

Global citizen consultation for the UN: Great concern for biodiversity and strong support for action

First Results of World Wide Views on Biodiversity: Three quarters of citizens were very concerned about biodiversity loss, people in developing countries feel more affected. Citizens agree that all countries should pay for protection, but the main part should come from developed countries.

The 3,000 participants of World Wide Views on Biodiversity (WWViews) – the first-ever global citizen consultation on biodiversity - were selected to reflect the demographic distribution in their country or region. Participants thus came from the mountains and lowlands of Nepal and Bolivia, some travelled three days by different means of transport to reach the venue; they were flown in from remote islands in the Philippines and the rain forests of Brazil; ethnic minorities and people from all parts of China were flown into Beijing and different language groups in Uganda were represented. The results from 34 meetings in 25 countries carry unique information about the views of citizens in both developed and developing countries. They are already available online and the conclusions from further analysis will be presented on October 18^t to policy makers on a Special Event at the UN COP11 in Hyderabad (India), before they make their final decisions.

Preliminary findings

- Three out of four citizens worldwide say that they are “very concerned” about the loss of biodiversity.
- Half the citizens in developing countries think that their country is “seriously affected” by the loss of biodiversity, whereas only a quarter of citizens in developed countries think that their country is, showing a deeper concern for the effects of the loss in developing countries.
- The great concern is also reflected in the citizens’ willingness to contribute to its protection. More than three out of four citizens from developing countries think that their countries should be obliged to pay for the protection of biodiversity in their countries, although developed countries should be obliged to pay the main part.
- Over 90 percent of worldwide citizens support the establishment of a legal framework to establish more marine protected areas in international waters.

Mr. Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity comments: *“The results of the World Wide Views on Biodiversity consultations is heartening as it reveals a relatively high degree of awareness of biodiversity and its importance for our well-being. It is interesting to see that people around the world see protecting marine biodiversity as a priority, for example. There also appears to be strong support for the mobilization of additional resources in support of biodiversity protection.”*

Unlike opinion polls, the WWViews method, developed by the Danish Board of Technology, provides respondents with balanced and scientifically based information, as well as an opportunity to deliberate for a full day with other citizens prior to rendering their judgements. It thus allows for exploring more substantive questions and well-considered responses, allowing policy makers to assess which policies will be well received if people are properly informed about the rationale behind them. Mr. **Bjørn Bedsted**, coordinator of **World Wide Views on Biodiversity**, said: *“The sample of citizens consulted in WWViews is large and diverse enough to give a sense of general trends in national and international public opinion on biodiversity”*.

„World Wide Views on Biodiversity“ is a part of the UN Decade on Biodiversity that aims to create awareness on Biodiversity. It contributes to this by giving citizens worldwide a platform for stating their views on how to deal politically with the decline in biodiversity. It is the citizens of the world who will have to live with the changes in biodiversity and they have the right to be aware of the consequences and possibilities on biodiversity.

The **Danish Minister for Environment, Mrs. Ida Auken**, stated: *“It is of utmost importance that we as politicians listen to the citizens and their ideas on how we can halt the decline of natural resources, plants and animals. We need to reverse this trend and we need to do it now! I know this is expensive and I’m eagerly anticipating the citizens opinion on how the countries could distribute the economic responsibility.”*

Mr. **S. Faizi** board member of the **CBD Alliance** said: *„This model ought to be promoted so that the idea of global meetings and communication without having to undertake financially and environmentally costly travels would be widely recognised. In the whole process it is important not to miss the fact that the views of the local communities and Indigenous People, the historical custodians of biodiversity, are more important than any other view.“*

Dr. Andrew Rosenberg, biodiversity expert and director of the **Center for Science and Democracy of the Union of Concerned Scientists (USA)**

„There is a lot of information to digest in the study but even first impressions are revealing. While many participants recognize that they are not experts or knowledgeable about biodiversity issues, most do recognize the need for action. Of course there is a range of actions that are preferred in different countries, as should be expected given cultural and political differences, but deep concern about biodiversity loss, the need for strong action, and the importance of sharing the burden are widely recognized.“

WWViews on Biodiversity is the result of a unique cooperation between the UN Secretariat for the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Danish Ministry of the Environment and the Danish Board of Technology. It is supported by the VILLUM FOUNDATION, The Danish Ministry of the Environment and the Japan Biodiversity Fund.

Pictures from the citizen consultations which all took place on September 15th 2012 are available at Flickr (www.flickr.com/groups/wwviewsonbiodiversity/pool/show/) and can be used by press.

Results are available for comparisons across countries, regions and economic groupings at www.biodiversity.wwviews.org.

Detailed results will be available end of September 2012 and can be obtained via the Danish Board of Technology (DBT):

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