LIZARDI BHI	2009-10	Topic: **Sustainability**	MARKS:
Science in Society	2nd. term		
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TASK: Read the article and answer the questions at the end

BBC NEWS

Biodiversity nears 'point of no return'

VIEWPOINT Hilary Benn

The decline in the world's biodiversity is approaching a point of no return, warns Hilary Benn. In this week's Green Room, the UK's environment secretary urges the international community to seize the chance to act before it is too late.

" Much greater concerted effort is needed to stop the plunder of our ecosystems "

In 2002, the world's governments made a commitment to significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010.

Although it is hard to measure how much biodiversity we have, we do know these targets have not been met.

Our ecological footprint - what we take out of the planet - is now 1.3 times the biological capacity of the Earth.

In the words of Professor Bob Watson, Defra's chief scientific adviser and former chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), we are in danger of approaching "a point of no return".

So the action we take in the next couple of decades will determine whether the stable environment on which human civilisation has depended since the last Ice Age 10,000 years ago will continue.

To do this, we need to widen the nature of the debate about biodiversity. Flora and fauna matter for their own sake; they lift our spirits and nurture our souls.

But our ecosystems also sustain us and our economies - purifying our drinking water, producing our food and regulating our climate.

Climate change and biodiversity are inextricably linked. We ignore natural capital at our peril.

Interdependence

The UK and Brazil are hosting a workshop in preparation for the next UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Representatives from more than 60 countries - from the Maldives to China - will attend the three-day event to discuss how we can ensure that the post-2010 targets stand a better chance of being met than those set in 2002.

The majority of those attending are from developing countries, including those with the rarest and greatest biodiversity. They need to be listened to.

It is easy to have principles when you can afford them - economics and ecology are interdependent.

So when it comes to biodiversity, we desperately need to start restoring links between science and policy, between taking action and evaluating it and between economies and ecosystems.

The big challenge will be for the real benefits of biodiversity and the hard costs of its loss to be included in our economic systems and markets.

Perverse subsidies and the lack of value attached to the services provided by ecosystems have been factors contributing to their loss. What we cannot cost, we don't value - until it has gone.

Investing in the future

Much greater concerted effort is needed to stop the plunder of our ecosystems.

> **" The restoration of our ecosystems must be seen as a sensible and cost-effective investment in this planet's economic survival and growth "**

Overfishing has reduced blue fin tuna numbers to 18% of what they were in the mid-1970s.

The burning of Indonesia's peat lands and forests for palm oil plantations generates 1.8bn tonnes of greenhouse gases a year, and demand is predicted to double by 2020 compared to 2000.

More than seven million hectares are lost worldwide to deforestation every single year.

The restoration of our ecosystems must be seen as a sensible and cost-effective investment in this planet's economic survival and growth.

I am optimistic. Talking about the danger of climate change has brought with it opportunities to tackle the biodiversity crisis.

While the 2010 targets have not been met, more than 160 countries now have national biodiversity action plans.

Mechanisms now exist for research, monitoring and scientific assessment of biodiversity, although we now need an Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services to oversee progress in the same way the IPCC does for climate change.

One example of progress is the Brazilian Government's new target, which requires illegal deforestation to be cut by 80% by 2020.

Last year, deforestation rates in Brazil dropped by 45% against those of 2008, the largest fall since records began.

Other examples, closer to home, are the UK's Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) - 89% are in a good or recovering condition.

Our ninth National Park, in the South Downs, was created last year and agri-environmental schemes are producing significant improvements in biodiversity.

2010 is the International Year of Biodiversity and later this year - in Nagoya, Japan - we will have the chance to halt the decline of our planet's biodiversity.

It is up to us to seize it.

Hilary Benn is the UK Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

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EXERCISES

1. Build a conceptual map based on this article

2. Explain –briefly- the meaning of the sentence: "... Our ecological footprint is now 1.3 times the biological capacity of the Earth ..."

3. Justify the next idea: "... Climate change and biodiversity are inextricably linked ..."

4. Why is biodiversity so important? Mention one reason (from the article or from your point of view)

5. Give one fact or reason to be optimistic about this issue (from the article or yours)

6. Relate ocean acidification and marine biodiversity. Mention why ocean is becoming more acidic.

7. Do you think that declaring 2010 the "Year of Biodiversity" is important? Justify –briefly- your point of view.

VOCABULARY

Expression	Approximate meaning
A point of no return	Irreversible, Recovery might not be possible
Targets are not met	Objectives / aims are not accomplished
To widen the nature of the debate	To include more topics in the discussion
Inextricably linked	One (issue, topic) can not be understood without the other (issue, topic)
Peril	Risk
To host a workshop	To organize a meeting to study or analyze something
It easy to have principles when you can afford them	With money (budget) the targets can be met; but without it nothing can be done
Perverse subsidies	Subsidies (financial help) that works against biodiversity (by depleting resources...)
Lack of value	We do not value what nature does for us (water and air purification...)
Peat	Type of fuel (from vegetation)
Greenhouse gases	Gases that contribute to global warming (carbon dioxide, methane...)
To tackle the ... crisis	To confront the ... crisis
To drop	To decrease
Scheme	Program