

UN secretary general says humanity waging war on nature

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**UN biodiversity summit told 'time is running out' for humanity to stop destroying the planet.
(Photo: UN)**

United Nations, October 1 (RHC)-- UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has warned humanity must stop "waging war on nature" at the United Nations' first ever summit on the biodiversity crisis on Wednesday.

The UN chief said one consequence of the imbalance with nature -- caused by deforestation, climate change and food production -- was the emergence of deadly diseases such as HIV-AIDS, Ebola and

COVID-19. “Humanity is waging war on nature. And we need to rebuild our relationship with it,” said Guterres.

“Wildlife populations are plummeting because of overconsumption, population growth, and intensive agriculture. And the rate of species extinction is accelerating with some one million species currently threatened or endangered.”

The UN recently published a major assessment that found none of the 20 global biodiversity targets agreed 10 years ago with a 2020 deadline were fully met. Guterres said governments must include nature-based solutions in coronavirus recovery plans, investing in forests, wetlands and oceans.

“Ten years ago, we secured commitments that should have protected our planet. We have largely failed. But where effort has been made, the benefits to our economies, human and planetary health are irrefutable. Nature is resilient and it can recover if we ease our relentless assault,” the UN chief said.

Wednesday’s online event gave more than 100 heads of state and government the opportunity to raise ambitions for the development of the 10-year-strategy. Addressing the summit in a video message, Chinese President Xi Jinping urged global cooperation on the environment, saying countries were “passengers in the same boat.”

“The loss of biodiversity and the degradation of the ecosystem pose major risk to human survival,” Xi said, urging humanity to turn the planet into a “beautiful homeland”. Last week Xi pledged China would achieve carbon neutrality before 2060.

French President Emmanuel Macron said “2021 must be the year of action,” while European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen reaffirmed her commitment to the new global biodiversity framework.

Britain’s Prince Charles told the event: “We are, I’m afraid, at the last hour. We know what we need to do... Let’s get on with it.”

The United States did not participate in the UN summit.

The world spends an estimated \$80-\$90 billion on conservation each year, but studies show hundreds of billions of dollars may be needed to save ecosystems from collapse.

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