

A *Monthly* from the East African Sustainability Watch Network and INFORSE East Africa

## Are You Ready to Be Part of the Biodiversity Plan?



**BE PART OF THE PLAN**  
International Day  
for Biodiversity  
2024

The worldwide observance of the International Biodiversity Day commemorates the adoption of the text of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) on 22 May 1992 and provides a unique opportunity to foster wide support for the Convention, its Protocols and related action frameworks. The Theme of Biodiversity Day 2024 is: "*Be part of the Plan*".

This is a *call to action* for all stakeholders to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity by supporting the implementation of the *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework*, also referred to as the Biodiversity Plan. As humanity is facing the intertwined triple planetary crisis of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution, collaborative action is needed from all sectors of society to restore harmony with nature and foster a transition to sustainable socio-economic systems. Adoption of the Global Biodiversity Framework in December 2022 was therefore an important step to commit to action that protects nature.

East Africa is globally recognized for its rich biodiversity and iconic landscapes. Wildlife is a critical asset for East Africa's future growth and development. For example, the total direct contribution to Gross Domestic Product of nature-based tourism to Kenya and Tanzania is over USD \$1.2 billion (USAID, 2023). Managed well, these resources spur economic growth and improve livelihoods. However, factors like climate change, wildlife crime, habitat fragmentation, human wildlife conflicts, and urban expansion are threatening conservation efforts.

Invasive alien species remains as a 'silent' but major challenge to biodiversity globally and in East Africa, as it is underappreciated, underestimated, and often unacknowledged. According to a recent report by the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), more than 37,000 alien species have been introduced by many human activities to regions and biomes around the world. In 2019, the IPBES *Global Assessment Report* (produced by 86 experts from 49 countries, working for more than four and a half years) found that invasive alien species are one of the five most important direct drivers of biodiversity loss – alongside changes in land- and sea-use, direct exploitation of species, climate change and pollution.

Goal D of the Biodiversity Plan (*Invest and Collaborate*) focuses on ensuring adequate financial resources, capacity-building, technical and scientific cooperation, and access to and transfer of technology is imperative to fully implement the Plan in addressing the above and other challenges. The African Development Bank and UNEP (2023) note that significant resource mobilization, both in terms of "financing green" (increasing nature-positive flows) and "greening finance" (reducing nature-negative flows) are needed. But this should not suffer the fate of unfulfilled financial commitments (the USD 100 billion per year) under the Paris Climate Change Agreement. These means of implementation are essential for rolling out implementation of the Biodiversity Plan at national (National Biodiversity Strategies & Action Plans) to action plans by local authorities, communities and individuals. All these actions should emphasize equitable governance; full integration of rights-based approaches; and the important role of local youths in protecting, managing and conserving nature.

The CBD as an international instrument for the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits derived from the use of genetic resources, has been ratified by 196 countries. This universal observance provides a unique opportunity to foster wide support for the Convention, its Protocols and related action frameworks.

Read more about the Biodiversity Plan (with 4 Goals and the 23 Targets) from here: <https://www.cbd.int/gbf/>

## Regional Report on Prospects for Just and Sustainable Transitions in Africa Launched



The 2024 Economic Report on Africa on the theme “*Investing in a Just and Sustainable Transition in Africa*” was launched in Addis Ababa on 24th April 2024. The Report analyses the opportunities and policies for Africa to build a just and sustainable economic system. According to the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), ‘For this to materialize, African countries need holistic development plans and strategies that fundamentally redirect their production, consumption, governance, technology, human capital, and financial systems’.

The Report notes that African countries face many economic, social, and environmental challenges. These global challenges render “business as usual” strategies unsustainable, and a new transformative approach is needed for a Just and Sustainable Transition (JST) in Africa. It also analyses the opportunities and policies for Africa to build a just and sustainable economic system.

Ms. Zuzana Schwidrowski, Director, Macroeconomics and Governance Division, UNECA, who delivered the presentation on the Report, highlighted that Africa has window of opportunity to undertake impactful JST guided by an African-informed narrative and needs. Factors such as youthful population (about 60% of Africans are under the age of 25), arable land, renewable resource endowments (Africa has vast reserves of critical minerals – including aluminum, cobalt, copper, lithium and manganese – needed for high-tech and green products like smartphones and solar panels), and latecomer advantages from emerging technologies position Africa to shape the sustainability transition at the global level.

In view of this, achieving JSTs in Africa requires fundamental shifts at the economic (especially production and consumption), governance, and technology-systems. These shifts need to be driven by efficient natural resource use, sustainable infrastructure development, low-carbon industrialization, and resilient agro ecological systems. But this will require significant resources to fund capital, financial innovation, and social protection systems and the continent will need to catalyze innovative approaches. Therefore, the international financial architecture also requires a paradigm shift in this journey.

