

MEDIMUN XV Annual Session 2020



**RESEARCH REPORT - GA4 - Legal
Committee**

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Topic 1: The question of voluntary euthanasia

Introduction:

Euthanasia is the act of intentionally ending a life to relieve suffering - for example a lethal injection administered by a doctor. Voluntary euthanasia (VE) and physician-assisted suicide (PAS) have been the focus of great controversy in recent years. Under English law euthanasia is illegal and is considered manslaughter or murder. However, last year, the UK Supreme Court ruled that legal permission would no longer be needed to withdraw treatment from patients in permanent vegetative state. The NHS says withdrawing life-sustaining treatment can be part of good palliative care and should not be confused with euthanasia. Euthanasia can be accomplished either through an oral, intravenous, or intramuscular administration of drugs, or by oxygen deprivation (anoxia), as in some euthanasia machines. In individuals who are incapable of swallowing lethal doses of medication, an intravenous route is preferred. Intravenous administration is the most reliable and rapid way to accomplish euthanasia. The major parties involved are Switzerland, the Netherlands, and the U.S. state of Oregon.

One useful distinction is:

Euthanasia: A doctor is allowed by law to end a person's life by a painless means, as long as the patient and their family agree.

Assisted suicide: A doctor assists a patient to commit suicide if they request it.

Euthanasia can also be classed as voluntary or involuntary:

Voluntary: When euthanasia is conducted with consent. Voluntary euthanasia is currently legal in Belgium, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Switzerland, the states of Oregon and Washington in the US, Colombia and Canada.

When writing your resolution, you should not include the following since they are not included in the topic:

Non-voluntary: When euthanasia is conducted on a person who is unable to consent due to their current health condition. In this scenario the decision is made by another appropriate person, on behalf of the patient, based on their quality of life and suffering.

Involuntary: When euthanasia is performed on a person who would be able to provide informed consent, but does not, either because they do not want to die, or because they were not asked. This is called murder, as it's often against the patients will.

Voluntary euthanasia

The person wants to die and says so. This includes cases of:

- asking for help with dying
- **refusing burdensome medical treatment**
- asking for medical treatment to be stopped, or life support machines to be switched off
- refusing to eat
- simply deciding to die

Arguments for

Freedom of choice: Advocates argue that the patient should be able to make their own choice.

Quality of life: Only the patient really knows how they feel, and how the physical and emotional pain of illness and prolonged death impacts their quality of life.

Dignity: Every individual should be able to die with dignity.

Witnesses: Many who witness the slow death of others believe that assisted death should be allowed.

Resources: It makes more sense to channel the resources of highly-skilled staff, equipment, hospital beds, and medications towards life-saving treatments for those who wish to live, rather than those who do not.

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Humane: It is more humane to allow a person with intractable suffering to be allowed to choose to end that suffering.

Loved ones: It can help to shorten the grief and suffering of loved ones.

We already do it: If a beloved pet has intractable suffering, it is seen as an act of kindness to put it to sleep. Why should this kindness be denied to humans?

Arguments against

The doctor's role: Health care professionals may be unwilling to compromise their professional roles, especially in the light of the Hippocratic Oath.

Moral and religious arguments: Several faiths see euthanasia as a form of murder and morally unacceptable. Suicide, too, is "illegal" in some religions. Morally, there is an argument that euthanasia will weaken society's respect for the sanctity of life.

Patient competence: Euthanasia is only voluntary if the patient is mentally competent, with a lucid understanding of available options and consequences and the ability to express that understanding and their wish to terminate their own life. Determining or defining competence is not straightforward.

Guilt: Patients may feel they are a burden on resources and are psychologically pressured into consenting. They may feel that the financial, emotional, and mental burden on their family is too great. Even if the costs of treatment are provided by the state, there is a risk that hospital personnel may have an economic incentive to encourage euthanasia consent.

Mental illness: A person with depression is more likely to ask for assisted suicide, and this can complicate the decision.

Slippery slope: There is a risk that physician-assisted suicide will start with those who are terminally ill and wish to die because of intractable suffering, but then begin to include other individuals.

