

Second Biodiversity Workshop

SUMMARY REPORT

Perspectives on biodiversity commitments, the 2030 Mission, the other elements of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, and the Belt and Road Initiative

13-14 May 2019, Beijing

Organized by the EU-China Environment Project

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Table of contents

1. Introduction	5
2. What could national biodiversity commitments look like, how could they be linked to NBSAPs?	6
3. Discussions on 2030 Mission and apex targets	9
4. Other elements of the post-2020 framework	10
5. The Belt and Road Initiative and mainstreaming of biodiversity	11

1. Introduction

On the road to the Fifteenth Conference of Parties (COP15) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which will be held in China at the end of 2020, it is important to multiply the occasions for experts to discuss options for the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. Ad hoc workshops, dedicated to key issues in negotiations, are useful moments where a common understanding can be built, and advances made towards consensus.

After a first workshop¹ on 9-10 October 2018, the EU-China Environment Project organized a second workshop on 13-14 May 2019, in Beijing. It aimed at exchanging perspectives on biodiversity commitments, the 2030 Mission, other elements of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, and the Belt and Road Initiative. The meeting was held under Chatham House rules. It gathered representatives from China, France, Germany, Egypt, the European Commission, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom, the OECD, IUCN, WWF, Expertise France, and IDDRI.

¹ Rankovic, A., Shen, X. (2019). First Biodiversity Workshop - Summary Report: Sharing perspectives on CBD implementation and options for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, 9-10 October 2018, Beijing. EU-China Environment Project.

2. What could national biodiversity commitments look like, how could they be linked to NBSAPs?

Decision 14/34 of the CBD invites Parties, and encourages non-state actors, to develop biodiversity commitments on the road to COP15. There is still a need to better understand the nature and purpose of these commitments, and the workshop participants addressed several points, both concerning state and non-state actors.

2.1. Perspectives on commitments by States

Purpose of biodiversity commitments

- ¶ The discussion around commitments is taking place in a context of implementation failure. Participants thus reflected on how commitments have added value to reinforce implementation.
- ¶ The NBSAPs are the current principal translation of the CBD at the domestic level. However, there are many instances, and even at CBD COPs, where governments or heads of States make additional commitments which are not recorded nor monitored at the CBD level. Their added value thus does not seem to be at its full potential.
- ¶ Before COP15, the purpose of biodiversity commitments is also to raise the ambition by the end of 2020, capitalizing on the growing momentum around COP15.
- ¶ Up until COP15, more discussions are needed on how biodiversity commitments could become a new instrument to strengthen the implementation of the post-2020 framework.

Before and/or after COP15?

- ¶ The decision taken at COP14 does not address whether the biodiversity commitments would be

part of the post-2020 framework, nor, if yes, how they could function. The regional consultations conducted in early 2019, however, showed that there exists interest for this instrument, and reflections are thus needed.

- ¶ For now, there is a distinction between the period before COP15, and the period after. Before COP15, the commitments should aim at displaying individual ambition and raising collective ambition. After COP15, the commitments should reflect the Parties' decisions to implement the post-2020 framework. The commitments taken before COP15 could be fine tuned, after COP15, to be consistent with the post-2020 framework.
- ¶ Key questions remain on how biodiversity commitments could fit into the post-2020 framework. Discussions compared the pledge system in climate change, which functions with nationally determined contributions (NDCs). In climate change policies, there is a long-term goal on temperature increase, as well as a target on emissions reductions. The NDCs are a contribution to these global goals, and also a means to compare actions, and thus compare and discuss the efforts undertaken by different Parties. If the biodiversity commitments are seen as a way to create these dynamics for biodiversity, then further discussions will be needed on how to achieve this.

How could it work after COP15? With what relationship with NBSAPs?

- ¶ During the workshop, there was a general agreement that biodiversity commitments could be a mechanism that builds upon the NBSAPs. For now, it seems that commitments can come in very different forms and modalities; whatever

the form they take, it will be important to clarify how it complements and strengthens the NBSAPs and their implementation.