Recognizing the role Africa’s abundant renewable energy resources can play in enabling African countries to achieve their development objectives, the Report acknowledges that, guided by African-informed narratives and needs, “the transition away from fossils needs to be gradual.” Africa’s current investment in its “sustainability transition” and in renewables remains negligible, according to the report.

The Report recommends strengthening strategies and policies for JSTs in Africa by integrating national priorities with the SDGs and Agenda 2063, facilitating the key role of the private sector, and balancing growth and strategic public investment while maintaining fiscal sustainability.

It also calls for mobilizing new financing while making smarter use of available financial resources and for establishing a dedicated national mechanism for financing JSTs. This remains a hard task due to competing development priorities in Africa. Indeed, when Ms. Hanan Morsy, Deputy Executive Secretary-Programme, UNECA took to the podium, she reaffirmed the willingness of UNECA to assist Member states in their efforts to implement JST. “Given the magnitude of the challenge that climate change alongside rising inequality and poverty present, there is no time to waste. The time to act is now’, She cautioned.

The Economic Report on Africa launched on the opening day of the 2024 Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (RFSD), notes that an interpretation of a JST that serves Africa’s needs to be well defined as an economic system encompassing environmental sustainability, social mitigation, and green industrialization. **Read the full Report from:** <https://www.uneca.org/economic-report-on-africa-2024>

## Living With Climate Change Risks in East Africa



East Africa hazards Watch (ICPAC)

East Africa is still in for more deadly landslides and floods, as torrential rain after years of biting drought in Kenya and elsewhere, deliver a brutal reminder of the threat posed by extreme weather brought about by climate change. According to The Secretary General of the Kenya Red Cross, Ahmed Idris, Kenya, Tanzania and other African countries are “bearing the brunt” of climate-related extreme-weather events like the very intense rain that has been causing lethal floods in recent weeks.

Mr. Idris added that after 20 years of climate change, “We anticipate that the wet seasons will be getting wetter and the dry seasons and hot seasons getting hotter.” The devastating rains in the region are a result of a mix of factors, including the countries' seasonal weather patterns, human-caused climate change as well as natural weather phenomena such as El-Nino. In Kenya's case, the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD), a naturally occurring climate system has been cited by researchers as contributing to the natural weather phenomena. The IOD is a swinging of sea surface temperatures that makes the western Indian Ocean warmer than average then colder than average than those of the eastern Indian Ocean. It has positive, neutral and negative phases. The positive phase causes heavy rainfall in areas west of the Indian Ocean, such as Kenya, and droughts in Indonesia and Australia. Also, tropical cyclone Hidaya (torrential rains) which landed on the Tanzania and Kenya coastlines over the weekend, has reportedly claimed up to 400 lives and displaced 20,000 people from their homes so far in Kenya and Tanzania. But in Uganda, the water level of Lake Victoria in Entebbe has reportedly surged again threatening those with dwellings and businesses near to the waterfront.

*The East African Newspaper* (April 27, 2024) reported that Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Burundi have been worst hit by the storms, with highways and railways temporarily closed. Experts warn that Tanzania, one of the sources of food to the region, will realize reduced yields by up to 30 percent due to the impact of the floods. According to *The East African Newspaper*, rains cut off movement between Kenya and Tanzania on the Nairobi-Namanga highway for the better part of April 24, 2024, after the Athi River burst its banks flooding a large part of residential and industrial areas in Kajiado and Machakos counties.

The gravity of these floods illuminates the gaps in in disaster risk preparedness, early action to address climate change effects on vulnerable and often poor communities and the fragile ecosystems. Therefore, there is an urgent need to craft on time, targeted early warning climate information for vulnerable audiences (pastoralists, farmers, and urbanites among others).

Also, the International community and development partners need to come to the rescue of the affected East African states with these unusual episodes, by providing resources they need to support a comprehensive management of flood-risk needed and to build resilience of communities to these growing dangers in future. This is in addition to the emergency needs that have already arisen.

Governments and Development Partners should also roll out good practices in disaster risk reduction from different sectors (be it disaster risk reduction, water and sanitation, health, food security, or agriculture). For example, the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE), University of Bern and Swiss NGO Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Platform, have developed a *Compendium of Good Practices in Disaster Risk Reduction* to contribute to the up- and out scaling of proven land-based/ land-related practices in DRR by sharing and mainstreaming existing, and emerging, knowledge and experiences.

Read ‘*Where people and their land are safer: A Compendium of Good Practices in Disaster Risk Reduction*’ (400pp) with 44 technologies and approaches from: <https://floodresilience.net/resources/item/where-people-and-their-land-are-safer-a-compendium-of-good-practices-in-disaster-risk-reduction/?paging=1&limit=5&searchphrase=all>