



# Enabling a post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework *fit for purpose*

Perspectives and reflections for the Fifteenth Conference of the Parties, Montreal, Canada, December 2022



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## 1. Context and purpose of this paper

At the 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), one of the important decisions expected to be taken by Parties to the Convention will be the adoption of a post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). This framework will constitute a roadmap to guide the work on biodiversity at the global level for the period between now and 2030 and towards the 2050 biodiversity vision of 'living in harmony with nature' (manifested as a world where "*By 2050, biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and wisely used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people*"). A dedicated process – through the Open-Ended Working Group on the post-2020 GBF (OEWG) - was established in 2018 to develop the draft framework to be considered by COP15.

The analysis and reflections in this note pertain to the currently available draft. The views expressed in this analysis are meant as a contribution to the ongoing efforts to complete the post-2020 GBF by sharing a perspective on what we consider as key considerations and main requirements to bear in mind to conclude a GBF designed to be 'fit for purpose'. In other words, an effective, practical and implementable framework, concise and easy to communicate and capable of galvanizing backing and buy-in by various sectors of society and diverse groups of stakeholders in order to achieve meaningful progress by 2030 and ultimately realize the 2050 vision of 'living in harmony with nature'. This will require an all-of-society transformative change and paradigm shift to be attained.

## 2. Background

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was conceived to be the major international framework to address the loss of biodiversity through its three interlinked objectives of ensuring "*the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources, including by appropriate access to genetic resources and by appropriate transfer of technologies, taking into account all rights over those resources and to technologies, and by appropriate funding*" (Article 1). It is important to recall from the onset the formulation of these objectives as enshrined in the text of the Convention because the deliberate balance of expectations reflected therein continues to mark the discussions that take place under the auspices of the CBD to this day, including the development of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework which is the subject of this paper.

### 2.1. Growing concern about the loss and erosion of biodiversity

The Convention resulted from the growing concern about the loss and erosion of biodiversity. There has been increased awareness of the values of biodiversity, the seriousness of the impacts of its ongoing loss and destruction for a sustainable future and the importance of maintaining a healthy nature: the world's ecosystems and biodiversity provide us with food, clean water, the air we breathe, jobs, livelihoods, general welfare and happiness, and help us prevent and be resilient to natural disasters. Driven by sustained scientific evidence, there is also a growing recognition across society:

- that nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history –the rate of species extinctions is accelerating, and the health of ecosystems is deteriorating more rapidly than ever;
- that the current rapid and dramatic decline in nature and *nature's contributions to people* threatens human health and well-being, development and economies, our very existence and that we are facing a planetary emergency;
- that the biodiversity crisis is interrelated to and interlocked with other planetary emergencies of climate change, land degradation and desertification, ocean degradation, and pollution, and increasing risks to human health and food security, pose enormous risks to our society, our culture, our prosperity and life on our planet;
- that these crises are all different sides of the same problem of unsustainable development exacerbating poverty and inequality, and that need to be addressed in an integrated and coherent way by all relevant legal, policy and financial instruments;
- that impacts of nature loss are hitting the poorest hardest, causing food and water insecurity and conflict, and costing the global economy billions each year.

Despite the CBD having been into force for nearly three decades and some progress achieved in implementing its provisions over the last decade, the overall picture emanating from several recent high-profile assessments and flagship reports – notably the 2019 IPBES Global Assessment Report of Biodiversity and Ecosystems Services<sup>1</sup>, the 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report (prepared to inform the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development)<sup>2</sup>, the 5<sup>th</sup> Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO 5)<sup>3</sup> and the recent releases of the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species<sup>4</sup> - shows a continuing trend of loss and deterioration of biodiversity in all its components – at the genetic, species and ecosystems levels. The conclusions from all these expert and authoritative voices on biodiversity and sustainable development confirm that sustainability cannot be achieved by current trajectories, and that goals for 2030 and beyond may only be attained through *transformative changes* across economic, social, political and technological factors.

## 2.2. An overview of global target-setting under the CBD

During the early years (1994-2002) after the entry into force of the Convention and the kick off of periodical meetings of the Conference of the Parties as the supreme governance body of the Convention, contracting Parties focused mostly on policy dialogues that translated into decisions to develop operational guidance for the implementation of a number of the general provisions of the Convention, including the development of the first Protocol under the Convention, known as the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, adopted in January 2000 as a landmark treaty which provides an international regulatory framework for the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology that may have adverse effect on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ipbes.net/assessing-knowledge>

<sup>2</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/globalsdreport/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/gbo/>

<sup>4</sup> IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. <https://www.iucnredlist.org>.

The first decade of the CBD saw also efforts in over 100 countries to initiate the development of national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) to guide government actions in the implementation of the Convention at national level pursuant to Article 6 of the Convention.

