

## Biodiversity

Biodiversity is defined by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) as “the variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems”.

Healthy ecosystems are essential for biodiversity to flourish, providing a range of goods and services upon which humanity depends, including food, fuel, clean water and protection from natural hazards. Conserving biodiversity is therefore central to sustainable development, human wellbeing and poverty eradication. Yet, the global decline of biodiversity is accelerating, mainly due to urbanization, overpopulation, agricultural expansion, the introduction of invasive species, pollution, overexploitation of natural resources and climate change. Action to stop the negative trend must be immediate before the damage is irreversible.

In May 2011, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity, continuing the UN’s work with the Convention on Biological Diversity. The convention promotes biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of ecosystems as well as the equitable sharing and utilization of genetic resources.

## UNOPS and biodiversity

Together with partners that include the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), UNOPS promotes the management of protected areas including nature reserves and national parks in West and Central Africa, and marine ecosystems across the globe.

UNOPS also works to enhance biodiversity conservation in production landscapes, marine areas and economic sectors such as agriculture, forestry and tourism. In West Africa, UNOPS supports local communities to develop alternative livelihood strategies to poaching such as eco-tourism, and promotes the protection of endemic livestock species. In Guatemala, UNOPS is ensuring compliance to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, an international agreement which aims to ensure the safe handling, transport and use of living modified organisms.



UNOPS is supporting governments to conserve the biodiversity of the TRIDOM landscape. **Photo:** COMIFAC

Presently, UNOPS implements biodiversity projects worth over \$50 million. UNOPS also supports biodiversity conservation through international waters projects and the Small Grants Programme.

### Case study: Building partnerships for rainforest conservation in Central Africa

The Congo Basin contains the second largest rainforest in the world after the Amazon, spanning six African countries. The area is one of the world’s most biologically diverse regions and provides shelter, food and materials for nearly 20 million people, including the indigenous forest-dwelling Baka people. The Congo Basin is also a vital region for climate change mitigation as it acts as a major carbon dioxide sink. However, the biodiversity of the Congo Basin is at risk from illegal timber exploitation, mining, poaching and large-scale commercial hunting.

Together with the GEF and UNDP, UNOPS is supporting the governments of Cameroon, Gabon and the Republic of the Congo to conserve the biodiversity of the Tri-national Dja-Odzala-Minkébé (TRIDOM) landscape, covering almost 150,000 square metres – around seven per cent of the entire Congo Basin. The project supports local communities by involving them in sustainable natural resource management. Moreover, the project seeks to alleviate poverty through income generating activities including eco-tourism, small scale commercial fish ponds and agro-forestry.