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Last stop before Kunming COP15: what are the priorities for Geneva's biodiversity negotiations?

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Ecological Civilization-Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth

KUNMING · CHINA

Meetings to negotiate the future post-2020 global biodiversity framework, aiming to reach a consensus on a shared pathway to “living in harmony with nature” by 2050, will finally resume in person in Geneva (14-29 March 2022). Following a period of remote working that lasted over two years, which enabled the exchange of views but did not facilitate the search for compromise, these meetings represent a major step in the run up to COP15. Not only must the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) express their positions and proposals on the content of the global framework, its goals and targets, but they will also need to jointly consider its implementation and regular monitoring to ensure it produces the expected

“transformative change”.

What remains to be accomplished to achieve an ambitious text?

Three different meetings will alternate in Geneva to prepare and contribute to the discussions on the global framework to be adopted at COP15: the third meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework (WG2020), the third meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI-3), and the 24th meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-24) will be held to follow up on the initial online discussions that took place in spring and summer 2021. These meetings will therefore have very full agendas that address the framework's content, implementation mechanisms and instruments, and indicators to monitor efforts.

The international community already seems to strongly support certain elements of the global framework. For example, this is the case for the much publicized “30x30” target, which aims to protect 30% (by surface area) of terrestrial ecosystems and 30% of marine ecosystems worldwide by 2030. Discussions have been fuelled by numerous debates: on the importance of protecting the most essential ecosystems, backed by scientific evidence and coalitions¹ that highlight the objective of protecting 30% of the planet, or even seeing this as a minimum²; on the effectiveness and efficiency of this protection; and on the issues of respecting and enabling the participation of indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLC)³. This is a key target of the framework, while reminding us of the importance of human rights-based approaches. The terms of this target will need to be clarified to reflect these key issues.

Other elements of the framework, which are also crucial since they address the drivers of biodiversity loss and implementation issues, will be discussed in depth to enable a consensus to be reached on ambitious and measurable goals and targets. For example, the figures for the target on pollution (target 7) as presented in the [first draft](#) of the post-2020 framework, published in July 2021, have already triggered a range of reactions⁴ during the latest online discussions, particularly regarding pollution from the agricultural sector. Common ground must be established if this target is to contribute more fully to the necessary transformation of the agriculture and food sector, which is subject to complex trade-offs that do not facilitate an agreement at the CBD.

Moreover, stumbling blocks remain and are only to be expected on issues such as resource mobilization, including financial resources for the framework's implementation. Currently, two targets specify how to bridge the financial gap by 2030 (set at US\$700 billion per year within Goal D) between what is needed to protect biodiversity and what is actually spent: Target 19 provides for the mobilization of an additional US\$200 billion, and US\$10 billion per year for developing countries, while Target 18 calls for the redirection, reform, and/or elimination of harmful subsidies and incentives amounting to US\$500 billion annually. While there is certainly a need to reduce biodiversity-harmful financing to avoid the future costs of ecosystem degradation, developing countries are expecting more guarantees from developed countries. Without a change of approach to emphasize the importance of redirecting financial flows towards positive financing for biodiversity while securing significant and necessary additional resources, the new CBD framework could continue to face conflicts between developed and developing countries, thus compromising its implementation and its appropriation by all.

An indivisible framework to support transformative change

During the [last online discussions](#) of the working group, CBD parties highlighted the need to clarify the relationship between goals on the state of biodiversity in 2030 and 2050 and the action targets that would help achieve these goals. To inform these discussions, a group of scientists and experts published a [report](#) last December on their work focusing on Goal [A5](#). A number of key messages helped to clarify priorities:

- There is no single, direct link between each specific action target and the expected outcomes of the framework's Goal A, but rather multiple interactions. The five main drivers of biodiversity loss identified by IPBES [6](#) have impacts on all aspects of biodiversity. Furthermore, the sustained action that must be implemented immediately after the adoption of the global framework will not necessarily have an instant impact on the state of biodiversity.
- There is a need to determine how global numerical targets will be defined at other levels (regional, national, local) and to allow for a certain degree of flexibility as the pathway is set at the global level, while ensuring that actions involve international collaboration and coordination to ensure they stay on track. To this end, the strengthening of is a critical first step.
- Without assurances on ambition for all targets beyond 30x30, particularly regarding the indirect drivers of biodiversity loss [7](#) but also on implementation and mainstreaming targets and mechanisms (such as the aforementioned Targets 7, 18 and 19), outcomes will be too weak to achieve the goals on the state of ecosystems, on a reduction of the species extinction rate, and the preservation of genetic diversity.