- ¶ Ideas that were mentioned for biodiversity commitments include: a principle of non-regression, indicating clear deadlines for the commitments, precisising and clarifying means for implementation. For the production of such commitments, it could also be imagined that each ministry is asked to develop their own commitments, and heads of States as well: this would require a lot of negotiations and coordination at the national level, but would have the merit of stimulating discussions on biodiversity.
- ¶ It was also mentioned that the reporting on commitments could be done in the context of national reporting, in order not to increase the burden on national administrations.
- ¶ A parallel with climate change could also help identify the respective purposes and complementarity between NBSAPs and biodiversity commitments. Regarding climate, countries develop how they are going to contribute to the global goals in their NDCs, with commitments on greenhouse gas emission reductions (and on adaptation), but they are also invited to develop low greenhouse gas emissions development strategies (e.g., long-term view on the transformations on drivers), which are important to give visibility and consistency to shorter-term actions. NBSAPs could provide medium- or long-term political visions on the domestic transformations that are necessary to achieve the 2050 Vision. The biodiversity commitments would work, on their part, on a shorter-term basis (e.g., five years, like the NDCs), and be the object of more collective stocktaking at the CBD level.²
- ¶ At COP15, guidelines could be adopted to guide governments on the procedure to produce their commitments.

Links with finance

- ¶ The lack of international and domestic funding was recalled during the workshop, and it is

anticipated that this question will be central for the implementation of the post-2020 framework.

- ¶ Like the NDCs for climate, the biodiversity commitments could be an interesting tool to clarify the funding needs for each committed national action aimed at implementing the post-2020 framework domestically. It could help specify the short-term funding needs (e.g., 5 years period, like in climate) and thus facilitate the mobilization of international cooperation.

2.2. Perspectives on commitments by non-state actors

The importance of non-state actors' mobilization

- ¶ The mobilization of non-State actors on the road to COP15 is of utmost importance to sustain high ambition. This is a key lesson learned from climate COP21.³ There is an urgent need to further operationalize and communicate on the "Sharm El-Sheikh to Kunming Action Agenda for Nature and People".
- ¶ The actors involved in the implementation of biodiversity policies are key to achieving global goals, including local authorities, businesses, the finance sector, indigenous peoples and local communities, NGOs, etc. Involving them more actively in the process could increase their knowledge of the post-2020 framework, increase their ownership, and also better reflect their perspective from an implementation standpoint.

Building coalitions

- ¶ Coalitions of different actors (including States) on key sectors that are the most involved in the drivers of biodiversity loss (i.e., the agrifood sector) and that could get organized before COP15 and, after, commit themselves to implement the post-2020 framework, were considered as very important.
- ¶ Building such coalitions and bringing actors together necessitates, however, effort from States, to stimulate and facilitate their emergence.

2 Rankovic, A., & Babin, D. (2019). Defining and achieving a post-2020 ambition – Insights from a conversation in Tokyo. *Towards Post-2020 – Dialogue With N°1*, Post 2020 Biodiversity Framework – EU Support, 4 p.

3 Kok, M., Rankovic, A., Löwenhardt, H., Pattberg, P., Prip, C., Widerberg, O., Laurans, Y. (2018). *From Paris to Beijing: Insights gained from the UNFCCC Paris Agreement for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework*. PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency, The Hague, PBL publication number: 3412, 26 p.
Rankovic, A., Maljean-Dubois, S., Wemaere, M., Laurans, Y. (2019). An Action Agenda for biodiversity: Expectations and issues in the short and medium terms, IDDRI, *Issue Brief* N°04/19.

An MRV for non-state actors

- ¶ A key challenge in non-state actors' commitments in the last ten years has been the risk of greenwashing. Actions need to be proven, and commitments must be assessed and monitored.
- ¶ Since non-state action is key, a dedicated system of monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV) should be developed.⁴

Chinese perspective

- ¶ The Chinese NGO landscape on the environment has developed significantly in recent years.
- ¶ The Chinese government and environmental NGOs are increasing their experience in working jointly on different issues.

- ¶ There are initiatives led by non-state actors (businesses, NGOs) that are trying to address different biodiversity issues in innovative ways (e.g., the Deforestation and Sustainable Meat Declaration, or innovations using new technologies such as AliPay).
- ¶ The COP15 team, on the Chinese side, recognizes the importance of non-state actors and is willing to increase exchanges and collaboration with them.

4 See Rankovic et al., (2019), *ibid*.

3. Discussions on 2030 Mission and apex targets

Two presentations with different views on the 2030 Mission and apex targets were invited before opening the floor to discussion.