The first global target-setting framework under the CBD was undertaken in 2002 at the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting of the COP which adopted the Strategic Plan for the CBD 2002-2010<sup>5</sup>, structured around 4 broad goals and objectives with the stated overall purpose of 'halting the loss of biodiversity' (Decision 6/26). The 2010 Biodiversity Target - *to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth* – was seen as rather vague and seemingly unmeasurable.<sup>6</sup> The general view is that the Strategic Plan 2002-2010 did not significantly change things on the ground.

A major development in setting global targets was achieved in 2010 with the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the COP which adopted the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets<sup>7</sup>. This was a more articulated Strategic Plan which structured the 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets, to be achieved by 2020, around five Strategic Goals, setting benchmarks for improvements across drivers, pressures, the state of biodiversity, the benefits derived from it and the implementation of relevant policies and enabling conditions<sup>8</sup>.

COP 10 endorsed also a 2050 Vision for Biodiversity “Living in harmony with nature” and adopted the Nagoya Protocol on ‘Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits arising from their utilization’ (known as the ‘Access and Benefit Sharing – ABS - Protocol’ in short), another major milestone in furthering the objectives of the Convention.

The Strategic Plan 2011-2020 had some shortcomings, and some Aichi Targets were hard to measure, but it provided the beginning of a harmonized framework with benchmarks to guide Parties in implementing actions and activities to address loss of biodiversity through the NBSAPs which many governments prepared in the period after COP 10 or updated from earlier versions to align to the new Strategic Plan.

As the endpoint of 2020 for the Strategic Plan 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets was approaching, contracting Parties agreed on the need to set in place a timetable and a process to develop a post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (COP decision 13/1 in 2016<sup>9</sup>, and COP decision 14/34 in 2018<sup>10</sup>). The new framework would build on progress made and lessons learnt in implementing the Strategic Plan 2011-2020, and other opportunities that can offer realistic achievable solutions to tackle the loss of biodiversity.

In the meantime, new endeavors related to sustainable development had come into being, some of which have interconnections with biodiversity, notably:

- i) the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its framework of 17 Sustainable Development Goals <sup>11</sup>(SDGs) including those pertaining specifically to biodiversity (e.g., SDG 14 & SDG 15) built from the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/sp/2010/>

<sup>6</sup> Walpole et al. Tracking progress toward the 2010 Biodiversity Target and beyond. SCIENCE VOL 325 18 SEPTEMBER 2009. [Online.](#) / Mace, Georgina and Baillie, Jonathan. The 2010 Biodiversity Indicators: Challenges for Science and Policy. Conservation Biology Volume 21, No. 6, 1406–1413, 2007. [Online.](#)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/sp/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/gbo/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-13/cop-13-dec-01-en.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-14/cop-14-dec-34-en.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

- ii) The Paris Agreement on Climate Change under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) which has linkages to biodiversity given the contribution that healthy functional ecosystems can play in both mitigation and adaptation.

The development of the GBF would therefore also consider the linkages and synergies with these other frameworks as well as with the other Rio Conventions (UNFCCC and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification - UNCCD) and biodiversity-related conventions and agreements.

### **2.3. The rationale of a post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework**

Considering the relentless loss of biodiversity and its impacts on societies across the world, there has been a renewed and growing concern that, if not properly addressed, this crisis could also jeopardize the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and other international goals and targets, and therefore there is an urgent need for an ambitious biodiversity agenda going forward. This is evidenced by decisions and calls emanating from high-level intergovernmental and other multilateral and/or multi-stakeholders policy fora and gatherings, *inter alia*:

- The decision by the Parties to the CBD at their 14<sup>th</sup> meeting in November 2018 to establish a comprehensive and participatory process for the preparation of a post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, thus providing the mandate to develop the framework building from previous initiatives to tackle the loss of biodiversity (COP decision 14/34).
- The UN Summit on Biodiversity in September 2020, with the theme "Urgent action on Biodiversity for Sustainable Development", which highlighted the crisis facing humanity from the degradation of biodiversity and the urgent need to accelerate action on biodiversity for sustainable development. The Summit expressed support for the development of an ambitious post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework to put nature on a path to recovery by 2030 to meet the SDGs and realize the vision of 'living in harmony with nature'.
- The IUCN World Conservation Congress (held in September 2021) which echoed the call for the development and implementation of a transformative and effective post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework envisaged as: an ambitious agenda for an equitable, nature-positive and net zero world to ensure there is more nature globally in 2030 than there was in 2020, by halting and reversing the loss of nature to put nature on a path to recovery for the benefit of all people and the planet by 2030, as well as tackle climate change, achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and enable people and communities to thrive in a healthy and stable future (Resolution WCC-2020-RES-116)<sup>12</sup>.

### **2.4. The road to a post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework**

In its decision 14/34, the COP established an open-ended working group (OEWG) on the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and mandated it to develop the framework to be adopted by the COP at its 15<sup>th</sup> meeting<sup>13</sup>.