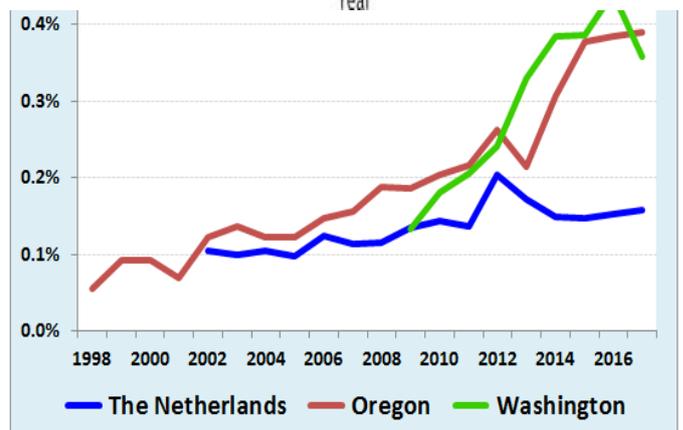
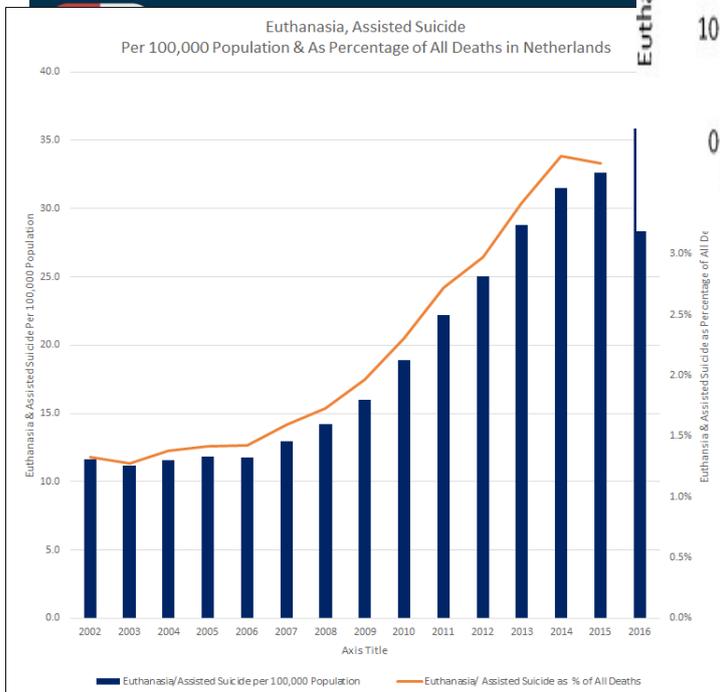
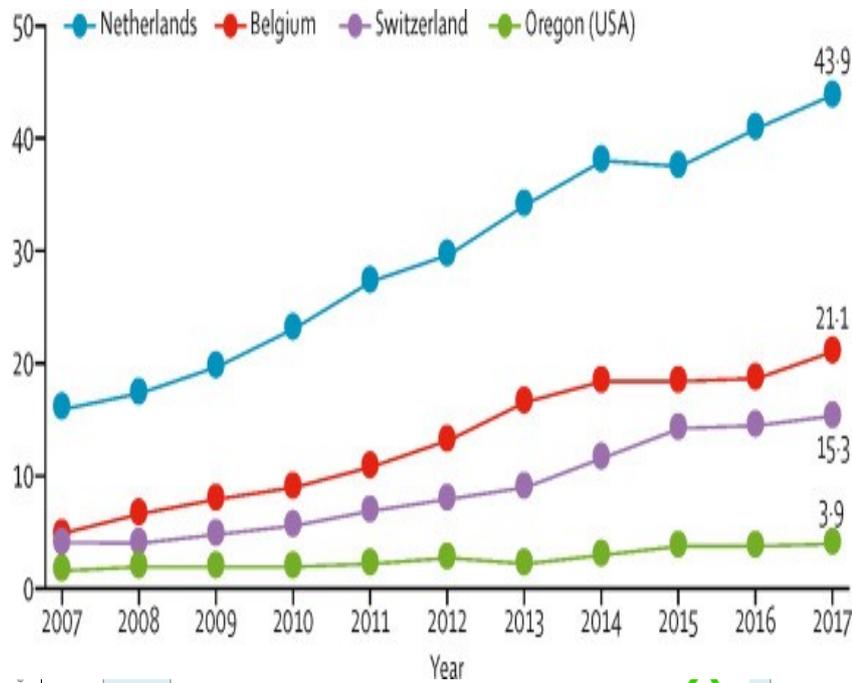
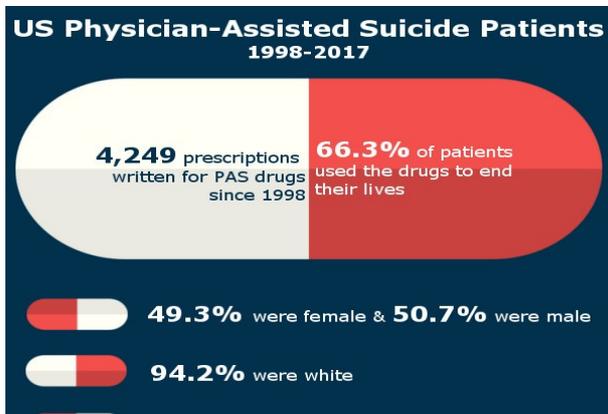
Possible recovery: Very occasionally, a patient recovers, against all the odds. The diagnosis might be wrong.

