POST BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK EU SUPPORT 2020

TOWARDS POST-2020 EXPERTISE ON #24

ALIGNING HIGH CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY AMBITIONS IN 2021 AND BEYOND

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Better aligning ambition and action for climate and biodiversity is necessary to make progress on both challenges and more strongly push for the transformative change required in most socioeconomic sectors to set societies on the path to sustainability and achieve the goals of Agenda 2030. Key steps can already be taken in 2021 to make climate and biodiversity actions stronger together.

"COMMITTED TO WORKING TOGETHER ON THE LINK BETWEEN CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY, DETERMINED TO SUPPORT AND WORK TOGETHER WITH OTHER POLITICAL LEADERS TO PROMPT A GLOBAL AND EFFECTIVE RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY LOSS IN THE COP15 OF CBD TO BE HELD IN KUNMING, CHINA"

Presidents Xi Jinping and Emmanuel Macron, Beijing Call for Biodiversity Conservation and Climate Change, 6 November 2019

The need to jointly address the challenges posed by climate change and biodiversity loss has entered the scientific and political mainstream [1]. The time is now ripe for policymakers/States and non-State actors (NSA) to step up their action further, and start aligning high climate and biodiversity ambitions with action in 2021 and beyond.

The Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI) and the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework-EU support project, in collaboration with the European Climate Foundation, organised on 9-10 February 2021 an online dialogue between actors involved in climate and biodiversity science, policymaking, and implementation.

The dialogue's objective was to develop a better mutual understanding of the case for aligning climate and biodiversity ambitions and action. The dialogue also aims to improve understanding of the challenges encountered, and the opportunities and enablers to catalyse an alignment that maximizes coherence and synergies between climate and biodiversity and minimizes trade-offs and even possible conflicts.

Addu Nature Park,
Addu, Maldives.
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1. CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY LINKAGES: A SYSTEMIC VIEW OF SYNERGIES AND TRADE-OFFS

Nature Based Solutions (NBS) [2] are often a central focus in discussions on the climate and biodiversity nexus: NBS conserve biodiversity, and are central to climate adaptation strategies. Some studies stress that NBS can provide up to a third of mitigation needed up to 2030 to maintain temperature rise to 2°C when implemented with biodiversity safeguards [3]. NBS' 'win-win-win' characteristic substantiate the need to scale them up. The dialogue highlighted that NBS – framed as 'biodiversity can help address climate change'– is only one of at least four ways to connect both issues. The other three are:

+ CLIMATE CHANGE HURTS BIODIVERSITY: climate change is already a key driver for biodiversity loss, and its impacts are set to accentuate in coming years [4]. Both the IPBES and the IPCC underline the significant benefits to biodiversity of keeping temperature rise to 1.5°C rather than 2°C [5]. Ambitious climate mitigation in the coming decade and reaching carbon neutrality by mid-century should be viewed as an urgent priority for both communities, as it will allow to keep the 1.5°C temperature goal in reach.

+ CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY DEGRADATION SHARE ROOT CAUSES: these are linked to unsustainable modes of production and consumption (e.g., in agri-food systems and energy production), which result in land-use changes (e.g., deforestation and land-degradation), damaging climate and biodiversity. A significant issue is the role of harmful subsidies (e.g., for agriculture and fossil fuels) [6]. This highlights that climate and biodiversity 'high ambition' need to emphasise the role of profound supply and demand-side transformations. For example, in the Post-2020 Biodiversity framework, 'high biodiversity ambition' should comprise not just the goal of protecting 30% of lands and seas by 2030, but also developing sustainable use of the remaining 70% in coherence with the SDGs.

+ SOME CLIMATE MITIGATION 'SOLUTIONS' COMPROMISE BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION, WHICH IN TURN COMPROMISES THE ABILITY TO REACH CARBON NEUTRALITY: this remains a blind spot in discussions on climate and biodiversity. IPBES and IPCC reports and recent science reveals that the extensive use of bioenergy to replace fossil fuels, and large-scale deployment of land-based Carbon-Dioxide Removal (CDR) through Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS) or afforestation may have highly negative impacts on biodiversity. The IPCC 1.5°C Special Report clearly states that the only way to reach carbon neutrality by mid-century in the face of mitigation inaction between 2020 and 2030 would be to resort to very extensive carbon dioxide removals by 2030-2050 that may have a highly negative impact on biodiversity. One IPCC scenario projects bioenergy crops being grown on an area the size of India by 2050 [7]. This would result in: (1) severe land-use conflicts, compromising food security goals by increasing the number of food insecure people by up to 150 million [8]; (2) compromised biodiversity conservation, as up to half of ideal bioenergy growing areas is situated in biodiversity hot-spots [9], and much bioenergy is projected to be grown in monocultures [10].