- One presentation reflected on what could be an equivalent to the 1.5° C or 2 °C targets under the UNFCCC, and proposed the rate of species extinction. More specifically, the proposal was to choose “no more than 2 known species per year allowed to become functionally extinct” as the apex target for 2030.
- The idea builds on the scientific idea that extinction risk can be an integrated indicator of the pressures experienced by ecosystems, and the potential of using extinctions to galvanize support for biodiversity conservation. Some participants perceived that extinctions can be a good communication-oriented target because they seem to be more easily understood by a broader audience than more complex biodiversity indicators, and extinction represents an irreplaceable loss of biodiversity.

Some concerns regarding using extinction rate as the apex target were, however, also raised:

- The threatened status of a species is affected by many factors. How the rate of species extinction is connected with the drivers of biodiversity loss (e.g., trade, the agrifood sector) and conservation efforts (e.g., protected areas) is not always straightforward.
- The UNFCCC single apex model may not be appropriate for biodiversity due to the complexity of biodiversity. For example, extinctions do not capture the change of ecosystems or their functions, nor the changes of common species that play important functions in an ecosystem.
- Since it is difficult to assess the historical and the current rate of extinction as a baseline, it is difficult to determine the specific number of species that are allowed to become extinct each year in

a robust way.

- How to disaggregate a global target of maximum two extinctions per year into targets at the national level remains unclear, especially considering the differences in biodiversity and threats to biodiversity in different countries.

The second presentation focused on another potential apex target, “Building an Ecological Civilization”, was also discussed. The structure of the Chinese Temple of Heaven was used to illustrate a hierarchical structure composed of three layers of targets: capacity building, resource mobilization, and mainstreaming as the cornerstone; sustainable development that values both nature and human wellbeing as the standing pillar, and the 2050 Vision “Living in harmony with nature” as the ultimate goal on the roof of the temple. The area under effective protection (for example, 30% by 2030) was proposed as the 2030 Mission.

The rest of the discussions addressed the following points:

- The current system of targets is difficult to communicate, even within of environmental ministries. There needs to be a clearer system, yet it might be necessary to have several apex targets to cover more dimensions of biodiversity, and also to reflect the three objectives of the CBD.
- It is very important to start from the 2050 Vision and try to identify, in a backcasting exercise, what a consistent 2030 milestone could be. Otherwise, it will be hard to assess whether the post-2020 framework is putting us on track to achieve the 2050 Vision.
- The 2030 apex target(s) and mission should be easily communicable. The rest of the targets, which could be more technical, could then be presented underneath. A system of targets on the state of biodiversity, then on its threats, and then on the enablers, could be an example.

4. Other elements of the post-2020 framework

Various other aspects of the post-2020 framework were also discussed, including: .

¶ **Indicators:** Several participants stressed the importance of adopting indicators at the same time as targets. There seems to be a lack of uptake, at the national level, of the indicators proposed by the CBD. The availability of these indicators should be recalled. The work done for the SDGs could also contribute to the selection of indicators for the post-2020 framework, especially on aspects more related to development.

¶ **Sustainable use and the drivers of biodiversity loss:** The objective of sustainable use has historically been less addressed than the other objectives of the CBD. Sustainable use is key to addressing the drivers of biodiversity loss, which the IPBES *Global Assessment* has further identified earlier this year (with the agrifood sector, at land and sea, being the major driver of loss worldwide). How the post-2020 framework could better address this issue should be further discussed.

¶ **Cooperation with other international conventions and institutions:** One suggested idea, to address drivers, was to work with other conventions or organizations where drivers and/or pressures are being negotiated. For example, a stronger relationship with the FAO, to work on the necessary transitions in the agrifood sector, could be imagined. For pesticides, a stronger collaboration with the cluster of conventions on chemicals and waste could be developed.⁵ The importance of stronger cooperation within biodiversity-related conventions, and between the Rio conventions, was highlighted. It was noted that Parties to the CBD are also usually Parties to most of the other conventions, and they could thus also make such requests themselves to the

different conventions. It was also noted that in some national contexts, a stronger link with the SDGs could enhance the legitimacy of the post-2020 targets, especially if NBSAPs could also be written so as to show that they are also a vehicle to implementing the SDGs.