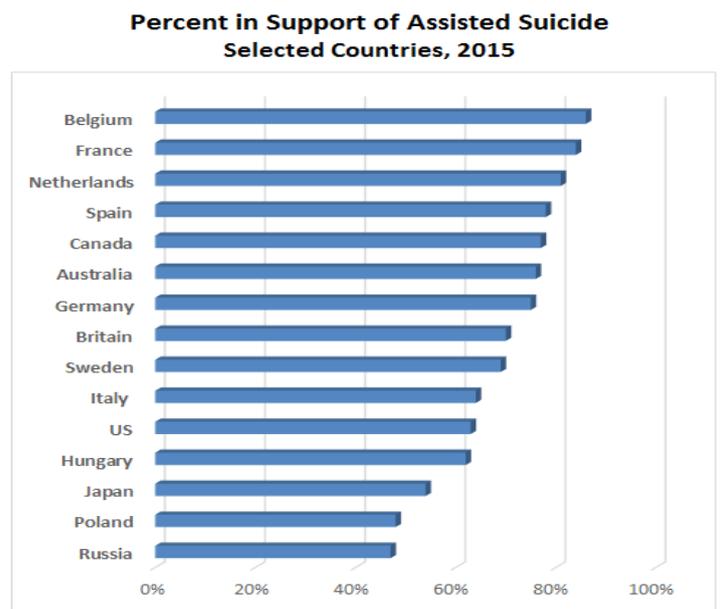
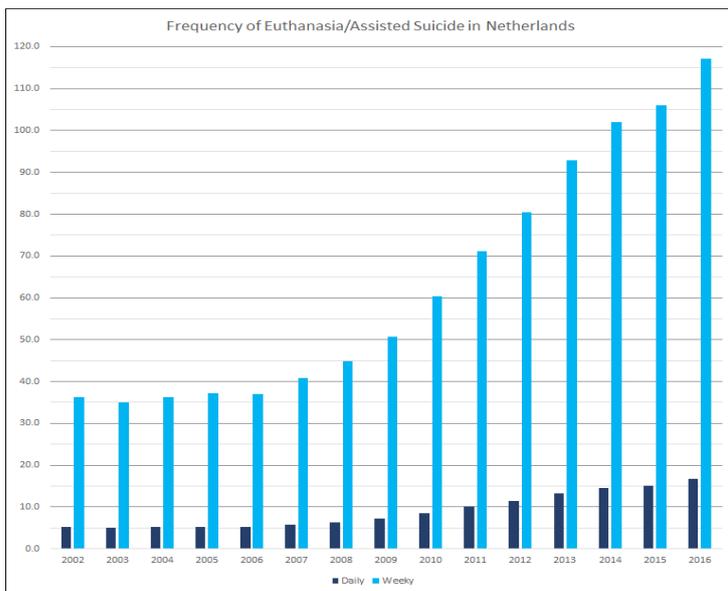
Palliative care: Good palliative care makes euthanasia unnecessary.

Regulation: Euthanasia cannot be properly regulated.

Some Statistics:

Around 3.7% of deaths in the Netherlands in 2015 were due to euthanasia. The Netherlands' regional euthanasia review committees reported that there were 5,516 deaths due to euthanasia in 2015. That is out of a total of around 147,000 - 148,000 deaths in the Netherlands that year.





Helpful websites:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voluntary_euthanasia

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/jan/18/death-on-demand-has-euthanasia-gone-too-far-netherlands-assisted-dying>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/euthanasia-and-assisted-suicide/>

<https://theconversation.com/in-places-where-its-legal-how-many-people-are-ending-their-lives-using-euthanasia-73755>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-47158287>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/euthanasia-and-assisted-suicide/>

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/euthanasia-voluntary/>

Topic 2: The question of the regulation of cross border air pollution

INTRODUCTION

It's a natural fact that wind and water don't respect national boundaries. One country's pollution quickly can, and often does, become another country's environmental and economic crisis. And because the problem originates in another country, solving it becomes a matter of diplomacy and international relations, leaving the local people who are most affected with few real options.

A good example of this phenomenon is occurring in Asia, where cross-border pollution from China is causing serious environmental problems in Japan and South Korea as the Chinese continue to expand their economy at great environmental cost.

