

Headline: Solution to climate emergency? Conserve biodiversity

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Climate change is not an issue separate from biodiversity loss, as one inevitably affects the other.

Forest loss over the past decades has dramatically enhanced the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, leading to increased global temperature and heat waves.

The illegal, uncontrolled use and blasting of marine habitats such as mangroves, seagrass and coral reefs have also resulted in the massive decline of fish catch, and degraded ecosystem benefits such as carbon sequestration and flood protection. Efforts toward climate change adaptation and mitigation and the protection and conservation of biodiversity must then be looked at interdependently.

Ecosystem services from biodiversity are key to eliminating greenhouse gases and protecting communities from fatal climate change impacts such as flash floods and storm surges. Moreover, engineering renewable sources of human subsistence will also help sustain ecosystems and biodiversity for years to come.

Despite existing policies and localization efforts, the country must expedite the effective implementation of concrete environmental solutions to meet the bar. Our commitments in international pacts, such as the Paris Agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity, demand double the time for our institutions to operationalize and fund conservation programs.

We are in the midst of the sixth mass extinction, as teen climate activist Greta Thunberg puts it. Our ecosystems and biodiversity are greatly vulnerable to climate change. This makes our efforts to conserve and protect the environment and everything that lives in it more relevant than ever.

Ecosystem services are our strongest hope to effectively curb the devastating effects of climate change. Our constitutional right to a balanced and healthful ecology is founded on our basic human needs such as air, water, food, shelter and clothing — all generously provided by ecosystems.

As a response to the climate issue, Haribon Foundation and its partners are advocating for a sustainable forest management law. The proposed bill is undoubtedly the overarching policy solution for a viable forest ecosystem, as it spotlights forest protection and reforestation as the forefront solutions to respond to the climate change issue and the need for the conservation of biodiversity.

We are also calling on decision-makers at all levels to establish, strengthen and sustain conservation efforts, explore sustainable livelihood programs, and continue to raise awareness about coastal and marine management.

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