The OEWG has held 4 meetings between August 2019 and June 2022 and is scheduled to hold a last meeting in December 2022 to finalize its work and forward the draft framework to COP 15 for adoption. In addition to the meetings of the OEWG, the CBD Secretariat also arranged several thematic and regional consultations to

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<sup>12</sup> IUCN's Resolution -WCC-2020-RES-116 adopted by IUCN Members at the World Conservation Congress, 2021. The key messages contained in the IUCN position paper prepared for the third meeting of the OEWG draw from the guidance provided in this Resolution...

<sup>13</sup> This meeting was initially scheduled to take place in October 2020 in Kunming, China, but had to be postponed several times.

provide inputs into the process as well as a series of webinars to introduce agenda items and background documents ahead of formal meetings.

The Co-Chairs of the OEWG have regularly communicated on the progress of the discussions, pointing to areas of convergence and those of divergence, and making some suggestions on how different views could be reconciled. They have also communicated at intervals on meetings and other events in which they have participated as opportunities to keep momentum on the post-2020 GBF process and/or raise awareness on its importance as much as possible.

The meetings of the OEWG so far have resulted in a draft post-2020 GBF which is still work in progress. The slow pace of the meetings and the postponement of COP 15 caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic, have impacted the process. The challenges caused by moving the discussions to virtual meetings have made it more difficult to reach agreement on key issues, the observers' active participation has been hindered, and taken together, all these impediments have resulted in an overly complex framework that reflects a multitude of views and elements without a clear line of sight and lacking overall coherence.

### **3. Key considerations for a Global Biodiversity Framework 'fit for purpose'**

Given the limited time left for the finalization of the draft to convey to COP 15, what should be the essential considerations to bear in mind when the OEWG gets into the last leg of the negotiations? This paper attempts to offer some reflections on the elements, components, and other considerations to orient the further development of a GBF 'fit for purpose'.

#### **3.1. Overview of the first order draft post-2020 GBF – structure, content, and components**

The guidance in COP decision 14/34 outlines overarching principles to the preparatory process for the framework, aiming at ensuring that the result is a truly global effort, developed with inputs not only from Governments but also from a broad range of stakeholders. It is worthwhile recalling those overarching principles so that they can serve as a set of parameters through which to reflect on the form and function of the discussions in the OEWG as they get into the last phase of the process. COP 14 stipulated that the process to develop the post-2020 framework was to be Party-led and guided by the following principles: *participatory, inclusive, gender-responsive, transformative, comprehensive, catalytic, visible, knowledge-based, transparent, efficient, results-oriented, iterative, flexible*.

In addition, the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework is meant to be first and foremost a strategic plan. As such, it must revolve around 4 elements, namely: 'Why', 'What', 'How', 'by When' (and if possible, 'by Who', although this point may not be required for a global target setting framework as it is understood that the principal accountable actors will be the governments who negotiate the framework and who will adopt it). The draft GBF meets these requirements based on its current structure and the components that make it. It consists of 4 long term **goals** for 2050, a **mission** statement for 2030, and **action targets** to be achieved by 2030 on the road to reaching the 2050 vision of '*living in harmony with nature*'.

As the intent of this paper is not to provide a detailed in-depth commentary on the draft framework, below are some general high-level observations on the overall orientation of some selected features in the structure, content and components of the draft framework, seen from a light SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) perspective to provide a background for the reflections and recommendations made in the concluding section.

## i. Theory of change

The theory of change around which the post-2020 GBF is built should convey a clear, logical, coherent and easy to understand representation bringing together all elements that constitute the framework and how they are connected. It should provide a “mapping” of the causal links, interlinkages and feedback loops that connect the desired state embodied in the long-term 2050 vision (‘where we want to be’) to today’s status of biodiversity (‘why we need to change’) and spell out the requirements for what needs to happen in between these two signposts to achieve the desired change (‘how do we get there’). This then sets the canvas to flesh out the structure, components and content of each element of the framework.

It will be important to emphasize how the framework will be complementary to and synergistic with other existing global commitments notably the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs to address in a holistic manner the drivers of biodiversity loss through mainstreaming biodiversity into core national development parameters. This is critical as we should not assume that by just working on addressing the direct drivers of biodiversity loss, the problem will be solved. Indirect drivers of biodiversity loss – demographic and sociocultural, economic and technological, institutions and governance, conflicts and epidemics – need to be factored in the underlying theory of change and appropriately reflected in the framework’s elements emphasizing the need to consistently and coherently link up to the Sustainable Development Goals which cover a broader range of issues and include targets encompassing these indirect drivers.

## ii. Goals

The proposed **Goals** for 2050 portray 4 areas of outcomes to benefit biodiversity and human wellbeing, broadly envisaged as: maintaining and enhancing a healthy nature, safeguarding nature’s contributions to people, ensuring fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the utilization of genetic resources, and availing necessary financial and other resources to achieve the 2050 vision.

These Goals broadly relate to the various elements in the 2050 vision for biodiversity, embody to a large extent the overall picture set out in Article 1 of the CBD (the three objectives of the Convention) and reflect some key considerations expressed in the Preamble of the Convention’s text - notably the recognition of the intrinsic value of biodiversity, its importance for maintaining life sustaining systems of the biosphere, its multiple values for humanity, all of which justify the resolve of the contracting Parties to manage biodiversity for the benefit of present and future generations.