KEY TERMS

Air pollution: It occurs when harmful or excessive quantities of substances including gases (such as carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide, nitrous oxides, methane and chlorofluorocarbons), particulates and biological molecules are introduced into Earth's atmosphere.

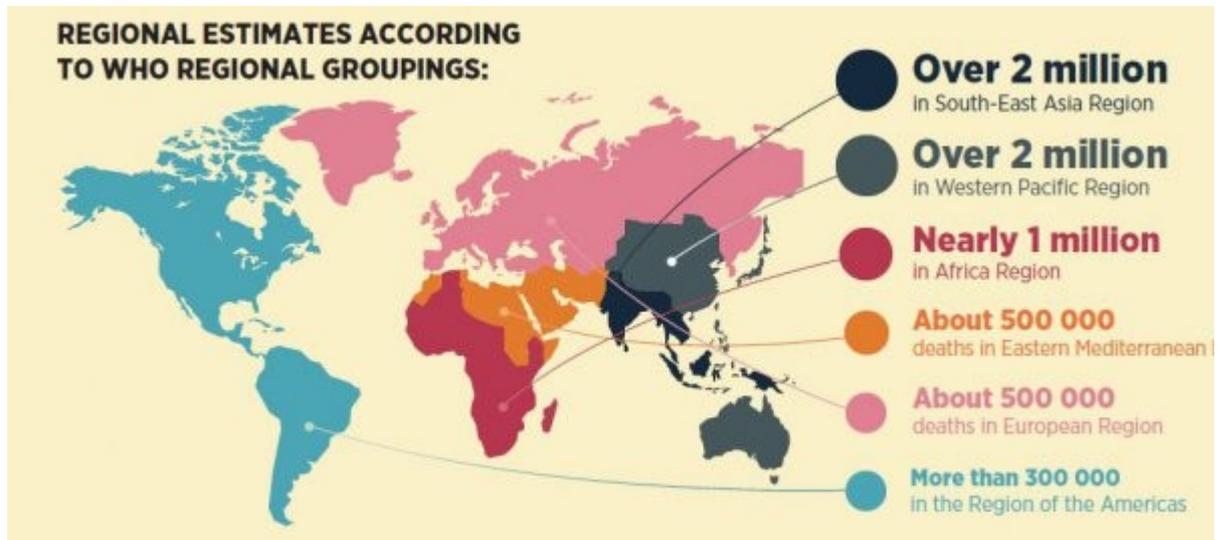
Cross border: involving movement or activity across a border between two countries.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

Air pollution has been referred to as the "invisible killer", leading to heart and lung disease, lung cancer, strokes. Since wind does not respect national boundaries, entities believe they can get away with it, disregarding the health of global citizens and the effects air pollution has on the planet. Cross-border pollution is a serious global issue, China is not alone as it struggles to find a workable balance between economic growth and environmental sustainability. Japan also created severe air and water pollution as it pushed hard to become the world's second largest economy after World War II, although the situation has improved since the 1970s when environmental regulations were imposed. And across the Pacific, the United States frequently places short-term economic gains before long-term environmental benefits. Emissions of nitrogen oxide — a greenhouse gas that is the primary cause of urban smog — are expected to

