

Terms of Reference (ToR)

Thematic Group on Biodiversity Conservation

Under the mandate of the Biodiversity Task Force of the Western Balkans (BDTF WB)

1. Background & Rationale

The Thematic Group on Biodiversity Conservation (TG-BC) is established under the Biodiversity Task Force of the Western Balkans (BDTF WB) to provide guidance for biodiversity conservation initiatives across the region. The group will support the development and implementation of key regional policy documents, including the Western Balkans Biodiversity Report, Western Balkans 2030 Biodiversity Strategic Plan (BSP), the Biodiversity Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework, and other conservation-related activities under the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (GAWB).

2. Objectives

The TG-BC will:

- Provide technical and scientific input on biodiversity conservation, supporting the alignment of national policies with EU and international biodiversity frameworks.
- Contribute to the development, review, and implementation of the Western Balkans 2030 Biodiversity Strategic Plan.
- Offer expert analysis on biodiversity monitoring methodologies, aligning with the Biodiversity M&E Framework.
- Enhance regional cooperation on biodiversity conservation through engagement with state institutions, academia, and non-governmental organizations.

3. Membership & Selection Criteria

- Members shall be recognized experts in biodiversity conservation, including specialists from academia, research institutions, NGOs, and the private sector.
- Membership will be voluntary, with individuals acting in their personal capacity rather than as institutional representatives.
- Selection will be based on technical expertise, geographical representation, and sectoral diversity, particularly emphasizing expertise in conservation of ecosystems, habitats, and species.
- Selection criteria and the nomination of the TG-BC members will be endorsed by the BDTF WB.

4. Structure & Governance

- The TG-BC will provide inputs to IUCN, in its role as the Secretariat of the BDTF WB, for consideration by BDTF members.

- The TG-BC will convene meetings at least twice per year in a virtual format, with additional online meetings as needed. Face-to-face meetings will be the exception rather than the rule and will be organized only when necessary.

5. Participation & Contribution

- Members are expected to actively participate in discussions, contributing their technical expertise and perspectives.
- Members will be required to review meeting documents in advance and prepare their technical input where relevant.
- Participation is not expected to be time-consuming; emphasis will be placed on providing guidance during discussions rather than preparing substantial written outputs.
- Members may be invited to share case studies, best practices, or emerging challenges relevant to biodiversity conservation.

6. Engagement & Sustainability

To maintain motivation and engagement, the following approaches will be adopted:

- **Recognition & Visibility:**
 - Acknowledgment of members' contributions in BDTF WB reports, strategic plans, and relevant policy documents.
 - Opportunities to represent TG-BC in regional and international biodiversity policy discussions.
- **Knowledge Exchange & Networking:**
 - Linkages with IUCN Commissions, and other global conservation networks for professional exchange.
- **Capacity Building & Professional Development:**
 - Opportunities to participate in training sessions, workshops, and knowledge-sharing events hosted by IUCN or partner organizations.
 - Access to expert roundtables and webinars with international biodiversity leaders.
- **Supportive Secretariat Role:**
 - IUCN, as the Secretariat of the BDTF WB, will provide logistical support for meetings and facilitate continuous communication among members.
 - A dedicated coordination platform (e.g., online workspace or mailing group) will be maintained to streamline communication, updates, and document sharing.

7. Responsiveness to BDTF WB

- The TG-BC will provide inputs to BDTF WB in a light and practical manner, ensuring that key discussions, insights, and recommendations are conveyed effectively.
- The group will in coordination with IUCN be responsive to requests and directions from the BDTF WB, ensuring that its technical input aligns with the evolving needs of biodiversity policy and governance in the region.
- The BDTF WB may request ad-hoc consultations with TG-BC members to provide expert perspectives on emerging biodiversity issues.