



Press Release

by the Secretariat of the Consortium of European Taxonomic Facilities (CETAF)

Global Coalition for Biodiversity Launched on World Wildlife Day 2020

‘United for Biodiversity’

CETAF community is since last May **official supporter** of the European Commission’s Global Coalition [“United for #Biodiversity”](#): the communication campaign, launched on the occasion of the [World Wildlife Day](#), calls for a strong mobilisation within the framework of the [EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030](#) that will, together with the adoption of [Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework](#), step towards [the 2020 UN Biodiversity Conference \(COP15\)](#) – now [rescheduled for May 2021](#).

TODAY, with this press release, the *Consortium of European Taxonomic Facilities (CETAF)*, representing 63 institutions from the Natural Science Collections community, intends to emphasise its position taken on the international day for Biodiversity in the light of the [30 September virtual 1st UN Biodiversity Summit](#) that will be convened by CBD under the theme **“Urgent Action on Biodiversity for Sustainable Development”**. The online Summit will precede and prepare the discussions that will be held during the **upcoming COP-15**: it constitutes an essential momentum that will give the impulse to an open and global dialogue on biodiversity mainstreaming, science, technology and innovation as driving forces of our future.

The exceptional circumstances brought by the COVID-19 forces us to drastically rethink our societies to be more inclusive, sustainable and resilient in the face of pandemics, climate change and other global challenges.

WE ALL realise that biodiversity threats impact directly and deeply our daily lives, our health, our economies, our ways of socialising. This global issue requires new decisions and globally aligned actions from our decision-makers and stakeholders to be taken in our countries: this cannot happen without an open and broad discussion where the wider civil society must be engaged at the local level.

As custodians of the natural world's heritage, our Natural Science Collections Community takes this opportunity to bring its voice to the discussion table, with the firm commitment to support and encourage socially inclusive and nature-based solutions at the core of a more sustainable future for our societies.

Together with the many other supporting organisations mobilised under the European Commission's [Global Coalition for Biodiversity](#), CETAF and its member institutions **jointly pledge to support actions for biodiversity and to intensify their communication efforts to raise public awareness, pool resources and work collaboratively to protect and effectively restore biodiversity in all its forms**. CETAF will strengthen its support towards the Global Coalition with active communication actions. CETAF will also focus on advocacy for research in taxonomy and systematics, and support biodiversity and geodiversity preservation through the scientific development made in those fields, making its mission a driving force used to slow biodiversity decline. Now more than ever, policy-makers need to hear from and listen to the communities dedicated to the study of nature and to support new generations of change makers and citizens to build the sustainable societies we intend to live in.

With this communication campaign, the Commission is calling for stronger mobilisation in raising awareness on the need to protect biodiversity, ahead of the upcoming COP-15 of the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#) (CBD), when nations will adopt a new global framework to protect and restore nature. The COP-15 on biodiversity, like the COP's for the climate, must define the global framework for the protection of wildlife after 2020, while considering that most of the [Aichi targets](#), as defined in 2010, have not yet been reached. These targets aimed,

among other things, to take better account of biodiversity in national strategies, to extend terrestrial and aquatic conservation areas, to prevent the extinction of endangered species, to avoid overfishing and to manage agricultural areas in a sustainable way by 2020. There is still much work to do.

As pointed out by the European Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries Virginijus Sinkevičius “...*protection and restoration of biodiversity would not only save nature for future generations, but also help to tackle climate change, and avoid negative consequences on our food, health and economy. We urgently need to take global action, otherwise, our only chance of seeing nature is in the zoos and botanical gardens. That would be a failure of humankind.*”

The [Consortium of European Taxonomic Facilities \(CETAF\)](#) strongly supports the call and is ready to take an active part in voicing the urgent need for action. Amplifying, aligning and joining forces across borders among all involved actors, from political decision-makers to the general public, will help to highlight how essential the conservation of nature is today, and that this is the only possible way for us to ensure a sustainable future.

CETAF is an active community of over 5000 scientists from across Europe who play a key role in the understanding and the preservation of biodiversity and geodiversity worldwide, and who provide a sound knowledge-base for policy changes which address societal challenges such as biodiversity loss, climate change and emerging health crises.

The CETAF community unites major natural history and natural science museums, botanic gardens and research centres in Europe to create a unique network made up of 63 research organizations in 22 countries which hold the priceless heritage of over 1,5 billion specimens representing almost 80% of the world’s described species in their collections. Natural sciences collections and the taxonomic knowledge generated by the research done using collections provide the necessary evidence and the scientific basis from which to understand biodiversity and geodiversity dynamics over time. As the hub for European taxonomic and geological expertise, CETAF members jointly support actions addressing both preservation in the present, and evolution modeling for the future.