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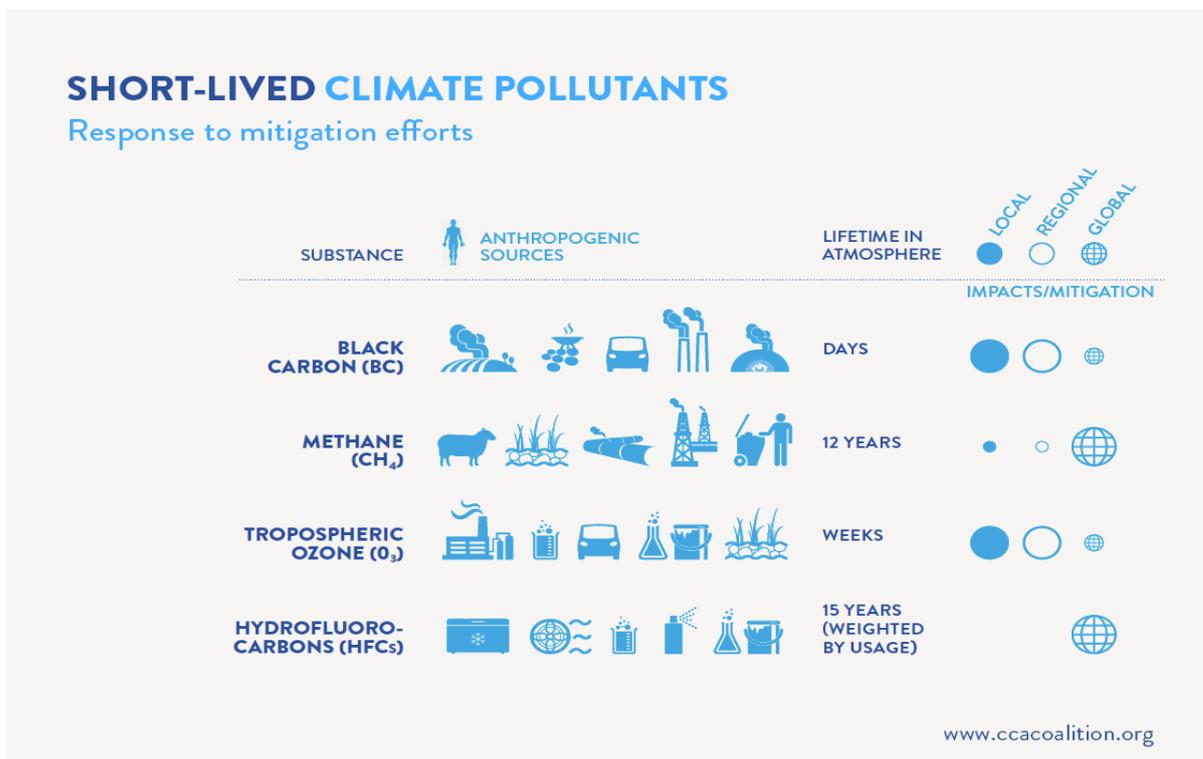
increase 2.3 times in China and 1.4 times in East Asia by 2020 if China and other nations do nothing to curb them. The EU is also facing problems due to coal-burning power generation used by many of its member states.



MAJOR PARTIES INVOLVED

World Health Organisation (WHO): A specialized agency of the United Nations that is concerned with international public health.

Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC): a voluntary partnership of governments, intergovernmental organizations, businesses, scientific institutions and civil society organizations committed to protecting the climate and improving air quality through actions to reduce short-lived climate pollutants.



International Energy Agency (IEA): It works to ensure reliable, affordable and clean energy for its 30 member countries and beyond. Their mission is guided by four main areas of focus: energy security, economic development, environmental awareness and engagement worldwide.

Global Alliance on Health and Pollution (GAHP): The [Global Alliance on Health and Pollution \(GAHP\)](#) was formed to address pollution and health at a global scale.

Health and Environment alliance (HEAL): a leading European not-for-profit organisation addressing how the environment affects health in the European Union (EU). HEAL demonstrates how policy changes can help protect health and enhance people's quality of life.

Climate Action Network (CAN): Climate Action Network–International is an umbrella group of environmental non-governmental organisations active on the issue of climate change.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP): leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system, and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE

BreatheLife is a joint campaign led by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Climate & Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) to mobilize cities and individuals to protect our health and planet from the effects of air pollution.

Geneva Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution: The UNECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (LRTAP) sets emission targets and technical emission standards with the goal of reducing the health and environmental impacts of air pollution. Since its establishment in 1979, it has grown to consist of eight protocols that identify specific measures to be taken to cut emissions for pollutants such as sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds and particulate matter.

In May 2015, WHO Member States took a major step forward in addressing air pollution issues, through the adoption of the resolution WHA68.8 (Health and the environment: addressing the health impact of air pollution).

More recently a road map for an enhanced global response to the adverse health effects of air pollution was adopted at the Sixty-ninth World Health Assembly in 2016, which etches out a plan forward in key priority areas:

- Expanding the knowledge base about impacts of air pollution on health;
- Monitoring and reporting on health trends and progress towards the air pollution-related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals;
- Leveraging the health sector to raise awareness of health benefits from air pollution reduction measures;
- Enhancing the health sector's capacity to work with other sectors and at all levels – local, national, regional and global – to help address the adverse health effects from air pollution through training, guidelines and national action plans.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

There is a dearth of information available on the health effects and economic impact of environmental pollution. Proven solutions are available, but implementation remains a challenge that requires coordinated efforts across sectors and nations.

The need for cooperation is reiterated in a special report on Energy and Air Pollution from the International Energy Agency (IEA), which campaigns for global action to overcome the negative environmental effects of energy use. The report cites energy production as the most important source of air pollution coming from human activity and presents strategies to tackle energy poverty in

developing countries, reduce pollutant emissions through post-combustion control technologies, and promote clean forms of energy.

