



Fashion's crucial role in biodiversity loss as UN officials call for action to preserve the natural world

During the [SDG Media Zone](#), run alongside the United Nations 75th General Assembly streaming dialogues and interviews focused on the power of science, solutions and solidarity to transform our world, UN officials working to preserve the natural world are also urging “action now” ahead of the crucial biodiversity summit where world leaders are expected to declare their countries’ commitments to nature and a post-2020 biodiversity framework.

“We have no time to wait. Biodiversity loss, nature loss, it is at an unprecedented level in the history of mankind”, Elizabeth Mrema, the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, told UN News in the SDG Media Zone. “We’re the most dangerous species in global history,” she added.

Kerry Bannigan, founder of the Conscious Fashion Campaign and Executive Producer of the SDG Media Zone has urged the fashion industry to clean up and halt the decline of the world’s ecosystems. She said in response to the SDG Media Zone session on Why Protecting Nature Protects Us with UN Environment Programme Executive Director Inger Andersen and Executive Secretary of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity Elizabeth Mrema, and ahead of today’s UN Summit on Biodiversity; “The fashion industry places a very heavy footprint on biodiversity. So much is rightly written about its impact on climate change and human rights but it is all interconnected; human and animal ecosystems are interdependent. The pandemic has put the devastating impact of the textile and fashion industry into sharp focus and it’s time for the industry to significantly reduce its contribution to biodiversity loss. I urge all producers, manufacturers, suppliers, brands and retailers to stop damaging the world and start cleaning up the fashion industry before it is too late. We need immediate action to change sourcing and production methods to tackle the sharp decline of ecosystems.”

One million species, between 12 percent and 20 percent of estimated total species, marine and terrestrial alike, are under threat of extinction - ecosystem degradation is so wide ranging,

affecting oceans, freshwater, soil, and forests. Fashion supply chains are directly linked to soil degradation, water pollution and natural ecosystems.

Head of the UN Environment Programme, Inger Andersen, speaking alongside Ms. Mrema in the SDG Media Zone, outlined other voices that will be heard this week in the General Assembly Hall during the Summit on Biodiversity, and in so-called leaders' dialogue sessions that will focus on sustainable development and on science and technology.

She said; "It's time for action... the Heads of State know that what they will say will really matter, because future generations will judge them. Were we going to be the leaders that stood and let species and nature disappear? So that your grandchild or mine, will not see that magnificent animal or that incredible flower or the very being of ecosystem that supports us? It's not small. It's very, very big, because it is the future [of] food security, because it is the future of peace, because it is the future of humanity as we understand it."

According to UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), some 93 billion cubic metres of water - enough to meet the needs of five million people - is used by the fashion industry annually, and around half a million tons of microfibre, which is the equivalent of 3 million barrels of oil, is now being dumped into the ocean every year. It takes around 7,500 litres of water to make a single pair of jeans, equivalent to the amount of water the average person drinks over a period of seven years. The industry is responsible for more carbon emissions than all international flights and maritime shipping combined.

Environmental impact of fashion industry (provided by UN News)

- 2,000 gallons of water needed to make one pair of jeans
- 93 billion cubic metres of water, enough for 5 million people to survive, is used by the fashion industry every year
- Fashion industry produces 20 per cent of global wastewater
- Clothing and footwear production is responsible for 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions
- Every second, the equivalent of one garbage truck of textiles is landfilled or burned
- Clothing production doubled between 2000 and 2014

About SDG Media Zone

Since 2016, the SDG Media Zone has been one of the main features of the UN General Assembly high-level week, bringing together UN Member States, content creators, influencers, activists and media partners to highlight actions and solutions in support of the Sustainable Development Goals. The SDG Media Zone takes the conversation on advancing the 2030 Agenda out of the policy sphere and into the public discourse through impactful in-depth interviews, panel discussions and Ted-style talks.

The SDG Media Zone is organised by the UN Department of Global Communications, in collaboration with the PVBLIC Foundation - an innovative foundation that mobilises media, data, and technology for sustainable impact around the globe chaired by Sergio Fernandez de Cordova. Kerry Bannigan is a founding member of the SDG Media Zone and serves at the Executive Producer. www.un.org/sdgmediazone #SDGLive.

About the United Nations Summit on Biodiversity

The United Nations Summit on Biodiversity will be convened by the President of the General Assembly on 30 September 2020, at the level of Heads of State and Government under the theme of “Urgent action on biodiversity for sustainable development.”

Our societies are intimately linked with and depend on biodiversity. Its loss and the degradation of its contributions to people jeopardize progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and human wellbeing. The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the importance of the relationship between people and nature.

The Summit will highlight the crisis facing humanity from the degradation of biodiversity and the urgent need to accelerate action on biodiversity for sustainable development. It will provide an opportunity for Heads of State and Government and other leaders to raise ambition for the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework to be adopted at the 15th meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, to be held in 2021. This framework, and its effective implementation, must put nature on a path to recovery by 2030 to meet the SDGs and realise the Vision of “Living in harmony with nature”.