

# Megadiverse Countries

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In News

Megadiverse Countries is a term used to refer to the world's top biodiversity-rich countries. This **country-focused method** raises national awareness for biodiversity conservation in nations with high biological diversity, with many species unique to a specific country. This **concept was first proposed in 1988 by Russell Mittermeier.**

## More About Megadiverse Countries

- The Megadiversity Country concept is based on four premises:
  - The **biodiversity of each and every nation is critically important to that nation's survival.**
  - Biodiversity is by no means evenly distributed on our planet, and **some countries, especially in the tropics, harbour far greater concentrations of biodiversity** than others.
  - Some of the most species rich and **biodiverse nations also have ecosystems that are under the most severe threat.**
- To achieve maximum impact with limited resources, **conservation efforts must concentrate heavily (but not exclusively) on those countries richest in diversity and endemism and most severely threatened.**
- The identified **Megadiverse Countries are:**
  - United States of America, Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, Brazil, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa, Madagascar, India, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, China, Australia

## Criteria for Classification

- The principle criterion is **endemism**, first at the species level and then at higher taxonomic levels such as genus and family. To qualify as a Megadiverse Country, a country must:
  - **Have at least 5000 of the world's plants as endemics**
  - **Have marine ecosystems within its borders**
- The focus on endemism is in line with the **IUCN's "doctrine of ultimate responsibility"**, which holds that a country with the only populations of an endangered species has ultimate responsibility for ensuring the survival of that particular species.
- **The classification was brought by Conservation International.**
- While there is **no specific management associated** with this concept, 17 countries rich in biological diversity and associated traditional knowledge have formed a group known as the **Like Minded Megadiverse Countries**.
- These include 12 of the above-identified Megadiverse Countries.
- This group was formed **in 2002 under the Cancun Declaration to act as a mechanism of cooperation** on the conservation of biological diversity and traditional knowledge.



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