The Clean Air Scenario presented by IEA uses benchmarks for air quality goals, such as WHO guideline levels, to set long-term targets. Strategies outlined for the energy sector are adapted to different national and regional settings. In developing countries in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, a notable health impact arises from smoky environments caused by use of wood and other solid fuels for cooking; whereas power plants, industrial facilities, and vehicle emissions are the main causes of outdoor pollution in many high-income countries. Cities in particular are susceptible to becoming pollution hotspots due to concentrated populations, energy use, and traffic.

The Lancet, the Global Alliance on Health and Pollution (GAHP), and the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, with coordination from the UN Environment Programme and the World Bank, have united to produce a Commission on Pollution, Health, and Development. The aim of the Commission is to inform key decision makers globally of pollution's severe and under-reported contribution to the global burden of disease and to present available pollution control strategies and solutions, dispelling the myth of pollution's inevitability and combating apathy. In a turbulent political climate, environmental pollution must not be allowed to fall by the wayside. Policies should take centre stage and nations must come together in a spirit of mutual cooperation to tackle air pollution.



Sources:

<https://www.citywindsor.ca/residents/environment/Environmental-Master-Plan/Goal-A-Improve-Our-Air-Quality/Pages/Cross-Border-Air-Pollution.aspx>

<https://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=5ec63b6a-92d3-47a2-b6ec-af4075c501bc>

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(16\)31019-4/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(16)31019-4/fulltext)

https://unctad.org/en/Docs/iteipcmisc12_en.pdf

<https://www.thoughtco.com/cross-border-pollution-1204093>

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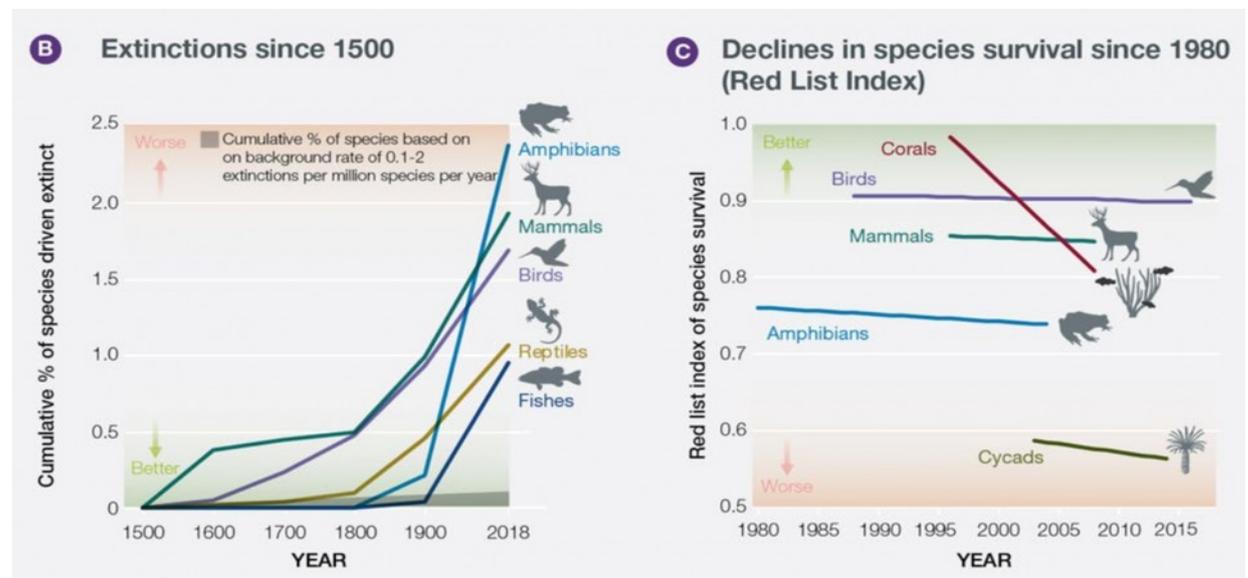
<https://breathelife2030.org/news/infographic-library/>

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Topic 3: The question of the legal responsibility for the preservation of endangered species.

INTRODUCTION

Extinction is a natural occurring phenomenon that occurs at a natural background rate of one to five species per year. Today, scientists estimate that species are going extinct at up to 1000 times the background rate- dozens of species become extinct each day. Earth is facing its sixth mass extinction and this time – unlike the previous five- it is caused by humans.



KEY TERMS

Endangered species: An endangered species is a type of organism that is threatened by extinction.

Organism: any individual living thing.

Red List of Threatened Species: defines the severity and specific causes of a species' threat of extinction. It contains seven levels of conservation: least concern, near threatened, vulnerable, endangered, critically endangered, extinct in the wild, and extinct. Species are classified based on five criteria; population reduction rate, geographic range, population size, population restrictions, and probability of extinction.

