

Global Development Conference on

**Biodiversity**

and

**Sustainable Development**



OCTOBER 31 – NOVEMBER 1, 2023 | QUITO, ECUADOR

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## CONFERENCE CONCEPT NOTE

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*The Global Development Conference is the Global Development Network's (GDN) flagship 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 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, it offers new, Southern perspectives on sustainable development issues mostly debated in high-income countries and reinforces cooperation and development effectiveness.*

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The 2023 Global Development Conference will be held in **Quito, Ecuador**, on **October 31 and November 1, 2023**, organized in partnership with [Universidad San Francisco de Quito](#) and [Future Earth](#).

While the conference will target a large contingent in person (up to 350 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 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 (CBD)** 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”.<sup>1</sup> Biodiversity and Sustainable Development are intrinsically linked, as the relevant literature has poignantly argued: “we are embedded in nature”.<sup>2</sup>

**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.<sup>3</sup>

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 recognized and yet the last set of global targets, agreed in 2010 in Aichi (Japan)<sup>4</sup>, 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 **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)**,<sup>5</sup> 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 behaviors** (...) The rate of change in the direct and indirect drivers differs among regions and countries”.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> UN, I. R. B., 1992, Convention on biological diversity. Treaty Collection.

<sup>2</sup> Dasgupta, P., 2021, The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review. Abridged Version.

<sup>3</sup> Dasgupta, P., Levin, S., 2023, Economic Factors Underlying Biodiversity Loss

<sup>4</sup> Convention on Biological Diversity, 2010, Aichi Biodiversity Targets

<sup>5</sup> Convention on Biological Diversity Secretariat, 2022, Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

<sup>6</sup> 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.

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 organization 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.

## THEMATIC STREAMS

Biodiversity and Sustainable Development Conference 2023



## Organization and Structure

The conference will last two days with an agenda to balance different models such as:

- (Dynamic) Plenary sessions and Keynotes by leaders in the field
- Parallel sessions
- Rapid fire presentation sessions of the latest research on biodiversity in developing countries
- Controversial plenary debate
- Poster sessions/activities (competitively selected)
- Expo with booths from the conference hosts, session organizers and sponsors
- Photo competition - *Biodiversity and Sustainable Development*
- Networking opportunities

The Agenda for the Conference is meant to be dynamic and with the contribution from all sectors with **two Call for Proposals** which will shape the event: 1) for research papers to be highlighted, and 2) for sessions to be integrated to the Conference.

*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 Organizing Committee and the final selection will be made by the Scientific Committee. Some of the proposals will be presented as research posters while the better ranked will present full papers.*

Key players on the topic such as the United Nations Environment Program, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the United Nations University – Institute for Environment and Human Security, the European Investment Bank, World Wide Fund for Nature, *Agence Française de Développement*, among others are part of the invitees to contribute papers, speakers, sessions, dedicated exhibits and/or side events.

## Scientific and Organizing Committees

A Scientific Committee has been constituted with leading figures in the field, which will help identify plenary speakers, validate the thematic focus and promote the event in their respective 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 also be speakers themselves at the conference.

The Organizing Committee is composed by representatives of the conference partners who will play the 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, **most of the participants will be from LMICs**. In previous conferences, participants have represented no fewer than **90 countries** and included Nobel prize laureates, high-level policymakers, and opinion leaders from around the world. 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.

## Conference Sponsorship



## About the Conference Organizers

### **Global Development Network**

The Global Development Network (GDN) is a public international organization that supports high quality, policy- oriented, social science research in LMICs, to promote better lives. 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 LMICs; multidisciplinary research cutting across economics and other social and natural sciences, including the ongoing **Biodiversity and Development Awards program**; as well as outreach activities.

### **Future Earth**

Future Earth is a global network of scientists, researchers, and innovators collaborating for a more sustainable planet. Our mission is to advance research in support of transformations to global sustainability. We exist to foster collaboration between researchers and stakeholders from all different regions, backgrounds, and sectors who are working to generate actionable, solutions-oriented knowledge to help transform toward societies that provide good and fair lives for all within a stable and resilient Earth system.

### **Universidad San Francisco de Quito (USFQ)**

Universidad San Francisco de Quito USFQ is a liberal-arts, private university located in Quito, Ecuador. It was the first totally private self-financed university in Ecuador and the first liberal-arts institution in the Andean region. USFQ's research agenda includes biodiversity, environmental management, and economics. A dedicated multidisciplinary research center in the Galapagos islands is dedicated to promoting the conservation of the fragile ecosystems of the islands and the development of the populations that inhabit them through integrated scientific research, education, and community support. USFQ will host the conference on its campus in Quito, Ecuador and liaise with relevant local stakeholders.