The 2019 Report from the [Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services \(IPBES\)](#) already showed that biodiversity is declining globally at higher rates than ever before in human history, with up to a million species facing extinction, with serious impacts expected for people around the world as a result of this loss. This means ecosystems may no longer be able to support humanity by providing water, food, clean air and timber, and their services of pollination, climate regulation, soil formation and the prevention of floods would be seriously affected.

Increased and repeated human pressure on ecosystems has had such an impact on nature's equilibrium that it threatens the sustainability of life on Earth with unpredictable effects. The emergence of zoonotic diseases is only one of the possible consequences that our society is currently facing. CETAF, together with the [Distributed System of Scientific Collections \(DiSSCo\)](#), the European Research Infrastructure to facilitate digital access to FAIR data from collections that is being built on top of our community efforts, has started a [COVID-19 Task Force](#) with experts from all over the world contributing a science-based response to the pandemic and to preventing the occurrence and propagation of potential future health crises such as the one caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2.a. Numerous other research organizations, research infrastructures and initiatives ([GBIF](#), [iDigBio](#), [ELIXIR](#), [GloBi](#), [TDWG](#), [SPNHC](#), [Plazi](#) and [Pensoft](#)) are also collaborating in this initiative that anchors on the study and analysis of data from natural science collections and scientific publications as well as biodiversity and genomic data repositories.

Our current situation, in conjunction with other potential threats, forces us to take active steps to halt biodiversity loss and restore ecosystems. In the same international and direct manner that the world has addressed the current pandemic, the environmental crisis requires a similarly collective and immediate response from governments and citizens, in partnership with researchers and professionals, in finding prompt solutions. CETAF as a scientifically-driven community has a role to play in voicing this priority and to contribute with scientific knowledge to provide solutions to tackle societal challenges.

We, from CETAF, encourage you all to stand united and promote the importance of exploring and documenting biodiversity for science and society.

Start by voicing our pledge in social media and use relevant hashtags:

#biodiversity2020, #cetaf, #eurotaxonomy, #discoeu, #EUBiodiversity #EUPollinators
#Natura2000 #BiodiversityDay #BiodiversityWeek #WorldBiodiversityDay

Stay tuned for more CETAF communication activities!



Annex

Text of Pledge

UNITED FOR #BIODIVERSITY

WE,

WORLD NATIONAL PARKS, AQUARIUMS, BOTANIC GARDENS, ZOOS, NATURAL HISTORY AND
SCIENCE MUSEUMS,

JOIN FORCES FOR NATURE.

OUR COLLECTIONS SHOW THE DIVERSITY OF LIFE ON EARTH.

OUR CONSERVATION PROGRAMMES HELP PRESERVE ENDANGERED ANIMALS AND PLANTS.

OUR EDUCATION PROGRAMMES UNDERLINE THE IMPORTANCE OF NATURE FOR OUR
EXISTENCE.

TODAY THE WORLD IS FACING A PLANETARY EMERGENCY,

A NATURE CRISIS FUELED BY HUMAN IMPACTS, INCLUDING CLIMATE CHANGE.

SCIENCE IS WARNING THAT ONE MILLION SPECIES ARE AT RISK OF EXTINCTION,

NOT IN A DISTANT FUTURE, BUT WITHIN A FEW DECADES.

AS SIGNATORIES TO THIS COALITION, WE SUPPORT THE CALL

BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

FOR DECISIVE GLOBAL ACTION TO HALT BIODIVERSITY LOSS.

WE URGE ALL GOVERNMENTS TO AGREE ON AMBITIOUS POLICIES TO RESTORE AND
PROTECT THE ECOSYSTEMS ON WHICH WE ALL DEPEND.

WE INVITE ALL NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO TAKE URGENT
MEASURES ON THE GROUND.

WE CALL ON ALL BUSINESS LEADERS TO ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR DEPENDENCE AND IMPACT
ON NATURE AND TO COMMIT TO SUSTAINABILITY.

AND WE APPEAL TO ALL OUR VISITORS TO RAISE THEIR VOICE FOR NATURE.

WE BELONG TO NATURE, WE NEED NATURE, AND NATURE NOW NEEDS US LIKE NEVER
BEFORE.