

Global Development Conference on

Biodiversity

and

Sustainable Development



OCTOBER 31 – NOVEMBER 1, 2023 | QUITO, ECUADOR

CONFERENCE CONCEPT NOTE

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 low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), which is its trademark. GDN's flagship event provides promising and established 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.

The 2023 Global Development Conference will focus on biodiversity and sustainable development, and it 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 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, growth, or tackling climate change.²

The choice 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. 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 last Biodiversity COP in Montreal and the landmark new 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. 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. “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 (IPBES, 2019).⁴
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.
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

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>

³ <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/e6d3/cd1d/daf663719a03902a9b116c34/cop-15-l-25-en.pdf>

⁴ 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>

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 target⁵ 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.

Conference Sub-themes

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

1. Alternative, nature-based solutions for sustainability challenges (including perspectives from indigenous people)
2. From ecosystem valuation (methodological approaches) and political commitments to implementation of the new GBF
3. Mainstreaming biodiversity and scaling up mainstreaming
4. Biodiversity loss, poverty and global inequality – links and trade-offs
5. Financing nature and biodiversity – domestic, international, private sector
6. Biodiversity governance – local and international
7. Technology and Innovation – links to biodiversity and ecosystem preservation
8. Interdisciplinary research & capacity building – including diverse knowledge systems

Organization and Structure

The conference will last two 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 booths from the conference hosts, session organizers and sponsors
- Art or essay competition by students on Nature in 2050
- Networking opportunities

⁵ <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/cop15-ends-landmark-biodiversity-agreement>.

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, WWF, 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 and Organizing Committees

A Scientific Committee has been constituted 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 is also being set up with 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, 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.

Conference Sponsorship

Conference sponsorship is sought at multiple levels:

- **Platinum sponsor: (US\$40,000):** Name listed on conference website. Acknowledgement given in opening and closing plenaries. Thanks for sponsorship on social media. Space

provided in Expo with a dedicated Booth. Possibility to have a 'Meet the sponsor...' session. One guaranteed parallel session in the program and a slot on one of the plenary sessions at no further charge, if desired.

- **Gold sponsor (US\$15,000):** Name listed on conference website. Acknowledgement given in opening or closing plenaries and on social media. Space provided in the Expo (physical or virtual booth). One guaranteed parallel session in the program, if desired.
- **Session sponsor (US\$4,000):** Name listed with the sponsored session. Space provided in the virtual Expo. One parallel session in the program (subject to acceptance).
- **Travel grants sponsorship** for LMIC researchers selected to present at the conference.

In kind sponsorship of the venue, IT equipment, translation, meals or a reception are also pursued. Sponsors are vetted by the Conference Organizing Committee.

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 Low- and Middle-Income Countries (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 LDCs; multidisciplinary research cutting across economics and other social and natural sciences, including an ongoing Biodiversity and Development Awards program; as well as outreach activities.