Natural Habitat: an ecological or environmental area where a specific species life.

Overfishing: the removal of a species of fish from a body of water at a rate that the species cannot replenish in time, resulting in those species either becoming depleted or very underpopulated in that given area.

Overhunting: is an activity which results in serious reduction of species population or harm to wildlife. It is otherwise defined as the relentless chase for wild or game animals for the purpose of killing or catching them for economic or personal gains or for food.

Overharvesting: refers to harvesting a renewable resource to the point of diminishing returns

Poaching: the illegal taking of wildlife, in violation of local, state, federal, or international law.

Fauna: all of the animal life present in a particular region or time

Flora: the plant life occurring in a particular region or time

Monoculture: the agricultural method of growing a single crop.

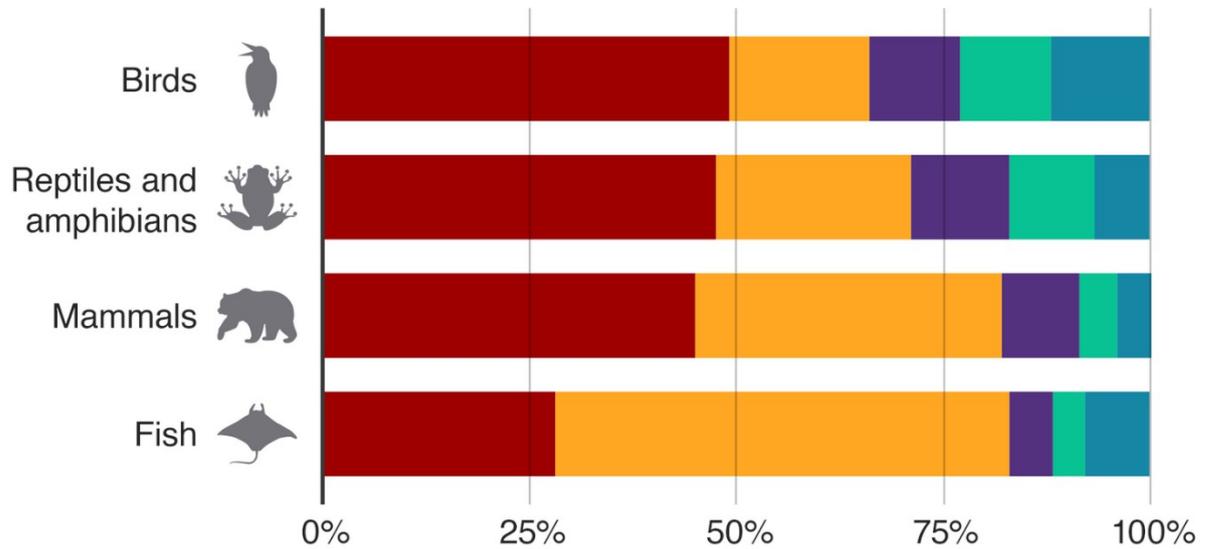
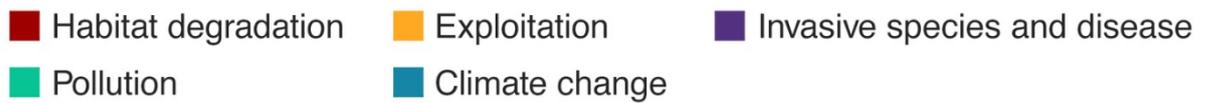
GENERAL OVERVIEW

Species become endangered by two main reasons: loss of habitat and loss of genetic variation. Although both can occur naturally, today human activity has a vital role in the degradation of natural habitat and the diminution of genetic variation. Development for housing, industry and agriculture rapidly decreases habitats, by clearing a piece of land, destroying organisms that are possibly habitats of other organisms and by reducing the range of a species.

Furthermore, the climate crisis is a leading cause of the destruction of natural habitat. One example is the melting of the ice caps, which has resulted in the reduction of arctic animals' habitats. Overhunting, overfishing, overharvesting and poaching and monoculture have vastly contributed to loss of genetic variation. By drastically decreasing the population of a species, fewer breeding pairs are available, shrinking genetic variation. If genes are not diverse, disease spreads more easily and species are not able to adapt to changes as easily, resulting in a further loss of population. Pollution and invasive species and disease are also contributing factors to the extinction crisis.

