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Press Release

by the Natural History Museum of Crete – University of Crete

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'United for Biodiversity'

Reconciliation with Nature

Our practices are biased by eons of cultural and religious traditions which regard humans as separate from Nature.

From our earliest texts (Genesis 1:28: "*Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.*") we humans are taught that we are separate from nature.

Human arrogance (as the "culmination of Creation" or "Evolution" depending on one's taste) grew ever since. Moreover, our technological advances contributed to a false self-confidence of omnipotence.

On the other hand, several scholars, culminating with Darwin and many more after him, showed clearly and unequivocally that human superiority to, and/or, separation from, the rest of Nature, is a dangerous allusion: Humans are part of Nature.

Despite our scholarly oaths of fidelity to Darwin, in our everyday practice, both economic and scientific, we continue to try to "subdue" Nature. In reality, we are in a constant and ruthless, profit driven, **war** with Nature. We continuously extirpate biodiversity, altering landscapes, shrinking whatever wilderness remains. Unsurprisingly, the new environments created are equally hostile to Nature as they are to humans.

We continuously invent new, shiny, albeit senseless concepts which contradict in their terms (e.g. sustainable development, ecosystem services) and which do not challenge our BaU¹ model and further alienate us from Nature. Due to society's palpable desperation (as it experiences a "cold Turkey" effect from the deprivation of a meaningful relation with Nature) such concepts are enthusiastically welcomed and widely accepted. However, they prove useless in mitigating our "war crimes" despite countless initiatives, policies and projects. Their results are deplorable by any measure: ecological footprint, rhythm of biodiversity loss etc.

¹ Business-as-usual, *sensu* [Stern's review](#)





Our arrogance should be humbled by the fact that Nature had existed on this planet ~4bn years before humans, having survived 5 major extinction events. It will survive us as well. The real question is: will **we** survive our catastrophic BaU attitude?

We need to acknowledge that we are part on Nature, which provides us with all our needs (food, water, clean air, medicines, materials, health – including psychic health, and countless other) for which we have no substitutes, nor can we pay for once they are lost.

Moreover, we need to dispose of our arrogance and acknowledge that **we** are in need of Nature and not vice versa.

Our main focus and all our efforts should be directed towards practices, at all scales, which help the reconciliation of Humans with Nature. Countless are such practices, means and methods. What we lack is a firm and decisive commitment towards such a goal, as well as an equally firm and decisive rejection of our BaU attitude.