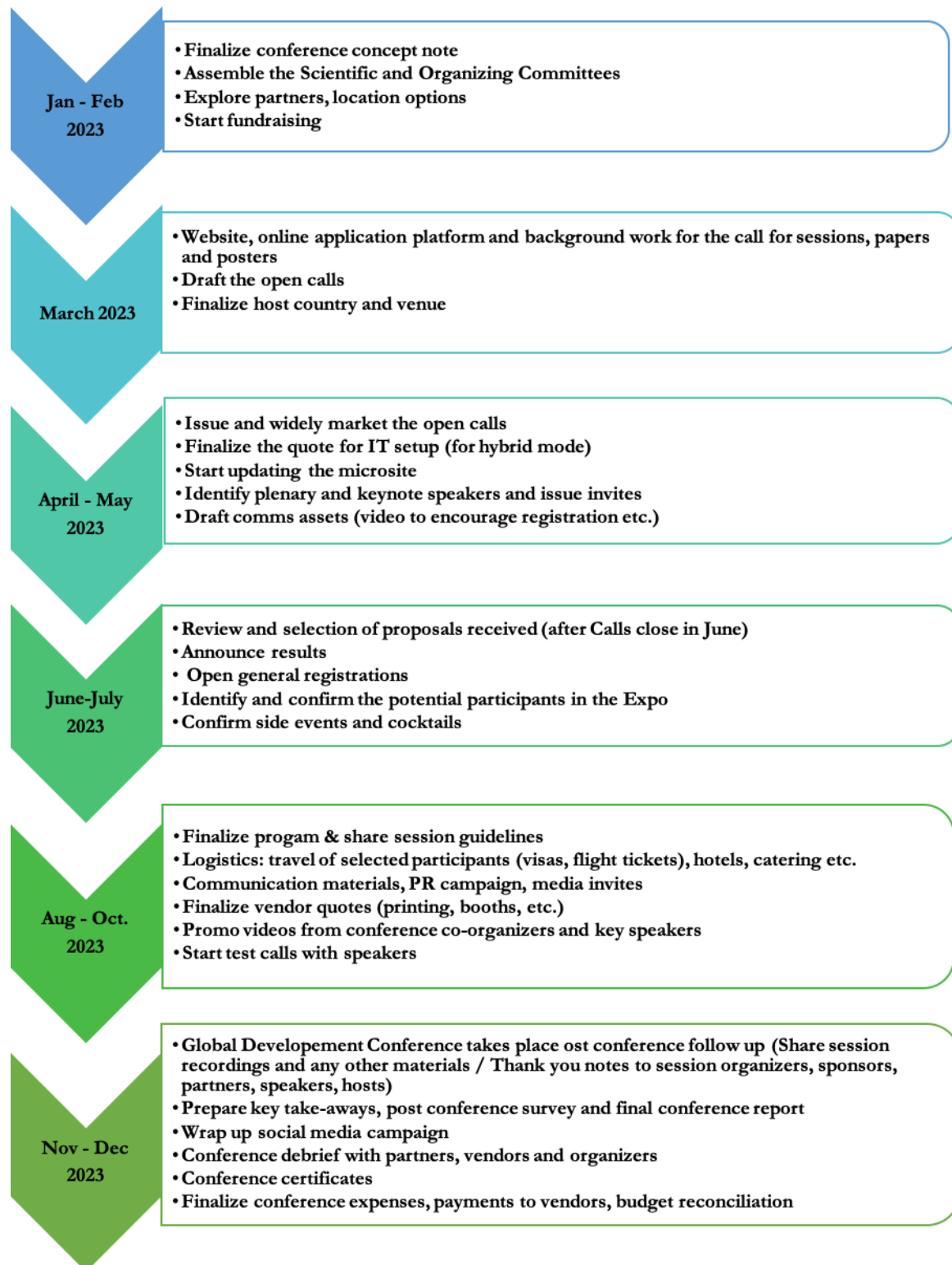
Future Earth

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.

Tentative Timeline



Annex

Scientific Committee Members

- **Luciano Andriamaro**, Director, Science and Knowledge Department, Conservation International, Madagascar
- **Jean-Louis Arcand**, President, Global Development Network (GDN)
- **Elena Lazos Chavero**, Professor-Researcher, IISUNAM, Mexico
- **Odile Conchou**, Senior Advisor, Biodiversity & Finance, AFD
- **Thomas Elmqvist**, Professor, Natural Resource Management, Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University
- **Jesse Gourevitch**, High Meadows Post-Doctoral Economics Fellow, Environmental Defense Fund
- **Valerie Hickey**, Global Director, Environment, Natural Resources and Blue Economy, the World Bank
- **Suneetha M. Subramanian**, Research Fellow, United Nations University, Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability
- **Sébastien Treyer**, Executive Director, Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI), France
- **Vanessa Ushie**, Acting Director, African Natural Resources Management and Investment Centre, African Development Bank Group