

# IN THE NEWS

By Olivia Nater, Communications Manager

## **Population Connection mourns the death of legendary conservationist Jane Goodall**

Our team at Population Connection was deeply saddened by the passing of beloved ethologist and conservationist Dr. Jane Goodall at the age of 91 on October 1. Through her decades-long field research on chimpanzees in Gombe National Park, Tanzania, she brought to light key behavioral insights that changed the way the world perceives animals. A trailblazer, Dr. Goodall was one of the first female field researchers, defying adversity in a discipline that was heavily male-dominated at the time. Through her work with her non-profit, the Jane Goodall Institute, Dr. Goodall went on to become one of the most tireless and inspirational messengers for environmental protection, empathy, and hope of our time.

Having witnessed first-hand the alarming impact of rapid deforestation on chimpanzee habitat, Dr. Goodall was also

a champion for the progressive population movement. At the 2020 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, for example, she told world leaders that “we cannot hide away from human population growth, because it underlies so many of the other problems.” Dr. Goodall was a powerful advocate for empowering population action, frequently highlighting the critical role women’s and girls’ empowerment plays in protecting the environment.

## **Seventh of nine planetary boundaries breached**

A worrying new report published by the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research reveals that humanity has breached the seventh of nine critical planetary boundaries, with severe consequences for Earth’s life support systems.

The Planetary Boundaries Framework identifies nine processes that have been scientifically proven to play a key role in regulating the stability, resilience, and life-sustaining functions of the Earth’s

systems. For each of the nine planetary boundary processes, the framework identifies a “safe operating space” in which the conditions on Earth will remain reliable and hospitable for generations to come. When available evidence indicates that we have left this safe operating space, the boundary is considered to have been breached.

According to the report, *Planetary Health Check 2025*, the newly breached planetary boundary is ocean acidification, caused by excess carbon dioxide from fossil fuel emissions. The other six boundaries that had already been breached are climate change, biosphere integrity (biodiversity loss), land system change (particularly deforestation), freshwater use, biogeochemical flows (including agricultural pollution), and novel entities (such as synthetic chemicals and plastics). All seven breached boundaries show worsening trends. The only two processes that remain in the safe zone are ozone depletion and aerosol loading (air pollution).

## First climate tipping point crossed

A similar but separate report, the *Global Tipping Points Report 2025*, published by the University of Exeter, concluded that the world has already crossed the first climate tipping point — a threshold at which catastrophic and potentially irreversible planetary changes are triggered. The authors found that warm-water coral reefs have passed their thermal tipping point due to rising ocean temperatures. This is resulting in unprecedented dieback, which threatens ocean ecosystems and the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people who depend on them.

Scientists believe we will officially exceed 1.5°C of global warming within the next few years, a level at which several other key systems likely have a tipping point. These include land permafrost, the Greenland and West Antarctic ice sheets, and the sub-polar gyre. Other systems are thought to have a tipping point around 2°C, including mountain glaciers, boreal forests, and the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC), the collapse of which would devastate global ecology and food and water security, and plunge northwest Europe into severe winters.

The authors warn that “to minimize the magnitude and

duration of global temperature overshoot above 1.5°C, global anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions need to be halved by 2030 compared to 2010 levels, reach net zero by 2050, and then net greenhouse gas removal needs to occur.” Currently, global greenhouse gas emissions are still increasing.

## Fewer than one in five Sustainable Development Goals on track

This year’s progress report on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) found that only 18% of targets are on track to be met by their 2030 deadline. Alarmingly, the same proportion of targets have gotten worse relative to 2015, while the remainder are either stagnating or progressing much too slowly.

The SDGs are a set of 17 goals designed to accelerate sustainable development and bring about wellbeing for all on a healthy planet. They were unanimously adopted in 2015 by all 193 UN member states (at the time). Each goal contains a set of targets, and every year, the UN publishes a report on the progress (or lack thereof) that has been made toward each target based on a set of indicators.

The 2025 report points out some serious data gaps due to lack of monitoring, primarily as a result of funding shortfalls. Some of

the critical goals most relevant to Population Connection’s work, for example, don’t have enough data availability to determine global trends. These include Goal 5 (gender equality) and Goal 13 (climate action), for which less than 30% of countries have trend data available.

In a shocking statement at a UN conference earlier this year, a US government spokesperson said that the US “rejects and denounces the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and will no longer reaffirm the SDGs as a matter of course.”

Trump’s devastating foreign aid cuts have put these words into action — while it is too early for the latest report to reflect the impacts of his second term, we can safely assume the 2026 report will be an even more dire read. 

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