Goals intend to identify the long-term ambition and provide a sense of direction. They also provide a way to objectively assess whether the Vision has been reached (or not). They may or may not contain numerical elements depending on the type of outcome envisaged. Currently, not all Goals in the proposed draft framework have numerical elements which makes them somewhat dissimilar. It may be better to have a consistent approach to how Goals are set and used within the framework to enhance clarity and the overall sense of direction. Worth considering that the numerical values can be reflected in the Targets if there is a clear sightline of what to measure and which metrics to use.

The current Goal A can be improved, for clarity and practicality of implementation. As it stands now, it merges and thus confounds the outcomes for the different levels of ecological organization, i.e., the three components of biological diversity - ecosystems, species and genetic diversity - into a single and rather vague biodiversity objective which is hard to slice up into clear aims or targets identifying the actions necessary to reach the primary ambition set in the first place. Some text suggestions have been made by IUCN for the formulation of three separate goals to better address the distinct components of biodiversity and make it easier to align with more specific, measurable and attainable targets.



### iii. 2030 Mission

The current formulation of the 2030 mission is as follows:

*“To take urgent action across society to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity and ensure the fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the use of genetics resources, to put biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030 for the benefit of planet and people”.*

The mission formulation can be sharpened to emphasize that it must be action-oriented but also inspirational clearly linked to achieving the long term 2050 Vision ‘*living in harmony with nature*’. IUCN has proposed a simpler wording for the Mission statement, recognizing that ultimately, the Mission will probably be the last part of the GBF to be agreed to after all other elements are in place<sup>14</sup>.

### iv. Milestones / 2030 Outcomes

Some Parties in their interventions questioned the usefulness of milestones arguing among other things, that they make the framework unnecessarily more complex. However, introducing clear milestones or outcomes to have been achieved by 2030 could be useful in order to give a more tangible idea of what needs to happen in the run-up to the long-term Goals. They may be seen as ‘intermediate results’ to be reached by 2030 and ‘guiding lights’ on the road to 2050. As the framework covers a 30-year time horizon, it could be possible to propose further milestones for 2040 and then for 2050, with each iteration of decadal milestones determined on the basis of progress achieved in the preceding decade. Milestones may also be helpful in the preparation of global assessments and other stocktaking endeavors to evaluate the effectiveness and outcomes of action taken to reach the 2050 Vision.

### v. Action Targets

The **targets** are categorized in three clusters which address the following outcomes: reducing threats to biodiversity; meeting people’s needs through sustainable use and benefit sharing; tools and solutions for implementation and mainstreaming. They are putatively all intended to be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound), but a close look reveals that this is not consistent across all targets, especially those that do not have a quantifiable element (e.g. targets 4,5,9,11, 12) or those with quantifiable elements which come across as unrealistic in relation to the scale of the problem (e.g. target 7,15), or else hard to measure the extent of achievement of the action because of lack of appropriate metrics (e.g. targets 6,10,11). Therefore, there is room for improvement to bring greater clarity and precision to the targets, focusing on actions that lead to desired outcomes set out in the goals, and to make the targets better meet the SMART criteria.

There is also room to reconsider the quantitative elements in the targets, whether expressed as percentage or absolute quantity, based on the extent of action necessary to achieve the 2030 outcomes and the 2050 goals rather than on (political) feasibility.

Furthermore, it would be desirable to establish linkages with targets agreed in other processes of relevance for the milestones for 2030 and the goals for 2050, in particular those under the SDG framework which have significance for biodiversity and ecosystem services (notably: SDGs 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 12, 14 and 15), the other Rio Conventions (UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, UNCCD) and other relevant biodiversity-related conventions,

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<sup>14</sup> IUCN’s proposed Mission statement: *To take urgent action across society to halt and reverse biodiversity loss to achieve a nature-positive world for the benefit of the planet and people.*

in order to reflect and enhance the synergies, interconnections, complementarities and coherence across mutually supportive frameworks. This point is further elaborated in the section below on enabling conditions.

## **vi. Other elements of the framework**

### The relationship with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Key points in this section should draw attention on the importance of synergies with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. As a universal, indivisible and integrated framework spanning the three dimensions of sustainable development, the SDGs provide an enabling environment for addressing most of the drivers of biodiversity loss given the multiple causal relationships and feedback loops that link all the SDGs at target level<sup>15</sup>. The Aichi Biodiversity Targets are reflected directly in many of the targets of the SDGs, especially under SDGs 14 (Life Below Water) and 15 (Life on Land). Biodiversity also underpins a much wider set of SDGs. For example, it is a key factor for the achievement of food security and improved nutrition (SDG 2) and the provision of clean water (SDG 6). These multiple connections allow a better understanding of the tradeoffs to be addressed and the co-benefits to be harnessed. Because the Aichi Biodiversity Targets reflected in the SDGs were lifted - almost verbatim - from the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 including keeping the 2020 endpoint, it is assumed that the post-2020 GBF will serve as a basis to update or align the concerned SDG targets with the new framework.