The message is clear: goals and targets must be interconnected and therefore indivisible if we are to embark on the pathway of “transformative change” advocated by the expert group and also by IPBES.

Defining the priorities for Geneva and beyond

Recent assessments have shown that none of the Aichi Targets (2011-2020) have been fully achieved [8](#). To avoid the situation where new goals and targets are only partially implemented or not at all, the Geneva sessions must particularly focus on elements that will condition the effective implementation of the text, after a long discussion period focused on its goals and targets.

- **Strengthening accountability and transparency:** planning, monitoring, reporting and review mechanisms must be improved to monitor the implementation of the framework and to enable the assessment of efforts in light of collectively determined ambition. To this end, [IDDRI proposes](#) (i) strengthening and supporting the alignment of future National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), (ii) strengthening reporting mechanisms, (iii) establishing an individual review process, (iv) establishing a global stocktake to assess collective efforts towards global goals and targets, and (v) establishing a compliance mechanism. These mechanisms should work together to create a dynamic review cycle for the implementation of the global framework up to 2030 and beyond, in a non-punitive and cooperative way.
- **Boosting biodiversity funding:** Not only must Parties agree on the amounts put forward within Goal D.1 and Targets 18 and 19, but they will also need to identify instruments and mechanisms to support resource mobilization and the alignment of financial flows with the ambition of the post-2020 framework. This will involve strengthening information systems on national, international and private flows, for example through instruments such as national biodiversity financing plans that track expenditure and needs; supporting the establishment of enabling conditions to redirect financial flows through economic and financial instruments; and ensuring effective instruments to support developing countries (e.g. official development assistance, environmental funds) while avoiding the future costs of harmful subsidies.
- **Accelerating the participation and engagement of non-state and sub-national actors:** To transform this global framework into a “framework for all”, and to create a sense of ownership at every governance level and by

all actors, it is necessary to stimulate the [Action Agenda for Nature and People](#). This platform, which aims to bring together the commitments and initiatives of non-state and sub-national actors, should provide further support for ambition until the framework's adoption. At COP15 it will also be necessary to [institutionalize this platform](#), to study options for its moderation and the follow-up of commitments, and ultimately to make non-state action a pillar of action for biodiversity.

1 High Ambition Coalition for Nature & People; Dinerstein et al. (2020), A "Global Safety Net" to reverse biodiversity loss and stabilize Earth's climate. Science Advances 6(36)

2 For example: <https://eowilsonfoundation.org/half-earth-project/>

3 For example: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/11/climate/nature-conservation-30-percent.html> , <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/indigenous-peoples-leadership-and-free-prior-and-informed-consent-are-fundamental-30x30>

4 Targets for reducing nutrients released into the environment by at least half and pesticides by at least two thirds.

5 Goal A to 2050: "The integrity of all ecosystems is enhanced, with an increase of at least 15% in the area, connectivity and integrity of natural ecosystems, supporting healthy and resilient populations of all species, the rate of extinctions has been reduced at least tenfold, and the risk of species extinctions across all taxonomic and functional groups, is halved, and genetic diversity of wild and domesticated species is safeguarded, with at least 90% of genetic diversity within all species maintained."

6 These are (i) changes in land and sea use, (ii) direct exploitation of certain organisms, (iii) climate change, (iv) pollution and (v) invasive alien species.

7 According to the expert group, these are Targets 14 to 21 on implementation and integration tools and solutions, as well as Targets 1, 9 and 10 on spatial planning, sustainable fisheries, and sustainable agriculture, aquaculture and forestry.

8 Global Biodiversity Outlook (2020), Convention on Biological Diversity

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