

'The world is a mess' warns renowned zoologist Jane Goodall ahead of Cop16

By RFI



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As officials from around 200 countries prepare to meet in Colombia for the Cop16 biodiversity summit starting Monday, world-respected British zoologist Jane Goodall said there was little time left to reverse the downward slide. She wants the United Nations meeting to lead to action rather than "words and false promises".

"What keeps me going is that right now, the world is a mess," Goodall told RFI. "I care really passionately about the natural world, the environment, not just the chimpanzees, but all the other animals, but I also care about children. I care about the people around the world who are suffering so much today."

Goodall has been a UN Messenger of Peace since 2002 and has used this platform to raise awareness about the damage done to nature.

At 90, she is still crisscrossing the globe in a bid to help defend the chimpanzee, who she first went to Tanzania to study more than 60 years ago.

"I was given a gift, and when I speak, people listen. And people who are losing hope, I seem to be able to give them more hope, to enable everyone to roll up their sleeves and take action," [she told RFI](#) ahead of her talk at [Unesco in Paris](#) on Saturday.

Her visit to the French capital comes just two days ahead of the Cop16 biodiversity summit in Cali, Colombia.

Reverse species destruction

About 12,000 delegates from nearly 200 countries, including 140 government ministers and a dozen heads of state are due to attend the [16th Conference](#) of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, running until 1 November.

Themed "Peace with Nature," it has the urgent task of coming up with monitoring and funding mechanisms to ensure that 23 UN targets agreed in 2022 to halt and reverse species destruction can be met by 2030.

The delegates have their work cut out for them, with just five years left to achieve the UN goal of placing 30 percent of land and sea areas under protection by 2030.

[Goodall](#) told RFI that she hopes that promises made will be followed up "because the time for words and false promises is past".

Thankfully, more people are aware of climate change now and these types of conferences lead to more networking behind the scenes and this "can lead to very positive results," she says.

[Wildlife populations plunge 73 percent amid warnings of biodiversity crisis](#)

When asked about a recent World Wide Wildlife Fund report (WWF) that shows wildlife has fallen by 73 percent in the last 50 years, Goodall pointed out the obvious connections between climate change and the worsening biodiversity crisis.

One of the dangers, is that people don't truly understand the issues at hand. "Scientific reports are a bit too scientific. That's why she made a point of writing her own reports in an accessible language that "even the average 16 year-old could understand".

"The trouble is everything, all the problems that we face... they're all interrelated."

One of the major issues is industrial agriculture, the use of pesticides and herbicides, and the significant quantity of water needed to change vegetable in animal protein, she points out. This results in a lot of CO2 produced with the use of heavy machinery, added to the methane gas produced by the animals themselves.

Stop greenwashing

Desperate measures are necessary, she says. Government and big companies really need to start "pulling in their belts and take action, not just greenwashing".

"You may solve one problem, and if you're not thinking holistically, that may create another problem."

Besides [biodiversity](#), Cop16 organisers have said Indigenous peoples will take an active part in the talks.

Even if Indigenous peoples have been all too often disappointed by the final decisions taken at biodiversity summits, that progress and increased presence was hailed by Goodall.

"Fortunately, we're beginning to listen to the voices of the Indigenous people. We're beginning to learn from them some of the ways that they've lived in harmony with the environment," she told French news agency AFP.

Goodall also urged nations to tackle poverty to help protect the environment.

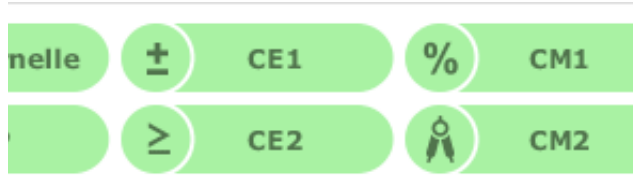
[EU reaches 'historic' deal on contested biodiversity law](#)

"We need to also alleviate poverty because very poor people destroy the environment in order to survive," she said.

Preaching the importance of keeping alive the hope humanity can save the world, Goodall came with the message: "Realise every day you make a difference."

"Each individual matters. Each individual has a role to play, and every one of us makes some impact on the planet every single day, and we can choose what sort of impact we make," she said.

"It's not only up to government and big business. It's up to all of us to make changes in our lives."



own climate change".