Habitat loss is a major threat to biodiversity

The Living Planet Report assesses key drivers of species decline



Note: A sample of 3,789 populations evaluated by the Living Planet Index

Source: WWF, Living Planet Report 2018

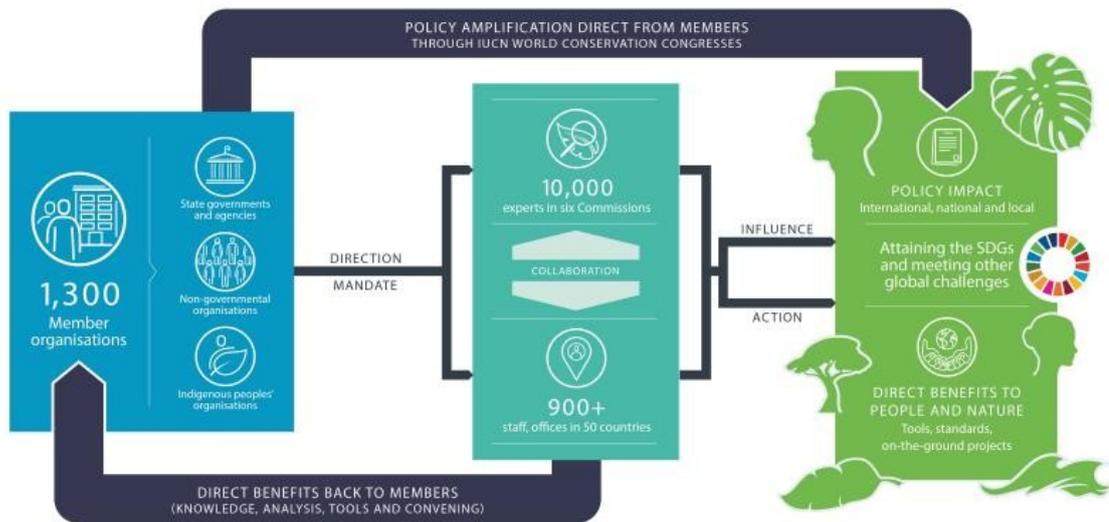


MAJOR PARTIES INVOLVED

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN): international organization working in the field of nature conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. It is involved in data gathering and analysis, research, field projects, advocacy, and education.



UNITED FOR LIFE AND LIVELIHOODS



The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF): international non-governmental working in the field of wilderness preservation, and the reduction of human impact on the environment

International Anti-Poaching Foundation (IAPF): Operates in southern and East Africa. The focus of the organization is ecosystem preservation, achieved through the two key functions of training and operations.

Wildlife conservation Society (WCS): an international non-governmental organisation whose mission is to save wildlife and wild places worldwide through science, conservation action, education, and inspiring people to value nature. Its goal is to conserve the world's largest wild places in 15 priority regions, home to more than 50% of the planet's biodiversity.

Wildlife Alliance: founded in 1995 originally as the Global Survival Network, is an international non-profit organization with current in-country programs in Cambodia and completed projects in Thailand, Myanmar, India, Ecuador and Russia.

The UNFCCC secretariat (UN Climate Change) : established in 1992 when countries adopted the United Nations Framework [Convention](#) on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES): an intergovernmental organization established to improve the

interface between science and policy on issues of biodiversity and ecosystem services.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE

Multiple agreements and treaties have been implemented in hopes of conserving the populations of wild animals and plants. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species and Fauna (CITES), entered into force in 1975, is an international agreement between governments. Its aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. The Convention on Biological Diversity is an international legally-binding treaty with three main goals: conservation of biodiversity; sustainable use of biodiversity; fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources. Agreements to combat climate change – a leading effect on the increase of endangered species- have also been implemented. The Paris Agreement brings all nations into a common cause to undertake ambitious efforts to combat climate change and adapt to its effects, with enhanced support to assist developing countries to do so. As such, it charts a new course in the global climate effort. The Kyoto Protocol is an international agreement that aimed to reduce carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions and the presence of greenhouse gases (GHG) in the atmosphere. Non-governmental organisations have had a significant role in raising global awareness on the matter while also working relentlessly to protect species' natural habitats and combat illegal activities.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Since this issue has a global capacity it is essential that it is solved globally; communication and collaboration between governments must be maximized.

Despite the efforts of many non-governmental organisations, many citizens not to mention people in power, still remain oblivious to the existence and the devastating effects of the Extinction Crisis.

In order to reduce the rate at which species become extinct it is essential to create sustainable households and businesses; to create new, definitive laws and regulations to combat overharvesting, overfishing, poaching , overharvesting and global warming and to eliminate invasive species.

SOURCES

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<https://www.iucnredlist.org/>

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<https://www.earth.com/news/extinction-crisis-solutions/>

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