

### Loss of wildlife threatens food supplies – UN

The 'collective failure' of the world to stop environmental degradation could cut off water supplies, push up food prices and even cause wars, the United Nations has warned

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Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General of the UN, said the "collective failure" of the world to address biodiversity loss could have implications for food and water supplies. Photo: AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The latest report on global biodiversity gives a more bleak picture than ever before of the state of the natural environment. In the last 35 years there has been a 30 per cent decline in the number of mammals, birds and other vertebrates on the planet, while the human population has doubled. It is impossible to count the loss of plants and insects because there are so many, but scientists fear millions of species could have been lost before they are even discovered.

Already major 'tipping points' are being crossed that will catapult the world into further irreversible loss, such as the decline of the Amazon rainforest, Arctic tundra and coral reefs.

Ban Ki Moon, the Secretary General of the UN, said the loss of wildlife is already being felt by poor people who rely on the plants and animals in their immediate area for food. But he said the developed world will also suffer as fish stocks decline, fertile land becomes desert and food prices rise. Cure for diseases that are yet to be discovered could be lost forever. The fight for natural resources, as water sources dry up, could even cause major conflict.

"The consequences of this collective failure, if it is not corrected quickly, will be severe for all of us," said Mr Ban. "Biodiversity underpins the functioning of the ecosystems on which we depend for food and fresh water, health and recreation, and protection from natural disasters. Its loss also affects us culturally and spiritually. This may be more difficult to quantify but it is nonetheless essential to our wellbeing."

The report, that involved thousands of scientists from more than 100 countries, confirmed that the world will fail to meet a UN target to halt biodiversity loss by this year. The Convention on Biodiversity, that will bring together Governments to discuss the issue in Japan later this year, will decide whether to set up a new organisation similar to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to address the problem.

Scientists have already warned that the rate of extinction is 1,000 times the natural rate and warned that biodiversity loss is as important as global warming. Many fear the world could be heading towards its sixth mass extinction.

Source: [Telegraph UK](#).