 'AFONA', Portfolio Natural, Nature First), participate in conferences, serve as a judge in photography contests, engage in exhibitions, and take part in activities promoting books and magazines. She was the winner of the Animal Portrait category in the Golden Turtle and Nature Photographers of the Year (NPOTY) contests in 2020, received the MontPhoto biennial scholarship in 2021, was awarded an Honourable Mention in the Biodiversity category of the Memorial María Luisa Contest in 2022, and received an Honourable Mention in the Artistic category of ASFÉRICO in 2023.

Juan Manuel González Villa

Dedicated to working and studying reptiles and amphibians, wildlife photographer, guide for photographic expeditions, president, and co-founder of Turipache Wildlife Expeditions S.A. Wildlife photographer whose work has been published in national and international media, including National Geographic, Discovery Channel, and European magazines like *Anima Mundi* from Italy, the book *The Best of Nature Photography in Mexico*, *Natural Wealth of Mexico* in 2020, 2021, and 2022, and other books about Mexican fauna. His work has been featured on the cover of the scientific journal *Journal of Zoology* and the book *Sea Turtle Research and Conservation*, as well as in various scientific publications.

Estefanía a Charvet

Estefanía Charvet is Director of Programmes and Research at Southern Voice where she leads the design and implementation of research initiatives. Before joining Southern Voice, Estefania worked for research organisations and think tanks in South America and Europe. She was responsible for conducting research on political inclusion, gender, participation, and accountability. Estefanía holds a Master in Development Studies from the Graduate Institute Geneva and a Bachelor in Economics from the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador.

Anaid Simone

Founding member and president of the ECUSLV Foundation, a manager of socio-environmental projects and humanitarian aid. Director of the educational campaign 'Ecuador Saves Life' and scientific advisor for the book *SOS Ecuador: Endangered Animals* (a campaign that reached over 540,000 students nationwide). With studies in biological sciences in the fields of mammalogy, herpetology, and bio-speleology; specialised in research and environmental education.

CONFERENCE TEAM

João Costa	Conference Director
Dinesh Thapa	Conference Coordinator
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Rajesh Sharma	IT Manager
Stephania Cajero	Social Media Manager
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Dominic Massey	Travel and Administrative Officer
Catherine Otayek	GlobalDev Blog Manager
Bridget Blake	Global Communications Manager, Future Earth


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78% PARTICIPANTS FROM LMICS

70% SPEAKERS FROM LMICS

17 SESSIONS

3 BLOG POSTS

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