

Background of the Planet Under Pressure Conference

The aim of the Conference was to provide a guide for Rio+20 and to help define the agenda for the next decade of global change research around the world. The Conference was co-hosted by The Royal Society, the UK's Living with Environmental Change (LWEC) Partnership and the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC).

The first day of the Conference explored the pressures that the planet and the human population are under, asking what the economic, political and scientific challenges are and how we manage systemic risk within the Earth system. Day two explored the solutions that science and other sources of innovation have identified for these looming problems; reducing pressures on the planet, improving human well-being and promoting transformative changes for a sustainable future. On the third day, challenges to progress were discussed. Many barriers to progress are well known and even well understood; yet collectively the science community is struggling to overcome them. Day three explored questions such as: What will global governance look like in the future? How do we rethink global trade? How are equality and sustainability linked? The final day was entitled 'Planetary Stewardship' and discussed ways ahead from a high-level policy perspective. Science has a pivotal role to play in providing new knowledge towards solutions, but the ways in which science, policy and industry work together must be addressed. On day four leaders from science, politics, industry and civil society discussed how we, as a community, can ignite paradigm shifts.

The conference had three main themes running across the four days: a) meeting global needs, food, energy, water and other ecosystem services; b) transforming our way of living, development pathways under global environmental change; and, c) governing across scales, innovative stewardship of the Earth system.

ESPA's Global Dialogue Session

On day three of the Conference, ESPA held a key event entitled: '**Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation: A Global Dialogue!**'. The session was chaired by Professor Paul van Gardingen, ESPA Director. The panel of international discussants included: Professor Georgina Mace, ESPA Associate Director for Knowledge; Liz Carlile, ESPA's Communication Team Lead; Dr Bhaskar Vira, an ESPA project Principle Investigator (PI); Janet Ranganathan, a member of ESPA's International Programme Advisory Committee (I-PAC); Professor Moses Chimbari, also a member of ESPA's I-PAC; Chetan Agarwal, an ESPA researcher; and, Nigel Asquith, an ESPA project PI. The last four panel members listed here joined the session by electronically, illustrating that in order to address the challenges of a planet under pressure, we need to start working in new ways.

The session promoted a global discussion on the opportunities and challenges associated with using ecosystem services to reduce poverty. The event was well attended by delegates at the Planet Under Pressure conference and stimulated a lively debate and series of interesting questions. It was also an opportunity to highlight the work of ESPA to a wider audience, many of whom were not aware of the programme and will hopefully be inspired to become future contributors to ESPA. Paul van Gardingen also stressed the innovative use of video technology at international conferences of this type and the session itself was testament to its importance and usefulness as a way of involving a greater number of people from around the globe without increasing our carbon emissions as a research community.

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