

Getting the message right on Nature-based Solutions at the CBD COP15

This document aims to address concerns and misconceptions heard from some Parties and observers about Nature-based Solutions in the CBD and Global Biodiversity Framework; raising the long term implications to the Convention if NbS were not integrated into the decision text.

Why must NBS be in the GBF?

1. Nature based Solutions have gotten undeniable political traction and recognition in most of the multilateral processes, except in the Convention on Biological Diversity; the authority for nature. Not recognizing that will strongly affect the CBD making it less relevant and leaving it out of this unstoppable political process.
2. By integrating NbS in official text, the CBD has a critical opportunity to become the forum that guides NbS implementation, building up on the NbS standard and bringing key elements such as biodiversity enhancement and ecosystem integrity. A failure to grasp that opportunity will not slow the development of nature-based solutions, but could create a critical missed opportunity for the CBD in international environmental policy.
3. Scientists, policy makers and the world at large acknowledge the importance of addressing the intertwined crises of nature and climate. Nature-based solutions achieve this, providing simultaneous benefits and a vital bridge between the often silo-ed political worlds of climate and the protection of nature.
4. Countries could miss the opportunity to deploy nature-based solutions finance to help them meet goals and targets to emerge from the GBF process. This will make these targets harder to meet. Wealthy and developing nations, the private sector and other non-state actors recognise their ability to deliver positive social and environmental impact at scale. It would be perverse if that impact couldn't be harnessed to the goals of the GBF.
5. Nature based Solutions are local and a community led mechanism, grounded in Indigenous Peoples and local communities traditional knowledge and practices, not recognizing them could represent a missed opportunity to strengthen this traditional knowledge, recognize the communities rights, safeguards and address social and environmental challenges in an integrated manner.
6. For developing countries, Nature based Solutions are an effective tool for (1) adapting to climate change and (2) for addressing their main source of carbon emission related to deforestation and land use change; not being able to apply them could constrain them from fulfilling their NDC targets and their 2050 Long Term Vision.

All Parties to the CBD have agreed and formally adopted a definition of Nature-based Solutions

1. At UNEA 5.2, all Parties agreed on a definition for Nature based Solutions, clearly stating that they are: "... **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".
The concept clearly states that NbS are **actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use ecosystems** which talks to the objectives of the CBD.
2. Nature based Solutions has been recognized by two of the three **UN Río Conventions; UNCCD at COP15 and UNFCCC at COP27** as well as in the Ramsar wetlands convention; aligned to UNEA resolution definition.
3. At UNFCCC COP27 the "**Enhancing Nature-based Solutions for Climate Transformation**" (ENACT), a track 2 partnership, was launched by Egypt (Presidency of UNFCCC COP27 and UN CBD COP14), Germany, Pakistan, Malawi, European

Commission, Norway, Japan, Slovenia, with IUCN; aiming to enhance the protection from and resilience to climate impacts of at least 1 billion vulnerable people, including at least 500 million women and girls. Several other Parties will announce their adherence to the Partnership at CBD COP15 on 17th December.

Addressing misconceptions around Nature based Solutions

1. Nature based Solutions were not designed primarily as a market mechanism nor as a carbon (or biodiversity) offsetting tool and to date have been mainly deployed as a solution for climate adaptation, improved land management, disaster risk reduction etc.

- i. UNEA resolution, which is an already closed process, “recognizes that nature-based solutions may contribute significantly to climate action, while recognizing the need for analysis of their effects, including in the long term, and acknowledging that **they do not replace the need for rapid, deep and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions**, but can improve action for adaptation and resilience to and mitigation of climate change and its impact”
- ii. Other ongoing processes and mechanisms are defining standards and regulations to restrict the use of offsets and avoid greenwashing. The UN Secretary General High level expert group report “*Integrity matters: Net Zero commitments by businesses, financial institutions, cities and regions*”, presented at COP27, clarified that “*Non-state actors must prioritize urgent and deep reduction of emissions across their value chain. High integrity carbon credits in voluntary markets should be used for beyond value chain mitigation but cannot be counted toward a non-state actor’s interim emissions reductions required by its net zero pathway.*”

2. Nature based Solutions provides a high integrity, rights-based approach operational framework with a clearly defined set of safeguards and standards.

UNEA resolution recognizes Nature based Solutions “**Respect social and environmental safeguards, in line with the three “Rio conventions”...**, including such safeguards for local communities and indigenous peoples”

- i. Nature based Solutions are a mechanism grounded in Indigenous Peoples and local communities traditional knowledge and practices.
- ii. There is an available framework for the verification, design and scaling up of nature based solutions; a global standard, as a benchmark to implement high quality, equitable and rights based interventions, that safeguard people and nature.
- iii. At UNFCCC, COP27, same Parties negotiating the GBF, encouraged “...Parties to consider, as appropriate, **nature-based solutions** or ecosystem based approaches, **taking into consideration United Nations Environment Assembly resolution**, for their mitigation and adaptation action while **ensuring relevant social and environmental safeguards**”

3. Nature based Solutions provide a high integrity operational framework that is built on the foundation of the Ecosystem Approach as defined in UN CBD Decision V/6. As reflected in UNEA 5.2 resolution, Parties “*acknowledges that the concept of nature-based solutions is cognizant of and in harmony with the concept of ecosystem-based approaches identified under the Convention on Biological Diversity and other management and conservation approaches carried out under existing national policy and legislative frameworks and established under relevant multilateral environmental agreements*”

4. Nature-based Solutions enhance rather than limit the scope of new financing for biodiversity. Some Parties have expressed concerns that Nature-based Solutions might represent a framework for limiting the total amount of resourcing available for implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework and the Paris Agreement. However the early evidence is that NbS is helping to unlock additional sources of finance given that its strong operational focus is suited to a range of public and private sector financing instruments, including, *inter alia*, debt management and debt restructuring arrangements, sectoral impact bonds, as well as more traditional public sector grants and loans.

Nature based Solutions and Ecosystem Approaches reflected in Multilateral Agreements

UNEA 5.2

Resolution on “**Nature-based Solutions for supporting sustainable development**” formally adopts NbS definition:

1. “Decides that **nature-based solutions are 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,
(...)

4. **Acknowledges that the concept of nature-based solutions is cognizant of and in harmony with the concept of ecosystem-based approaches identified under the Convention on Biological Diversity and other management and conservation approaches carried out under existing national policy and legislative frameworks and established under relevant multilateral environmental agreements**

UNCCD

“Invites Parties to explore complementarities within relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements, within their respective mandates and goals, in the achievement of the objectives of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification at the national level, **including, as appropriate, in the implementation of sustainable land management, ecosystem-based approaches or nature-based solutions**”

UNFCCC - COP27

Para 48. Encourages Parties to consider, as appropriate, nature-based solutions or ecosystem based approaches, taking into consideration **United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 5/5, for their mitigation and adaptation action while ensuring relevant social and environmental safeguards;** (Cover decision text - under forests)

RAMSAR

3. WELCOMING UNEP/EA.5/Res.5, which recognizes that nature-based solutions, with their social and environmental safeguards, play an essential role in the overall global effort to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals [restoration and conservation]

11. (...) ENCOURAGES Parties to integrate existing national wetland policies into national sustainable development strategies with a view to generate co-benefits from wetlands [generating co-benefits] [**as nature-based solutions or ecosystem-based approaches**] [promoting integrated approaches] for adapting to and mitigating climate change, biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, disaster risk reduction and poverty alleviation and to promote positive connections harmony between humans [people] human and nature;