### Implementation support mechanisms

This section should give emphasis on the resources to support the implementation, drawing from the mechanisms envisaged in the provisions of the Convention, i.e., access to technology, access to financial resources, capacity building, international cooperation. It is a good place to also highlight the importance of strengthening the science-policy interface in advancing the knowledge base to inform action.

Other important elements to reflect relate to Communication, Education and Public Awareness or CEPA.

### Enabling conditions and principles for implementation

A section containing the principles for the implementation of the entire framework is needed to streamline the wording of the goals and targets, but more importantly, to ensure their applicability throughout. The success of implementation of the framework will depend on meeting these conditions:

- Engagement of and at all levels of society.
- Collaboration and coordination to enhance coherence and synergies with the Rio Conventions, other biodiversity-related conventions, and relevant initiatives (e.g., the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, the UN Decade on Oceans Science). In particular, the critical role of biodiversity for the Paris Climate Agreement is now well understood in the UNFCCC circles, with the recognition that around one third of the net reductions in greenhouse gas emissions required to meet the Paris Agreement's goals could come from ecosystems-based approaches and nature-based solutions.
- Respect, protection, and fulfilment of human rights, including the right to a safe, clean, and healthy environment and international human rights law.
- The full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) including their free, prior, and informed consent, and with full recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples to their

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<sup>15</sup> International Council for Science (ICSU) and International Social Science Council (ISSC). Review of the Sustainable Development Goals: The Science Perspective. Paris: ICSU, 2015.

lands, waters, territories and resources, as set out under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and with full respect for their diverse knowledge systems.

- Empowering people to make positive change through education, awareness raising and social movements is critical to change behaviors that are damaging to biodiversity and ultimately to people's livelihoods. It is especially important to secure the active involvement of youth and women.
- Latest and best available science, with due consideration of the precautionary principle and the ecosystem approach.

### Monitoring framework

A monitoring framework with easily available, clear and feasible indicators is an essential tool to track progress in reaching the goals both at the national and global levels. It must make clear the line-of-sight between the goals, targets and indicators. Furthermore, as the implementation of the post-2020 GBF will require contributions from a broad range of sectors and stakeholders to be successful in attaining the Goals for realizing the 2050 vision, it is important for the monitoring framework to have a mechanism to invite and track contributions from non-State actors.

The experience and lessons from the implementation of the SDGs which use a tiered approach for the indicators will be useful to draw from. All relevant SDGs can be included as headline indicators.

The SDGs also have a now much advanced framework of global indicators (classified in three tiers depending on their level of methodological development and availability of data, with nearly 50% of them now in Tier I). As the refinement of the indicators continues under the auspices of the UN Statistical Commission, this can benefit the development of new indicators (headline or component) that may be needed for the post-2020 GBF once it is adopted.

### Responsibility and transparency

While the framework is ultimately a global one, actions will be undertaken under national jurisdiction where the biodiversity is located. It is therefore important that the GBF design envisions a suite of actions in which national targets will add up to reach the globally agreed targets. Analysis conducted in GBO 5 from national reports has shown that national targets were generally poorly aligned with the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, in terms of scope and the level of ambition. Fewer than a quarter (23%) of the targets were found to be well aligned with the Aichi Targets and only about a tenth of all national targets were both similar to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and on track to be met<sup>16</sup>. This will need to be remedied in the implementation of the post-2020 GBF.

The section on responsibility and transparency need to lay out effective mechanisms for planning, monitoring, reporting and review. It should clearly articulate what is expected from Parties regarding planning and reporting. While the details can be further addressed in the relevant COP decision, this part of the framework can already present some of the architecture – namely the planning (national targets that contribute to the global targets, as part of, or in addition to, the NBSAPs) and reporting tools (national reports linked to the headline indicators without precluding the use of nationally developed indicators) and the global mechanism to assess collective progress, and increase ambition.

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<sup>16</sup> Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2020) Global Biodiversity Outlook 5 – Summary for Policy Makers. Montréal.

### 3.2. New dimensions and emerging opportunities for accelerated implementation

Biodiversity loss is one of the multiple crises facing humanity. While some of them have been growing over time, and new threats are emerging, in particular the rise of zoonotic pandemics linked to new pathogens. Although humanity faces a daunting task, options and opportunities are available to the global community that could simultaneously halt and ultimately reverse biodiversity loss, limit climate change, protect human health from harmful pathogens and meet other goals such as improved food security. It will require a mix of actions including greatly stepping up efforts to conserve and restore biodiversity, addressing climate change in ways that limit global temperature rise without imposing unintended additional pressures on biodiversity, and transforming the way in which we produce, consume and trade goods and services, most particularly food, that rely on and have an impact on biodiversity.

