



IUCN
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IUCN Media Advisory

Sustainability Dialogue /Wednesday 8th October 2008 / 14:30-16:00 / Auditorium Human Health and the Environment

The Story

Cholera spreads across the Irrawaddy Delta following a devastating typhoon. West Nile virus sweeps across North America. Soaring food prices in developing countries lead to increasing malnutrition. The SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) brings tourism to a halt in parts of China and Canada. These are just a few of the health challenges facing modern society. The common factor among them is that they are all closely related to the environment and the profound impact that we are having on the planet.

The damage caused by the Burmese typhoon was worsened by environmental degradation in the protective mangroves along the delta. West Nile virus was introduced into the US by non-native species of mosquitoes, just one of the hundreds of invasive species that are posing a major conservation problem throughout the world. The soaring food prices are due to a large extent to inappropriate management of ecosystems, with significant impacts on nature. SARS involves a complex chain of causation involving wild animals, domesticated animals and people. Avian influenza involves wild species of birds, domestic birds, and humans.

The health issues facing societies in all parts of the world are gaining increasing attention, but the environmental component is often practically ignored. This sustainability dialogue will bring together the world's leading experts who are addressing the connections between these issues, and explain them in a way that clearly links the work of IUCN with the fundamental human need for a healthy environment.

Key issues

- How does human health depend on biodiversity?
- What can be done to ensure that the links between human induced change, wild species, and infectious diseases are well understood?
- What is being done to ensure that the wild species of plants that produce effective medicines are well conserved?
- What can be done to improve the management wild species and domesticated species, to the benefit of human health?

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Invited / Confirmed Panelists

1. Dr. Eric Chivian, Professor Harvard Medical School, and Editor of “Sustaining Life: How Human Health Depends on Biodiversity” *
2. Dr. Danna Leaman, Chair of the IUCN Medicinal Plants Specialist Group *
3. Dr. William Karesh, Co-Chair of the Animal Health Specialist Group of IUCN's Species Survival Commission *
4. Dr. Anders Nordström, Director General SIDA, former acting Director General of the World Health Organization

* = confirmed

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