"WE WILL RE-DOUBLE OUR EFFORTS TO END TRADITIONAL SILO THINKING AND TO ADDRESS THE INTERRELATED AND INTERDEPENDENT CHALLENGES OF BIODIVERSITY LOSS, LAND, FRESHWATER AND OCEAN DEGRADATION, DEFORESTATION, DESERTIFICATION, POLLUTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE. ALL IN AN INTEGRATED AND COHERENT WAY, ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY VIA ROBUST AND EFFECTIVE REVIEW MECHANISMS. WE AIM TO LEAD BY EXAMPLE THROUGH ACTIONS IN OUR OWN COUNTRIES." Leaders' Pledge for Nature

2. TOWARDS A CLIMATE-NEUTRAL AND BIODIVERSITY-POSITIVE FUTURE: AMBITIONS FOR 2030 AND 2050

The dialogue underlined how taking a systemic view of climate and biodiversity linkages reveals a fuller picture of the transformative changes needed to address both challenges successfully, and the importance of aligning high climate and biodiversity ambitions and action in the short, medium and long terms. Following the Paris Agreement, 'high climate ambition' is often framed as aiming for carbon neutrality by mid-century to reach the 1.5°C target. Ahead of COP26, expectations are placed on States to demonstrate ambitious climate action across time scales by: (1) submitting an updated NDC by Glasgow, demonstrating ambitious policies and goals for the defining 2021-2030 decade, (2) backing up the mid-century carbon neutrality announcements countries recently made (e.g. EU, China, USA, Japan, UK, South Korea, etc.) with detailed pathways describing how they plan to reach them [11], (3) fully walking the talk, ensuring their COVID-19 recovery plans accelerate the low-carbon transition rather than lock in high carbon infrastructure and processes.

[1] The IPBES/IPCC workshop on biodiversity and climate change, Leaders' Pledge for Nature, High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, Edinburgh Declaration, Youth Manifesto for Nature.

[2] Nature-Based Solutions include approaches that deliverecosystem services through the protection, restoration, or sustainable management of natural ecosystems. For further insights into NBS literature, see "The Nexus Report: Nature Based Solutions to the Biodiversity and Climate Crises" and "Expertise on #7 – Nature-based solutions

[3] Griscom, B. W., et al. (2017). Natural climate solutions. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 114(44), 11645-11650 & Roe, S., et al (2019). Contribution of the land sector to a 1.5°C world. Nature Climate Change. 9, 817–828.

[4] IPBES 2019 Global Assessment Report: https://cut.ly/bj4qfuY

[5] Ibid and IPCC 1.5°C Special Report (2018): https://cut.ly/qrLMsh0

[6] OECD (2019), Biodiversity: Finance and the Economic and Business Case for Action, report prepared for the G7 Environment Ministers' Meeting, 5-6 May 2019.

[7] IPCC (2018) Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report.

[8] IPCC (2019) Climate Change and Land: an IPCC special report.

Deforestation in the Maranhão state in 2016, Brazil © Ibama

The short, medium and long-term scales are equally important to define 'high biodiversity ambition': (1) 2030 is the crucial time horizon of the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework, (2) 2050 represents the long-term horizon of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)'s overarching vision, and the 'Global Stocktake' (which would also include a 2030 milestone), and (3) States are also called to 'nature-proof' their recovery plans.

INTERNATIONAL ALIGNMENT TO ENHANCE COORDINATION OF NATIONAL CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY IMPLEMENTATION: Aligning climate and biodiversity ambitions and action within governance, especially of the CBD and UNFCCC, should not be viewed as an aim in itself but oriented towards helping advance national climate and biodiversity policymaking and planning [12]. Rather than creating a joint programme between the secretariats of the three conventions (cf. the Rio Conventions' Joint Liaison Group), what is needed is to: (1) work on substantial issues pertinent to both climate and biodiversity (i.e. NBS, CDR and bioenergy in SBSTA/SBSTTA [13] joint work), (2) help ensure the coherence and greater alignment of policy instruments (NBSAPs and NDCs [14]), and (3) align reporting and accountability frameworks (SBI/SBI 15 joint work and common monitoring tools). Such efforts would help create greater alignment in domestic climate and biodiversity policymaking and planning, thereby sending helpful signals to public players at the national level, as well as to local authorities and the private sector.

Another key concern is creating greater coherence in global goals. Much was raised about the climate goal in the CBD post-2020 framework as a way to concretely support the Paris Agreement's collective goals, underscoring the pivotal role of ecosystems in climate mitigation and adaptation. Referring to the climate arena, the Global Stocktake in 2023 was highlighted as a key moment where carbon neutrality pathways must demonstrate they do not compromise biodiversity conservation, but rather ensure countries are collectively placing themselves onto nature-positive climate neutrality pathways. The SDGs and Agenda 2030 were highlighted as a useful framework to support creating more coherent climate and domestic biodiversity planning. The workshop also highlighted the role of advancing on integrated scientific expertise, with the IPBES/IPCC co-sponsored workshop on biodiversity and climate change in December 2020 a promising start.