#### i. Nature-based Solutions

Largely based on the IUCN definition of Nature-based Solutions (NbS)<sup>17</sup>, the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly defined them as actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems which address social, economic and environmental challenges effectively and adaptively, while simultaneously providing human well-being, ecosystem services, resilience and biodiversity benefits. NbS is an umbrella term that encompasses ecosystem-based adaptation, ecosystem-based mitigation and ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction, but also comprises additional approaches that, in addition to the main issue they address, also contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation; it is therefore important to promote the full range of these concepts. They also provide for synergies with the Land-Degradation Neutrality goal under the UNCCD. Concretely, these are actions that provide multiple benefits and can help redefine our relationship with nature.

The [IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions](#) provides an internationally recognized framework to standardize NbS approaches, increase the scale and impact of NbS, prevent unanticipated negative outcomes or misuse, and help funding agencies, policy makers, and other stakeholders assess the effectiveness of NbS implementation.

The design and implementation of the post-2020 GBF can be an opportunity to showcase how old and new challenges can turn into opportunities to change our relationship with nature to realize the 'future we want' including the vision of 'living in harmony with nature'.

#### ii. One Health

The COVID-19 global pandemic has disrupted the way our societies used to function, including for multilateral processes but has also further highlighted the importance of the relationship between people and nature – a reminder and wake up call to humans of the profound consequences to our own well-being and survival that can result from continued biodiversity loss and the disruption and degradation of natural ecosystems. The concept of 'One Health' has gained traction. It is a new way to managing ecosystems, including agricultural and urban ecosystems, as well as the use of wildlife, through an integrated approach, to promote healthy ecosystems and healthy people. This concept recognizes the full range of linkages between biodiversity and all aspects of human health, and addresses the common drivers of biodiversity loss, disease risk and ill-health.

Therefore, it is timely and opportune to make linkages to the health sector in the post 2020 GBF – for example through an additional target in the framework or within another target - and to call for more attention to be given

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<sup>17</sup> See: <https://www.iucn.org/theme/nature-based-solutions/about>

to biodiversity considerations in the funding allocations related to health, in the policies and financial packages being designed for the post-COVID recovery and the 'building back better' political discourse.<sup>18</sup>

### iii. Seizing the moment and capitalizing on the impetus

There has been increasing recognition of the consequences of environmental degradation, and their potential to destroy human societies and reverse the progress made over the last several decades in fighting poverty and reducing inequalities. World leaders in the political sphere as well as leaders of financial institutions and CEOs of large companies have expressed renewed commitments for strengthening nature protection as a prerequisite for sustainable development. New initiatives were launched, commitments announced, including financial commitments. Among others:

- *Leaders' Pledge for Nature* from the UN Summit on Biodiversity of September 2020;
- new pledges and commitments made at the Glasgow UNFCCC COP 26 -including but not limited to:
  - Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use;
  - Multilateral Development Banks Joint Nature Statement;
- 2030 Nature Compact from the 47<sup>th</sup> G7 meeting held in June 2021;
- Kunming Declaration from the high-level segment of the first part of CBD-COP 15 held 11-14 October 2021, the Kunming Biodiversity Fund announced by the President of China at of the opening of the first part of CBD-COP 15; Joint GEF/UNDP/UNEP Statement in Kunming committing to early support to countries for the implementation of the post-2020 GBF once adopted; and
- the Marseille Manifesto from the IUCN 2020 World Conservation Congress held in Marseille in September 2021.
- New commitments aimed at catalyzing biodiversity finance and conservation were unveiled at a high-level event convened on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in 2022 to showcase action and support for a nature-positive world. These included:
  - €0.87billion of new funding from the German government;
  - A 10-point plan for financing biodiversity endorsed by 16 initial countries;
  - The announcement of the next phase of the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People;
- The ENACT initiative, which will coordinate global efforts to address climate change, land and ecosystem degradation, and biodiversity loss through Nature-based Solutions (NbS), launched at COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh.

These are positive and energizing signs which provide some reassurance that the international community feels the urgency to address the threats posed by environmental degradation, notably the loss of biodiversity and climate change, and do something about it. The announced financial commitments can help developing countries, especially the least developed countries and small island developing states which have limited capacities to deal with multiple crises, to initiate early action to implement the post-2020 GBF after its adoption.

### 3.3. Way forward for contentious issues

There is a history of issues which tend to become contentious in CBD negotiations, and they can sometimes be used by some negotiators to slow down or put on hold reaching consensus on other issues under negotiation. Some of those issues can be traced back to the very beginning of the Convention in the way its objectives were framed in Article 1. There is a hint of the implicit bargain that contracting Parties were expressing with regards to the ways and means to achieve the 3 objectives of the Convention when they specified "*including by*

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<sup>18</sup> IUCN has advocated for a nature-based recovery through its [strategic initiative](#).

*appropriate access to genetic resources and by appropriate transfer of technologies, taking into account all rights over those resources and to technologies, and by appropriate funding*". The word "appropriate" appears three times in this sentence, and, as a whole, the sentence is loaded with qualifiers intended to reflect the balance of expectations between countries rich in biodiversity (the so-called global South) and the countries rich in technologies and financial resources (the so-called global North) who were seeing – and some still do - the Convention as a North-South deal. Contentions around these bargaining points - access to genetic resources and the sharing of benefits arising out of their use, transfer of technologies, appropriate funding - resurface at practically every meeting of the Parties.