¶ **Accountability:** It was noted that during regional consultations, there was a general will for a stronger review mechanism and more accountability on the actions undertaken at the national level to implement the post-2020 targets. It was also noted that a stronger mechanism for implementation and review was strongly lacking in the Strategic Plan 2011-2020, and that a new implementation and accountability mechanism would probably be one of the major improvements compared to the current state of play.

¶ **Funding:** With respect to funding, apart from discussing the important remaining funding gap for biodiversity, discussions also addressed the difference in the amounts of public finance for biodiversity (about 40 or 50 billion US\$/year) to the amounts of incentives that are harmful to biodiversity (500 billion US\$/year), as estimated by the OECD. Apart from mobilizing more resources, there is thus a major challenge in shifting public investment away from harmful practices to biodiversity. Discussions highlighted that this also concerned foreign investments for all countries.

⁵ Kinniburgh, F., Rankovic, A. (2019). Mobilising the chemical conventions to protect biodiversity - An example with pesticides and the Stockholm and Rotterdam Conventions. IDDRI, *Issue Brief* N°07/19.

5. The Belt and Road Initiative and mainstreaming of biodiversity

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a major international initiative launched by China. It covers one third of world trade and GDP, and over 60% of the world's population. As an initiative, BRI is aimed at promoting development based on increasing connectivity and trade, which raises questions on its potential impacts. Discussions have explored the numerous initiatives developed by the Chinese government to promote a “greening” of the BRI.

More specifically, discussions have focused on the challenges and opportunities of the BRI from the viewpoint of biodiversity. A workshop presentation noted the following for the biodiversity-oriented SDGs, SDG14 (Life below water) and SDG15 (Life on land):

For SDG14:

Challenges

- Increased reclamation could lead to the loss of coastal wetlands, mangroves, coral reefs, and other ecosystems
- Increased shipping and port construction could lead to more marine pollution (including marine plastics) and the introduction of invasive alien species

Opportunities

- BRI could enhance regional cooperation and the implementation of international legislation for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and their resources, including efforts to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing

- BRI could be used to stimulate the creation of new marine protected areas and strengthened biosecurity measures

For SDG15:

Challenges

- Increased habitat loss and fragmentation
- Increased number of wildlife road kills
- Blockage of migration routes
- Increased pollution
- Easier movement of invasive species
- Increased poaching, illegal logging and fires⁶

Opportunities

- BRI could leverage new resources for conservation, ecosystem restoration and the creation of new protected areas
- BRI could encourage countries to integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national planning and development processes
- BRI could strengthen global cooperation to combat poaching and the illegal wildlife trade

It was recalled that a study reported that the projected BRI rail and road projects would pass as close as 50 km from 3566 key biodiversity areas (KBAs), posing both a direct and indirect risk of impact to such areas. This represents close to 78% of the surface of KBAs.⁷ Another study, led by the Chinese Academy of Sciences, recently showed that the introduction risk of invasive alien species was significantly higher in BRI countries.⁸

6 Ascensão, F., Fahrig, L., Clevenger, A. P., Corlett, R. T., Jaeger, J. A. G., Laurance, W. F., & Pereira, H. M. (2018). Environmental challenges for the Belt and Road Initiative. *Nature Sustainability*, 1(5), 206–209.

7 Hughes, A. C. (2019). Understanding and minimizing environmental impacts of the Belt and Road Initiative. *Conservation Biology*, 33(4), 883–894. <http://doi.org/10.1111/cobi.13317>

8 Liu, X., Blackburn, T. M., Song, T., Li, X., Huang, C., & Li, Y. (2019). Risks of Biological Invasion on the Belt and Road. *Current Biology*, 29(3), 499–505.e4.

During discussions, it was pointed that the issue of making foreign investments more compatible with biodiversity objectives was a problem for most countries, and that there was thus an opportunity for China to take leadership on the matter. It was suggested that it could be important for all Parties, and for collective improvement, if China could make biodiversity-related commitments for BRI, on the road to COP15.

A mapping of the issues would be necessary, which could serve as the basis for a dialogue between Chinese and international institutions on how to address biodiversity issues in foreign investments, and potentially create biodiversity criteria for BRI investments. Participants concluded that there was an important relationship between BRI and biodiversity and that more work was necessary.

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