



# OPEN LETTER FOR BIODIVERSITY

## Be a signatory!



*On 26 March 2018, this Open Letter for Biodiversity will be published in French- and Dutch-speaking Belgian media, in order to call for the safeguard of biodiversity, by building on the recommendations listed in the regional assessment for Europe and Central Asia produced by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services ([IPBES](#)).*

*Be a signatory to this letter by filling-up [this form](#).*

**To be published on 26 March 2018**

### **Belgian scientists call for our government to safeguard biodiversity**

Today, a set of four regional assessment reports on the state of biodiversity and ecosystem services was published by the Intergovernmental Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). The IPBES is to biodiversity what the better-known Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is to climate change. It provides scientific assessments about the state of knowledge regarding the planet's biodiversity and its contributions to us, humans, in response to requests from decision makers. It also sheds light on the different scenarios for the future, and provides policy makers with options to remediate the situation.

According to the assessments, prepared by over 500 leading international experts from more than 100 countries, the picture looks rather grim. For example, the regional assessment for Europe and Central Asia shows that in our region, **[data regarding the loss of biodiversity will be added in this section of the letter once the IPBES assessments will have been officially launched in the sixth Plenary session in Medellin, Colombia]** Overall, plants and animal species are currently disappearing between 100 and 1000 times faster than the natural extinction rate; what some scientists call the beginning of the sixth mass extinction.

### **Why should we care about the loss of biodiversity?**

Biodiversity is globally recognised as the cornerstone of healthy ecosystems. It forms the basis for all 'services' produced by nature. These so-called 'ecosystem services' provide us with food and medicine, provide the raw materials needed for economic activity and innovation, allow a whole range of leisure activities, feed our spiritual needs, and inspire our artistic creations. It also offers regulatory services such as the production of oxygen in the atmosphere, the regulation of air qual-

ity, the regulation of climate and of water purification, the fixation of nitrogen in our soils and the pollination of our crops and vegetable gardens, etc. Moreover, biodiversity makes us more resistant and resilient. Studies show that people who live in a green environment suffer less from stress or obesity, are more active and take less antidepressants. While biodiversity disappears, ecosystems become less resilient, and all the services they offer will also fade away. Biodiversity also has an intrinsic value: species are the product of a long evolutionary process, and so they have the right to continued existence irrespective of whether or not they are useful to humans.

### **What can we do?**

The loss of biodiversity is caused by a number of interacting factors such as the intensification of our agriculture, climate change, urban development and the excessive use of natural resources; most of which can be addressed at a global level, but also at a national, regional, and local level. The IPBES assessment provides a list of recommendations for different sectors, to address drivers of change, safeguard biodiversity and ensure nature's contributions to people and sustainable development. For instance, it proposes to [\[listing of recommendations for different sectors will be added in this section of the letter once the IPBES assessments will have been officially launched in the sixth Plenary session in Medellin, Colombia\]](#)

### **Call for action**

Following the release of the IPBES assessment, we, Belgian researchers call on the various authorities in our country to take urgent measures for safeguarding biodiversity. We commit ourselves to conduct the necessary ecological and social scientific research to support such measures. The future of people depends on biodiversity. As a country where the loss of biodiversity already has major impacts and as a prime knowledge economy, Belgium should lead the way in the protection of biodiversity. It is time that we all make it the highest priority.

### **Signatories**

(names of signatories) *Be a signatory to this letter by filling-up [this form](#).*