Below are some reflections on two of these litigious points, more specifically the question of financial resources and the relatively new issue of digital sequence information (DSI), given their potential impact on complicating the final round of negotiations on the post-2020 GBF depending on how far some Parties will be willing to go in holding their positions on these matters.

#### **i. Financial resources**

Adequate and timely financial resources are key to implement the Convention. Over the years, the COP has taken several decisions pertaining to resource mobilization in relation to the financial resources needed by developing countries and countries with economies in transition to implement the Convention. It is thus expected that the post-2020 GBF should also put in focus this topic because an ambitious framework will require substantial financial resources – notwithstanding other non-monetary resources (e.g., contribution to human and institutional capacity building/strengthening, technology transfer and scientific cooperation) that will be also important.

In the preamble of the CBD, contracting Parties affirmed that 'the conservation of biological diversity is a common concern of humankind'. They also acknowledged that 'provision of new and additional financial resources will be required to meet the needs of developing countries to increase their ability to address the loss of biodiversity'. There is also a clause recognizing that "economic and social development and poverty eradication are the first and overriding priorities of developing countries". Taken together, these preambular provisions have been used by some countries to argue for more substantial allocations of financial resources from developed countries to developing countries in order to ramp-up conservation actions at national level. In doing so, references have been made to the concept of 'common but differentiated responsibilities' popular in the climate change arena. Some Parties (including some megadiverse countries) have used this line of argument to call for national conservation actions to be covered by new and additional financial resources and/or increased official development assistance (ODA).

Funding the agreed full incremental costs of implementing measures which fulfill the obligations of the CBD for developing countries and countries with economies in transition has been the operating principle. It is likely to be also the basis of the discussions regarding the level of new and additional resources that will be required to implement the 'ambitious and transformative' post-2020 GBF. For developing countries to fulfill their obligations, the proposed targets and other actions that relate to financial resources (Goal D) should be analyzed to evaluate if they are adequate to ensure the level of funding, the mix of funding streams and sources, the mechanisms of provision of resources and the approaches for resource mobilization to achieve the 2030 milestones. Among possible additional sources of funding for biodiversity action, the reform, reduction, elimination and redirection of subsidies and incentives harmful to nature and the feasibility of investing a portion of the global biodiversity footprint embedded in international trade can go a long way in unleashing substantial financial resources to avail to developing countries to fully implement the post-2020 GBF.

The adequacy of financial resources should thus be the subject of regular reviews, linked to monitoring and reporting as part of fulfilling the responsibility and transparency requirements, to align resources to needs.

## ii. **Digital Sequence Information (DSI) in relation to the fair and equitable sharing of benefits<sup>19</sup>**

Technological advances in recent years have made it simple and affordable to sequence genomes – information contained in DNA and RNA - and store this data digitally. Genetic material that contains this information can have a commercial value, therefore many countries exercise sovereign rights over genetic resources that originate from within their territories. Many countries also require that the benefits of research or commercialization are shared with the providing country or indigenous peoples and local communities before they grant access to genetic resources. However, the Nagoya Protocol on ABS is unclear on how to administer genetic sequence digital data, known as Digital Sequence Information (DSI). The lack of international agreement on this issue means that benefits resulting from DSI are sometimes not shared equitably, and this issue has in recent years turned into a contentious one in CBD discussions on how to handle DSI within the scope of the CBD in general and under the Nagoya Protocol in particular.

If no consensus can be reached on DSI, it would be better to provide for a process to continue the discussion on this issue by way of an ‘enabling clause’ in the draft decision for COP 15. It is not necessary to turn DSI into a ‘non-negotiable’ position for the discussions on the post-2020 GBF to conclude productively especially as it does not appear, from the mandate given to the OEWG in COP decision 14/34, that DSI must be an integral part of the post-2020 GBF from the onset. Considering this, should the resolution of the DSI question continue to be elusive during the final meeting of the OEWG, greatly because of lack of a “full picture” understanding, political good will, a spirit of compromise and a desire to move forward will be sorely needed.

## 4. **Conclusions and key messages: basic requirements for a GBF fit for purpose**

Since the coming into force of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and especially since the adoption of the Strategic Plan 2011-2020 and the commitments made by governments in 2010 to take effective and urgent action to halt the loss of biodiversity to ensure resilient ecosystems by 2020, much remains to be done. The post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework is an opportunity to pursue the work and scale up commitments to meet the relentless loss of nature. In concluding the reflections made in this paper, IUCN would like to offer the following key principles and messages regarding the preparation, scope and content of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework as essential considerations for Parties as they get into the negotiations in the final meeting of the OEWG and at COP 15.

