

Background Information

It should come as no surprise when the decline of biodiversity in the Arctic is mentioned in the context of climate change as it happens to be the main cause of habitat degradation, directly impacting the well-being of all ecosystems in the Arctic region. Global warming has affected the Arctic region more fundamentally than any other region in the world as it results in an increase of water temperatures, the melting of ice, altered weather patterns and ocean acidification, leaving many polar species no choice but to adapt to the changing conditions or fall into extinction. Its impacts are already noticeable: appearance of new oceanic currents, earlier snow melt and northward expansion of multiple species.

This, however, is not the only threat to the Arctic biome. More areas of human activity, such as pollution, commercial fishing, invasive species introduced by humans, nuclear waste and petroleum activity, put the natural order in the Arctic region at risk.

The Arctic Biodiversity Assessment stated the connection between the loss of biodiversity and severe disease outbreaks (SARS, Ebola...), the contact between the human population and wildlife increases the opportunity for viruses, bacteria and parasites to be passed on to human and rapidly spread.

“Sustaining the biodiversity of our natural environments is paramount for human health and well-being. Destruction of habitats by human activities increases our interactions with new pathogens - ones we have little or no defense against. If we want to prevent future outbreaks we need to support biodiversity, not destroy it.”

- *Mark Marissink, the Chair of the Arctic Council's Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna Working Group*

The Kiruna Declaration, signed in 2013 by representatives of the eight Arctic states. Here, the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) explains the concern and highlights the possibility of reducing the damage from human

activity that could result in long-term irreversible ecological loss. The execution of the Arctic Biodiversity Assessment (ABA) recommendations would greatly help in attaining not only biodiversity goals worldwide: the Aichi Targets in the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity (2010-2020) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

UN Involvement

In regard to the ongoing pandemic, the UN Environment Programme stressed the growing importance and urgency in a statement released on COVID-19: “It is precisely because of the interconnected nature of all life on this planet, that an ambitious post-2020 biodiversity framework matters greatly, and we remain committed to the efforts to make this happen.”

Questions to Consider

- What is my country’s role in the loss of biodiversity in the Arctic?
- What are the main causes and how does my country contribute (in both ways)?
- Has my country taken any precautions or efforts regarding the issue?
- What are the possible ways to fund the effort in my country and on the global scale?
- Who should be involved in the efforts?
- What are the necessary steps in the fight against the loss of Arctic biodiversity? How can we maximize their result? What should be done now, what is the course of action in the future?
- How to encourage victims in situations identified as domestic abuse to seek help?
- How does this impact not only my country, but the entire world?
- What are the impacts at this moment, what will be the potential consequences in the future?
- How to provide more awareness to the topic?

Helpful Resources and Links

UN involvement:

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2010/10/357262-un-report-urges-action-save-arctic-biodiversity>

https://www.un.org/depts/los/global_reporting/WOA_RPROC/Chapter_36G.pdf

<https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/oceans-seas/what-we-do/working-regional-seas/regional-seas-programmes/arctic-region>

News articles:

<https://arctic-council.org/news/biodiversity-and-human-health-less-biodiversity-more-infectious-diseases/>

<https://news.globallandscapesforum.org/46448/how-is-climate-change-affecting-biodiversity-at-the-poles/>

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/02/140214075511.htm>