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## ***To save life on Earth, abolish capitalism ASAP***

Scientists have issued yet another dire warning on the climate crisis. In what the New York Times described May 6 as a “sweeping new United Nations assessment,” a 1,500-page report compiled by “hundreds of international experts and based on thousands of scientific studies” alerts the world that biodiversity around the planet is on a dangerous, alarming decline.

Twenty or 30 years ago, most people might have skimmed this kind of article. Only those following the issue closely would have read the entire article, much less the full report. Today, the entire working class and especially those in the global South must know to read such reports carefully, as the loss of homes, land and lives affects more and more people around the world.

The U.N.’s recent report, “UNEP/Global Environment Outlook 2019,” (available at [un.org](http://un.org)) concludes that “civilization and humans are accelerating extinction and altering the natural world at a pace unprecedented in human history.” It points out that this is not the first report about the Earth’s ecosystem, but it does elaborate how “human life is intertwined with the fate of other species.”

The authors conclude that the devastation of nature has become so dire that piecemeal efforts are no longer adequate. It calls for “transformative changes that include curbing wasteful consumption, lessening agricultural footprint” and comes down on “illegal logging and fishing.”

This report, like much other analysis, concludes that “humans” or “civilization” is to blame. But it is not “humans” in the abstract who are responsible for the decline in

biodiversity or for climate change. It is the capitalist class and their system that are entirely at fault for creating this crisis.

The report calls for “transformative changes” — and that is important. But that is not enough. What is needed are revolutionary changes. What is needed is an end to capitalism and building socialism. This is needed now, not tomorrow.

### **Biodiversity — and humans — at extreme risk**

The report’s statistics on the natural world are indeed alarming. The rain forests of South America, like the jungles of the Congo, are awe inspiring, with an abundance of diverse species not only stunningly beautiful to the eye, but necessary planetwide for the continuation of life itself.

There is awe of another kind, however, at what is happening to the species in these areas — which have already declined by an awful 20 percent.

According to the report, “Activities like farming, logging, poaching, fishing and mining are altering the natural world at a rate unprecedented in human history.” The report estimates that biodiversity loss will accelerate through 2050, just a short 31 years from now. As local climates change, in which fish, mammals, plants, birds and insects evolved over millennia, the very existence of these species is in danger.

### **‘Our Planet’ is a must-see**

A recent Netflix documentary series, “Our Planet,” highlights the all-encompassing connection between these diverse species in our world and human beings. The film opens with narration affirming the U.N. report that in the space of one human lifetime, the whole world has changed. In the last 50 years, wildlife populations have declined by a whopping 60 percent.

Walrus are shown grasping for new space to live on a rocky island because the ice that once provided their home has melted. With no ice, extreme overcrowding leads to stampedes and death. Walrus are having to climb up stony cliffs in search of living space. They are seen plunging from the dangerous cliffs that cannot sustain them. Their bodies pile up in an eerie graveyard on the water’s edge.

The documentary points out that orangutans—indeed a spectacle to behold— are dying at a rate of 100 a week. Only recently this animal was discovered to use tools — a fact highlighting the similarities between humans and the other great apes, our evolutionary cousins.

Why are orangutans dying so rapidly? It's because some capitalist has decided to clear the animals' habitat to grow palm oil trees. As a result of that decision, 75 percent of their jungle habitat has disappeared.

It's true that palm oil is useful to humans, especially for medicinal use such as prevention and treatment of cancer, dementia, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and malaria. But the real issue is about how decisions are made about the land and the species that live there. Capitalists are making those decisions merely to further their drive for profits.

By the end of "Our Planet," the viewer is committed to saving not only humans, but the natural world from the climate crisis. You might find yourself Googling "eco-warrior!"

### **All life is connected**

If the natural world is in decline, it is an understatement to say that humans are dramatically impacted — because the relationship is as decisive as life and death. Humans cannot live without food security, clean water, clean air — and these are dramatically and negatively affected by climate change.

Humans are producing more food than ever. Now. But if there are no bees or other insects to help pollinate fruits and vegetables, people won't have these foods to eat.

Only a fraction of the living creatures on Earth, about 1 million species, have been identified. Scientists estimate there may be 8 million plant and animal species still to identify. But these and other species may cease to exist before they are even recognized. Extinction rates are "currently tens to hundreds of times higher than they have been in the past 10 million years."

(New York Times, May 6)

Land is being ravaged. Forests being cleared for farmland, for unplanned roads and cities that mainly aid the travel of capital, have meant that "three-quarters of the world's land area has been significantly altered."

Though tropical jungles and rainforests provide medicines — like the ingredients for aspirin — the unplanned, uncontrolled exploitation of these resources for corporate profit is also driving plant species toward disappearance.

What then for humanity? As the Earth is changed by fossil fuels, as ice caps melt away, the warming of the globe and rising seas result in danger for all the planet's biodiversity. Just as walrus lose space, so too do humans find themselves uprooted and endangered.

Jakarta, Indonesia, is one of many examples. A city of 10 million, Jakarta faces "obliteration by rising seas and sinking land. Models predict that by 2050, 95 percent of north Jakarta could be submerged." (Wired, May 2)

## **Who is to blame?**

Who decides what is planted, where and how to log? Who has the equipment to enter the rainforest and pillage its resources? Who decides that palm trees are more important than keeping the rainforest's land inhabited by its indigenous species?

It is not adequate to say “humans” are making these decisions. An impoverished worker in Kerala, India, may have no choice but to place fishing nets and ropes to trap and kill sea turtles. That worker must eat and support a family.

But who will stop the Trumps of the world from buying and selling ivory? That act has killed off nearly 7,000 elephants — wondrous social, communicative, memory-bearing creatures — in the last two years alone.

Who decides when to practice agricultural monoculture rather than grow more than one crop and thus replenish the soil's natural nutrients? Who decides where, when and how much to clear in the Amazonian forest? With a fascist president in Brazil who is a climate-change denier, who will protect the Amazon? The U.N. can publish all the groundbreaking reports it wants, but that won't and can't stop President Bolsonaro.

Will the capitalists of Indonesia allow the government to move a city of 10 million fairly and safely? Will they pay for it? Will the government be up to such a task without the intervention of the masses?

Are these decisions being based on human need — or on profit?

According to the Decolonial Atlas website: “Just 100 companies are responsible for more than 70 percent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions since 1988. The guys who run those companies — and they *are* mostly guys — have gotten rich on the backs of literally all life on Earth.” We should add “ultra-rich.”

The most eco-sustainable country on Earth is socialist Cuba. In 2006 the World Wildlife Fund reported Cuba to be “the only country in the world to reach a sustainable development, because the country covers their present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” ([tinyurl.com/y2t3w9bj](http://tinyurl.com/y2t3w9bj)) Merely compare Florida's coral reefs to Cuba's, and you will see that the former look like a cancerous lung, while Cuba's are sparkling with health.

China, with its centrally planned economy under the aegis of its Communist Party, is actively combating global warming. The Environmental Defense Fund admits, “As the United States steps away from global climate leadership, China is stepping up.” Even though China has become “the factory of the world,” it has exceeded the pledges made in

the Paris Accords to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, while the U.S. government has walked away from the accords and even denies global warming.

It is capitalism that created climate change. It is socialism that will resolve it. Only a planned economy based on solidarity and human need, not avaricious profit, can adequately and genuinely deal with the effects of climate change.

Remember Hurricane Katrina. Remember Hurricane Maria.

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