- **Avoid duplication and enhance complementarity with existing frameworks, in particular the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.** It is essential that the biodiversity framework focusses on effectively addressing threats to biodiversity as well as gaps that might exist in the Sustainable Development Goals – for instance, on the interlinkages between biodiversity and human health.
- Be structured to **reflect the pathway from where we are now to the changes we would like to see in the long-term future – 2050.** Action targets must be underpinned by a theory of change reflecting a clear line-of-sight from now until attainment of the 2050 Vision.

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<sup>19</sup> See: <https://www.iucn.org/resources/issues-briefs/digital-genetic-information-and-conservation>

- **Have focused, simple and measurable global Action Targets**, so that their implementation and impacts can be monitored and assessed.
- **Ensure that Action Targets are indeed actionable at country-level, responsive to national realities, and thus are “translatable” into concrete national actions.**
- **Reflect the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity as well as the three components of biodiversity** (species, ecosystems and genes) in coherent, distinct and ambitious outcome Goals.
- **Be a truly global framework:** clearly speaking to the other Rio and biodiversity-related conventions as well as to those agreements and processes that cover issues related to biodiversity. Synergies are essential.
- **Integrate Nature-based Solutions to safeguard and maintain ecosystems:** These are vital for food and water supply, protection against natural disasters and provision of goods and services which are essential for human well-being.
- **Embrace all voices:** indigenous peoples and local communities, regional and city governments, the private sector, NGOs, women, youth and society at large must be not only invited to the debate but the framework should also incentivize their explicit contributions towards the attainment of its global Goals and targets.

As the OEWG embarks on the final round of the development of the post-2020 GBF, attention should be directed at not trying to get a very detailed and complex framework in which each Party or stakeholder will see their views reflected, but rather a framework that makes sense not just to those involved in the discussions but also to a wider audience. The framework should be an opportunity to convey in *clear and simple language* the suite of actions needed to safeguard biodiversity, and indeed life in this planet. Ultimately, the framework and its accompanying complementary documents should inspire and motivate us all, people working on the ground and all actors from various sectors of society to contribute to reach its ambition.

Targets for which there is general common understanding, already a wide support, a good scientific underpinning, political buy-in and commitments from various fronts need not be renegotiated, other than as needed to bring greater clarity on implementation aspects. Among such targets one can include those on i) protecting 30% of the planet by 2030 covering land and sea areas, (ii) restoring large areas of degraded ecosystems and (iii) mobilizing significantly more funds for biodiversity.

However, conservation (through protected areas and other area-based conservation measures (OECMs)) and restoration alone cannot achieve the reversal of loss of biodiversity and there is the risk that the “easy consensus” on such targets could be a convenient way behind which to hide for not acting on other targets, especially those related to indirect drivers of biodiversity loss – e.g. international trade, harmful subsidies, unsustainable production and consumption patterns, governance - which will require a more systemic transformative change involving significant shift away from ‘business as usual’ across a broad range of human activities.

A post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework which is fit for purpose need not be too complex. A framework built on sound scientific basis and formulated in simpler, clearer and easy-to-communicate language, with a clear line-of-sight, would suit the purpose especially from an implementation perspective. The final iteration of the text of the GBF should address core biodiversity components (ecosystems, species, genetic resources) and link to the three objectives of the Convention (conservation, sustainable use, fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out the utilization of genetic resources) while encouraging countries to foresee the implementation of the framework in alignment with the broader scope of the SDGs in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This to maximize cross-sectoral integration and mainstreaming with themes such as poverty eradication, sustainable agriculture and food security, gender, health, energy, institutions and good governance, international



cooperation and partnerships, among others, which are encompassed by the SDGs. If one considers that the SDGs already provide a more holistic framework to address indirect drivers with set targets, indicators and other mechanisms to facilitate monitoring and review, then there may be no need to reinvent the wheel and try to address under the Global Biodiversity Framework these issues under specific Action Targets. The GBF could very well gain in simplicity, focus and ultimately “achievability” if its Goals and Targets would fall within the (strict) remit and mandate of the Convention under which it is being negotiated and of those government officials and other actors that would be responsible and accountable for its effective implementation. This of course does not mean that the GBF should be disconnected from the broad range of socio-economic issues covered by other international frameworks and that constitute the suite of indirect drivers to the loss of biodiversity. Proper recognition of those connections must be made within the framework, but perhaps not as component targets.

Finally, and perhaps more importantly, once the post-2020 GBF is adopted, countries, and indeed all actors, will have to ‘walk the talk’ beyond just voicing their good will. Actual, perhaps even binding commitments as opposed to rhetoric and political posturing are not only desirable but utterly necessary. A system of checks and balances that would increase accountability, identify where progress is insufficient or lacking and importantly, one that would reward good and steady progress would be welcome. Biodiversity conservation cannot be the sole business of the so-called biodiversity community. Indeed, welcoming and enabling participation of different sectors and stakeholders in this endeavor will not only unleash and increase further awareness across society on the importance of biodiversity for sustainable development but also ensure a critical mass of engaged citizens willing to be agents of the much-needed, whole-of-society transformative change if we are to realize the 2050 vision of *‘living in harmony with nature’*.

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