INTEGRATING NATIONAL CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY POLICYMAKING AND PLANNING: Several Parties shared very promising examples of work around NBS for both climate and biodiversity. However, it appears that their reflections on the national alignment of climate and biodiversity focused primarily on NBS. In doing so didn't put enough emphasis on the need for a more systemic view that would include biodiversity, sustainable agri-food systems, demand management, and the need for ambitious climate action to prevent recurring to extensive CDR. Research shows that incoherencies or contradictions exist between Parties' NDC, NBSAP, and UNCCD NAPs, even when referring to the same issue, e.g. ecosystem restoration [16]. The importance of long-term and spatial planning, and scenario analyses that cross both climate and biodiversity was underscored, as was the fact that aligning climate and biodiversity ambitions is also helpful to green COVID-19 recoveries. Finance actors also play a key role in bringing about greater climate and biodiversity alignment and stopping negative or unsustainable supports.

TOWARDS A CLIMATE NEUTRAL AND BIODIVERSITY POSITIVE ECONOMY: Successfully reaching both climate and biodiversity goals requires a profound transformation of production and consumption systems. The dialogue highlighted that the Paris Agreement truly jumpstarted the 'climate neutral economy', which has now entered the mainstream [17]. However, the concept of a 'biodiversity positive' economy remains at a more nascent state. Furthermore, NSA are not yet ensuring that their carbon neutrality goals and plans are compatible with biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.

"WE WILL USE OUR COP26 PRESIDENCY TO BUILD ON THE FOUNDATIONS LAID AT THE 2019 UN CLIMATE ACTION SUMMIT, WORKING WITH GOVERNMENTS, BUSINESSES AND CIVIC ORGANISATIONS TO RAISE AMBITION ON TACKLING THE DRIVERS OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY LOSS, MOBILISE FINANCING TO PROTECT AND RESTORE CRITICAL ECOSYSTEMS, AND KICK-START A JUST RURAL TRANSITION TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE LAND USE TO BENEFIT PEOPLE, CLIMATE AND NATURE." UK UNFCCC COP26 Presidency

3. SUSTAINABLE LAND AND OCEAN: KEY FOCI TO REACH CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY GOALS AND NATURE

Four issues arose throughout the conversation as key to align climate and biodiversity ambitions and action.

CLARIFYING NBS' ROLES AND CHALLENGES: The term NBS is sometimes misused, with some actors referring to NBS as bioenergy production, BECCS and monoculture tree plantations, despite these practices' negative impacts on biodiversity 18. There is a growing recognition among leading businesses of the need to ensure high-quality NBS [19]. In terms of governance, the weighty role

[9] Santangeli, A., et al. (2016). Global change synergies and trade-offs between renewable energy and biodiversity. GCB Bioenergy, 8(5), 941–951.

[10] IPBES 2019 Assessment Report.

[11] The Paris Agreement invites Parties to submit by 2020 Long-Term Low Emission Development Strategies (LT-LEDS).

[12] The UNCCD is also key in 2021, given UNCCD COP15 and the Rio Conventions High-Level Summit.

[13] https://cut.ly/dOdYwCW & https://cut.ly/Gd864Iq

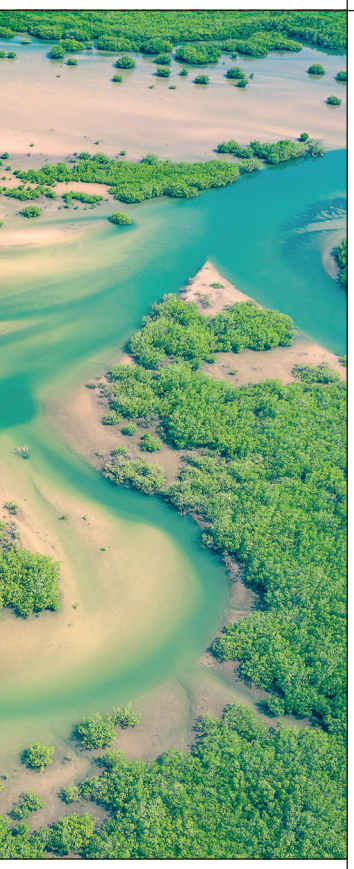
[14] https://cut.ly/qM5Ce5T & https://cut.ly/Xm71HMt

[15] https://cut.ly/IfeGIRA & https://cut.ly/PCs12Pz

[16] Sewell, A., van der Esch, S., Löwenhardt, H. (2020). Goals and Commitments for the Restoration Decade. A global overview of countries' restoration commitments under the Rio Conventions and other pledges. PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment, PBL publication number: 3906 https://cut.ly/QHnJFcV

[17] Over 1100 companies, 450 cities and 22 regions have made climate neutrality commitments on https://cut.ly/XUifebv

[18] Furthermore, monoculture tree plantation has lesser climate mitigation benefits than biodiversity-based options.



