

Conference Pre-Announcement

The Great Escape

There is No Planet B!
Biodiversity Conservation, a Natural Ally in Sustainable Poverty Reduction

26 – 27 April 2010
Natura Artis Magistra
Amsterdam

Introduction

Healthy and functioning ecosystems are fundamental for life on earth. Human beings all over the world depend fully on vital ecosystems, directly or indirectly. Nevertheless, the planet cannot support the current manner in which the global economy has developed.

In international cooperation policies, maintaining healthy, robust, and productive ecosystems is acknowledged but in practice this still is a side-issue. The central goal of international cooperation remains the transfer of old economic models based on human engineering and the linear exploitation of natural resources for economic growth. To support this model, natural areas are converted and species that form the backbone of functioning ecosystems are over-exploited.

The recently published study *The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity* shows that society should start understanding the real value of ecosystems. This study adds a financial dimension to what in 2005 became known as the loss of essential services due to ecosystem degradation in the *Millennium Ecosystems Assessment*.

Time for “the Great Escape.”

In the next 50 years, planet earth will need to support more than 9 billion inhabitants. 9 billion individuals need to eat, need to support their livelihood, and want to have a high quality of life. There is no Planet B. Smart ecosystems that have evolved over billions of years will be a crucial partner in providing those needs.

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The conference

The two-day conference 'The Great Escape' held in Amsterdam, the Netherlands aims to provide clarity amongst policy-makers on the importance of maintaining healthy ecosystems to achieve economic development goals.

Participants are invited to debate the proposition above, as well as dilemma's in the following areas:

1) Ecosystems and Human Well-being: An Introduction

Where or what do we need to escape from? During this session, the importance of ecosystems for human well-being will be explored. We will do so by revisiting the conclusions of the *Millennium Ecosystems Assessment*, the lessons learned from the *IUCN World Conservation Congress 2008*, and the conclusions from the *The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity*.

2) The Biobased Economy: Escaping the Land-use Reality.

Dutch industry is moving towards a biobased economy. Chemicals, energy, and synthetic materials will soon be based not on fossil resources but on biodegradable and bio-based resources.

Lessons from the use of first-generation biomass in the energy system have been learned, but risks remain. Taking into account the high needs for biomass that chemical industries will have, the quest for sustainable sourcing is even more apparent. How to frame sustainable sourcing of biomass, and how to organize it, control it and promote it? These will be central questions during this session.

3) Escaping the Impact of Emergency Aid Relief Operations on Long Term Environmental Security.

Conflicts, drought, natural disasters all have the potential to place local societies on the verge of breakdown. Global society responds through emergency relief programmes. Such interventions are quickly organised, and will have to respond to the provision of urgently needed basic services to the affected communities: Energy, shelter, food, and healthcare.

The urgency of maintaining healthy ecosystems (forests that provide wood for shelter and energy, soil or river systems that provide food and water) is not always considered a high priority. Yet, after the first needs are met, the affected people will need to have access to resources to rebuild their lives and livelihoods. Healthy forests, healthy river systems and healthy soil systems will provide those resources, except when they are used up. The central question during this session will be how to integrate sustainable resource management in emergency aid relief operations.

4) Payments for Ecosystem Services

Escaping the monetary stronghold: REDD, and other financial instruments that put a value on the protection of ecosystems.

The loss of value as calculated by the study "The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity" is based on what value "should" be given to ecosystem services. Regretfully the provision of clean air, water, food and materials is generally not priced. Neither are regulatory services (disease, climate).

This session will highlight a number of PES-projects that aim to serve the dual goals of preserving critical ecosystem services and the biodiversity upon which they depend, while also contributing to poverty reduction. How to set up a system where the value of ecosystem services is included in economic decision making will be the central question in this subject area.

Proposed programme of the plenary event:

26 April 2010

10:00 to 13:00	Opening. General discussion on Ecosystems and Human Well Being.
13:00 to 14:00	Lunch
14:00 to 17:00	The Biobased Economy
17:00 to 18:30	Reception

27 April 2010

10:00 to 13:00	Emergency Aid Relief Operations and Ecosystems
13:00 to 14:00	Lunch
14:00 to 17:00	Payments for Ecosystem Services
17:00 to 17:30	Closing
17:30 to 19:00	Drinks

Registration

You can register free of charge on www.iucn.nl/about_us/conference_the_great_escape/ until the 19th of April. Without a registration, participation will not be possible.

For more information, please contact Aukje ter Horst: 020-6261732 or aukje.terhorst@iucn.nl

The conference is organised by the IUCN National Committee of the Netherlands. It is made possible with support from the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, Natura Artis Magistra, and the National Postcode Lottery. It is being organised as part of UN Year on Biodiversity 2010 and in close cooperation with the NatureandPoverty.net.

