

Joint Statement to the 24th UNEP Governing Council and Global Ministerial Environmental Forum

Open Access to Data and Information on Biodiversity and the Environment



Comprehensive knowledge on the environment is essential for successful environmental management. Access to the best available data, information, and knowledge on the environment constitutes a fundamental precondition to meeting the objectives of UNEP, Multilateral Environmental Agreements, and the Millennium Development Goals.

Yet fundamental data and information on the environment and biological diversity are often fragmented, difficult to find, or simply not accessible. Key investment decisions are taken, in many cases, without the best available data on potential environmental impacts. These challenges are magnified in many countries where existing data and information assets of importance for meeting environmental goals are often held in institutions far from where they are needed most.

RECALLING Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration, establishing that each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities;

NOTING the Mission of UNEP “to provide leadership and encourage understanding in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples . . .” as well as to facilitate “the transfer of knowledge and technology for sustainable development”;

RECOGNIZING the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention);

FURTHER RECALLING the Berlin Declaration on open access in the Sciences and Humanities and the Budapest Open Access Initiative;

The Conservation Commons is a worldwide cooperative effort committed to open access of data and information on biodiversity and the environment. The Conservation Commons encompasses a variety of targeted initiatives, demonstrating innovative approaches to addressing the legal, institutional, and technological barriers we often face in accessing and using these important knowledge assets.

www.conservationcommons.org

The undersigned call upon the Parties to the 24th UNEP Governing Council and Global Ministerial Environmental Forum to consider the Principles of the Conservation Commons and, wherever possible in accordance with these Principles, ensure that all past, present and future publicly funded research results, assessments, maps, and databases on the environment and biodiversity are made freely and openly accessible to everyone.

Principles of the Conservation Commons

Open Access: The Conservation Commons promotes free and open access to data, information and knowledge for all conservation purposes.

Mutual Benefit: The Conservation Commons welcomes and encourages participants to both use these resources and to contribute data, information and knowledge.

Rights and Responsibilities: Contributors to the Conservation Commons have full right to attribution for any uses of their data, information, or knowledge, and the right to ensure that the original integrity of their contribution to the Commons is preserved. Users of the Conservation Commons are expected to comply, in good faith, with terms of uses specified by contributors.