Aerial view of mangrove forest in the Saloum Delta National Park, Joal Fadiout, Senegal.
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of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) was also brought up repeatedly, given the demonstrated benefits for biodiversity conservation when IPLC rights are upheld and land and coastal areas management is in their hands [20]. However, it is also key to acknowledge and address the limits and challenges related to NBS: the non-permanence of carbon sinks, and the level of engagement needed with decentralized actors, costly monitoring and reversibility. There is also a risk with regards to finance and offsetting: while greater NBS finance is needed, we must ensure that climate finance from voluntary and regulated carbon markets (i.e., the Paris Agreement's Article 6) is not seen as a 'cash-cow' for NBS and biodiversity, while ignoring the importance of finance's climate integrity.

SUSTAINABLE AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS IS THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM. While the dialogue did not dive into the agri-food system, participants repeatedly brought up the importance of transforming this sector to reach ambitious climate and biodiversity goals. Particular importance was placed on taking: (1) a systemic approach centring not only on climate and biodiversity, but also food security and nutrition, and (2) a food system approach (from farm to fork rather than just the agricultural sector). Several events this year (UN Food Summit, CBD COP15 and UNFCCC COP26, etc.) offer opportunities to push forward further the food sector's transformation and transition towards biodiversity and climate goals.

LAND-BASED CDR AS A LOOMING CRUNCH ISSUE. CDR and the need for its governance are much closer in the future than it may seem. Actors in the climate sphere currently reflecting on CDR governance approach this issue through a narrow climate lens [21]. There is an urgent need to (1) clarify the incompatibility of climate neutrality pathways using very large-scale CDR and reaching biodiversity goals, and (2) launch joint work on CDR and bioenergy by the UNFCCC and CBD Subsidiary Bodies, ideally starting at COP15 and COP26. CDR must also be brought to other relevant arenas relevant to its governance, such as the Committee on World Food Security.

DEMAND-SIDE MANAGEMENT IS THE OTHER ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM. The IPCC's 1.5℃ Special Report clearly shows that the carbon neutrality pathways least resorting to CDR deploy strong demand-side measures (reduced energy demand and food sustainability shifts) to drastically bring down GHG emissions. Promoting these behavioural changes in individuals' and collectives' lifestyles in the food and energy systems is essential. Two arenas in which this issue can be addressed are the SDG process (cf. SDG 12) and Stockholm + 50 Conference in 2022.

4. ACCELERATING POLITICAL TRACTION IN 2021 AND BEYOND

There is a need for global traction—including accountability as a form of peer pressure. But what would be the political impetus for aligning global climate and biodiversity ambitions towards COP15 and COP26, but also beyond 2021?

+ 2021: At COP15 and COP26: jumpstart joint work on (1) greater alignment in NDCs/NBSAPs, (2) reporting and accountability (SBIs), and (3) synergies and trade-offs (SBSTA/SBSTTA). The G7 and G20 also represent opportunities to ensure a greater narrative on aligned climate and biodiversity ambitions and action.

+ 2022: ideas included: (1) an implementation summit in 2022 after the three Rio COPs, (2) the high-level political forum of SDGs as an important place to advance an integrative vision, (3) Stockholm + 50 and UNEA-5 as critical moments for creating additional political traction at the global scale.

+ 2023: the Paris Agreement Global Stocktake is a milestone to integrate biodiversity into global climate accountability towards reaching carbon-neutrality and long-term collective climate goals.

NATIONAL-SCALE POLITICAL TRACTION is also essential to align high climate and biodiversity ambitions: greater national alignment helps the environmental front to weigh moreover national scale arbitrations.

"THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES UNDERLINES THE ESSENTIAL CONTRIBUTION OF NATURE TO ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS IMPACTS AND THE NEED TO ADDRESS BIODIVERSITY LOSS AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN AN INTEGRATED MANNER." UNFCCC COP25 Decision

[19] WBCSD (2020), "Mapping nature-based solutions and natural climate solutions", https://cutt.ly/Fcp2h7q

[20] Dinerstein, E. et al (2019) A Global Deal For Nature: Guiding principles, milestones, and targets, Science Advances.

[21] https://cutt.ly/Gcp2HWt and Fyson, C. et al. (2020), Fair-share carbon dioxide removal increases major emitter responsibility, Nature Climate Change. https://cutt.ly/ycp2Alz

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Wind Turbine Landscape, San José, Costa Rica
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