

# Integrating Social-Ecological Resilience into the New Development Agenda

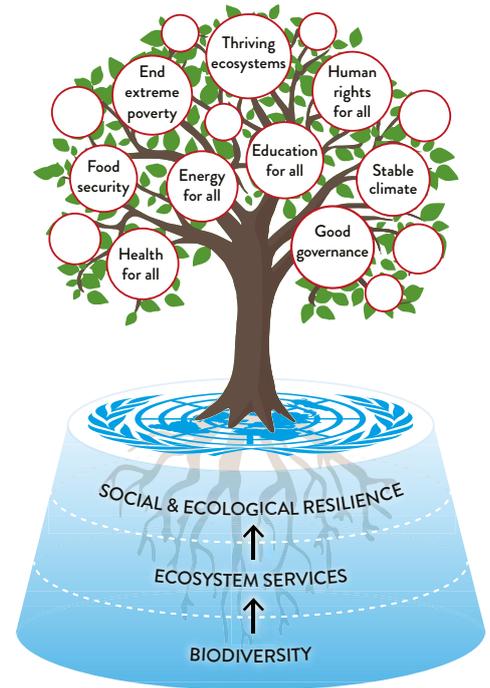
*Message from the Medellín Multi-stakeholder Dialogue Co-chairs*

**Johan Rockström**, Executive Director, Stockholm Resilience Centre at Stockholm University  
**Brigitte Baptiste**, General Director, Alexander von Humboldt Institute for Research on Biological Resources

The connections between people and nature should be at the heart of all sustainability discussions. However, the fundamental links between humanity and the biosphere on which we depend are not respected, and are sometimes not even adequately recognised, in many of the priority issues in the current discussions about global sustainable development goals (SDGs).

The Medellín Multi-stakeholder Dialogue held in Colombia, 2-4 December 2013, brought together people with a wide variety of perspectives on global sustainability, to explore the issues that arise in this stark gap between ecological reality and current policies and practices.

Our shared message is simple: Life on Earth, in all its diversity, shapes the environmental, social and economic processes and resources that are ultimately key to human well-being and achieving all SDGs. Losing biodiversity erodes the basis for sustainable development by undermining ecosystem services and social and ecological resilience, which reduces the capacity for adaptive responses in a rapidly changing world. Biodiversity should thus be integrated in all the SDGs and become a goal in its own right.



A sharper focus on integrating biodiversity in all the SDGs is essential. This is critical to help buffer against ecological impacts and pressures, in the face of growing human needs. We can also expect more environmental and societal surprises, because of the intricate social and economic connections of today's globalised world, and the physical processes of global climate change.

Thus, we must maintain the world's capacity to buffer these changes, so that humans can adapt, and where necessary respond in sustainable and transformative ways.

Maintaining social-ecological resilience requires mainstreaming biodiversity and ecosystem services into all SDGs because human prosperity depends on the biosphere. The current pressure on biodiversity means that biodiversity deserves to also be a stand-alone goal in its own right.

		PRIORITY ISSUES										
		End extreme poverty	Food security	Water for all	Health for all	Stable climate	Energy for all	Sustainable production and consumption	Human rights for all	Education for all	Good governance	Biodiversity for thriving ecosystems
TARGETS	A											
	B											
	C											
	D											

Biodiversity

# Integrating resilience in SDGs

Recommendations based on the Medellín Multi-stakeholder Dialogue

- **Sustainable development goals should be founded on principles of universality, integrity, equity, and quality of life in all its forms.** True involvement of all stakeholder groups is important at all stages in the SDG process. This requires a greatly expanded and deepened engagement with civil society and local communities.
- **Goals need to promote human prosperity within Earth's safe operating space.** Respecting planetary boundaries means recognizing fundamental biophysical thresholds in the Earth system. Crossing these thresholds takes humanity into conditions of unprecedented and often unpredictable risks.
- **Human prosperity depends on people reconnecting to the biosphere.** The SDG framework needs to reflect the essential contribution that biodiversity and ecosystem services make to human well-being and sustainable development. The CBD brings 20 years of experience, policy and practice, including the extensive elaboration and strong global agreement of goals under the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.
- **Policy processes need to handle issues of power, knowledge and rights in much improved ways.** Many power holders do not respect human rights and lack the transparency and accountability that sustainable development requires. This must urgently change. Rights-holders from indigenous, traditional and local communities must be given a voice in processes that affect them, and in issues where their deep knowledge is essential for effective responses. Environmental justice is a major part of social equity.
- **Fundamental institutional redesign is needed to enable the transformations to more sustainable pathways.** Policy implementation gaps currently block sustainable development. In future, human activity will likely trigger abrupt and unexpected environmental changes. SDGs can be a key part of adaptive governance that allows for adjustments in the face of change. Adaptive governance is characterized by collaborative and flexible learning-based mechanisms and timely information flows. Cultural resilience comes from institutional richness and a diversity of knowledge, and legal systems – that persist among indigenous, traditional and local communities.
- **Target-setting needs to add up to real sustainability progress.** This means that both processes *and* outcomes will need to be measured. The world has built up a great deal of expertise and experience regarding targets, metrics, and indicators – but gaps still urgently need to be filled with regard to appropriate measures of biodiversity and its contribution to human wellbeing. Targets and indicators must relate to knowledge and capacity building across society, addressing all dimensions of the social-ecological system and capturing people's cultural and subjective wellbeing.

The **Medellín Dialogue** included representatives of governments, science and academia, UN and other international organisations, civil society, the private sector, and other policy-influencers from around the world. Participants used their shared knowledge to build up narratives that describe how the SDG priority issues relate to Earth's biodiversity and the invaluable – yet too often invisible – services that the world's ecosystems provide to humanity.

The full co-chairs' report and more information on the Medellín Multi-stakeholder Dialogue can be downloaded from [www.medellin-dialogue.com](http://www.medellin-dialogue.com).

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Colombia's **Alexander von Humboldt Institute for Research on Biological Resources**, and the **Stockholm Resilience Centre** in Sweden, organised the Dialogue with the strong support of the Governments of Colombia and Sweden, and in consultation with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Economic support for the Dialogue was provided by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of Colombia, and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) through The Resilience and Development Programme (SwedBio) at Stockholm Resilience Centre.

Organisers:



Stockholm Resilience Centre  
Research for Biosphere Sustainability and Innovation



Supporters:



MinAmbiente  
Ministerio de Ambiente  
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Convention on Biological  
Diversity