

Biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and UK national security



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Westminster Hall debate, 3 September 2026

Legislation and
Governance Unit

Introduction

This debate on the government's January 2026 [national security assessment](#) of global biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse is an important opportunity to press ministers on transparency, preparedness and action.

The assessment is clear: the breakdown of ecosystems and destruction of nature is accelerating, which is threatening the UK's security and prosperity.

National security risks of this scale should be proactively disclosed to Parliament, not released only when forced by public pressure.

Recent extreme heat, drought, crop failures and falling river and reservoir levels underline that resilience is already a live UK security issue. Nature recovery, water resilience, soil health, peatland restoration, woodland creation and urban greening measures must be embedded as part of national preparedness, not seen as optional environmental measures.

Core facts in the assessment

The assessment identifies six ecosystem regions as critical to UK national security: the Amazon rainforest, Congo Basin, coral reefs, mangroves, the Himalayas, and boreal forests in Russia and Canada.

It warns there is a realistic possibility that some critical ecosystems could begin to collapse by 2030 or sooner, driven by biodiversity loss, land use change, pollution, climate change and other pressures.

The timing and pathways are uncertain, but thresholds may already have been crossed in some systems, meaning irreversible collapse could be inevitable, even if impacts are delayed.

The likely consequences include disrupted weather patterns, crop failures, water scarcity, infectious disease outbreaks, migration pressures, conflict, economic insecurity and greater competition between states for resources.

How should the government respond?

- Publish the full assessment and evidence base, including scenarios, confidence levels, departmental risk ownership and impact modelling.
- Designate ecosystem collapse as a formal national security risk in the National Security Risk Assessment, resilience planning, defence assumptions and foreign policy priorities.
- Create a cross-government action plan with clear ministerial ownership, deadlines, budgets and measurable outcomes.
- introduce a minister for adaptation within the Cabinet Office, to take a cross-government leadership role on resilience, including on the development of the Fourth National Adaptation Programme NAP4.
- Stop UK finance and trade driving ecosystem destruction overseas through stronger due diligence on deforestation, land conversion, biodiversity loss and human rights harms.
- Make protection of critical ecosystems a diplomatic priority, including through climate and nature finance, trade policy, debt relief and support for Indigenous peoples and local communities.
- Report annually to Parliament on ecosystem collapse risks to UK security and progress on government actions.

Suggested questions to put to the minister

- Will the government either publish the full national security assessment or give its reasons for withholding this from Parliament?
- What specific policy changes have been made since the assessment was completed?
- Who is responsible in government for coordinating the response to ecosystem collapse risks across departments?
- How will the new Climate and Nature Security Taskforce feed into policy making, and how transparent will its work be?
- What action is the UK taking to protect the ecosystems identified as critical to national security, including the Amazon and Congo Basin?
- What plans will be put in place to prepare for the impacts of extreme weather as we head into a year scientists are calling a 'super El Nino', including action before the Fourth National Adaptation Programme.
- Will the government recognise healthy, functioning ecosystems as essential national infrastructure in decision making?

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