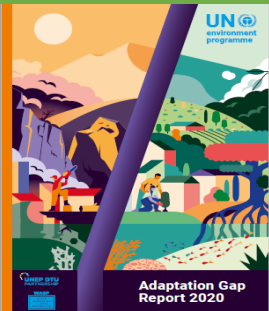
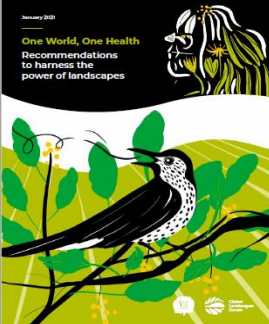
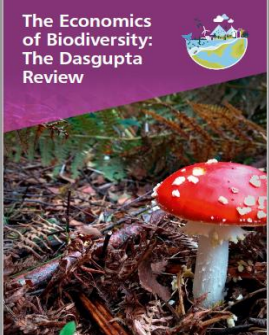


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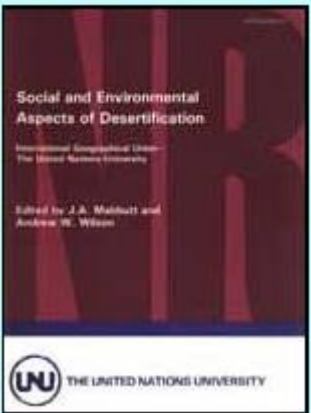
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Distribution: limited UNESCO/96/42/196 PARIS, 26 January 1958 Translated from the French UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION MAJOR PROJECT OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH ON ARID LANDS (1957) AND ARID ZONE RESEARCH The problem of the arid zones The problem of the arid zones can be summed up by the following numerical comparison: whereas cultivated land represents barely one-tenth of the land surface of the globe, the arid and semi-arid zones cover more than one-third. In other words, for each acre of cultivated land, there are three or four acres which are practically unused by man because they are covered or covered with sparse vegetation permitting only a precarious subsistence economy at best. But, the world's population, which now exceeds 2,500 millions, is increasing more and more rapidly and at the present rate will double itself in fifty years. Meanwhile, the mass of the people are coming to realize that their living conditions are far below those enjoyed by a privileged minority, and they are striving to improve their lot as quickly as possible. This dual increase - in the population figure and in its needs for a world with limited natural resources - raises a few last essential questions: will essential supplies any run short in the fairly near future? Hence the necessity of urgently developing and exploiting the resources of areas which are too far removed materially, having found more favourable conditions elsewhere. These areas consist mainly of the humid tropics, frigid and semi-arid zones. The last are of special importance not only because of their vast extent but also because they concern a large number of countries where the necessity for quickly developing resources is acutely felt. Most fortunately, man's need to exploit the arid and semi-arid zones occurs at a time when the great advance of scientific research gives him grounds for hoping that he will be able to solve the problems arising. The problems involved in developing these areas are multifarious, and are conditioned by economic, social and political considerations. They will not be the same in a geographically badly placed area with an extreme climate in which nothing beyond the exploitation of mineral resources can at present be contemplated as they are in a less inhospitable area which man himself has reduced to a desert-like state by irrational exploitation of the soil and vegetation, but whose present	<u>UNESCO major project on scientific research on arid lands 1958</u>
UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON DESERTIFICATION IN RETROSPECT Margaret R. Biswas September 1978 Professional Papers are not official publications of the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, but are reproduced and distributed by the Institute as an aid to staff members in furthering their professional activities. Views or opinions expressed herein are those of the author and should not be interpreted as representing the view of either the Institute or the National Member Organizations supporting the Institute.	<u>United Nations Conference on Desertification in retrospect 1978 Margaret R. Biswas</u>
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