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Implementing nature-based solutions in climate policies: What's in it for biodiversity?

First lessons from Morocco and Tunisia

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In the context of necessary and urgent action against climate change and its impacts, "nature-based solutions" (NBS) seem to be concrete measures that could be implemented rapidly and bring co-benefits for mitigation, adaptation and even biodiversity. On this latter point, the ways in which the incorporation of ecosystems into climate efforts could work either for or against biodiversity require special attention during the implementation of nationally determined contributions (NDCs). What will NBS-type climate initiatives actually entail, and how to avoid a potential further overexploitation of ecosystems? How can the initiatives be prioritised according to their level of support for biodiversity? And how can the inclusion of ecosystems in climate strategies provide additional support for biodiversity policies?

Morocco and Tunisia are the two Mediterranean countries that have given the greatest attention to NBS-type measures in their NDCs. Following their example, and based on research conducted with the participation of public authorities and NGOs in these countries, some initial recommendations can be made. These have a more general scope for countries wishing to mobilise ecosystems in their climate strategies and to develop synergies with their biodiversity conservation policies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **For each country, analyze the NDC in order to identify the NBS it contains** and classify these according to their level of ambition and the guarantees they provide in terms of biodiversity protection.
2. **Prioritise NBS measures that are based on policies that already explicitly integrate ecosystem protection or restoration objectives,** and understand how their translation into "climate NBS" can effectively provide additional support for their implementation.
3. **Integrate biodiversity objectives into climate NBS that do not give them explicit attention.** In the NDCs, the majority of NBS are based on biological elements such as trees, but do not explicitly set out any ecosystem conservation objectives.
4. **Evaluate the additional resources required** to implement biodiversity-friendly climate NBS. Characterise the factors that have so far hampered the implementation of biodiversity-friendly policies, and the necessary and feasible additional support coming from climate policies.
5. **Identify and support project leaders capable of intersectoral implementation of NBS.** NBS are at the intersection of many policies (conservation, agriculture, forestry, tourism and so forth) and it will be necessary to identify and support the actors, in both government and civil society, which are able to ensure that biodiversity issues are addressed throughout the NDC implementation process.

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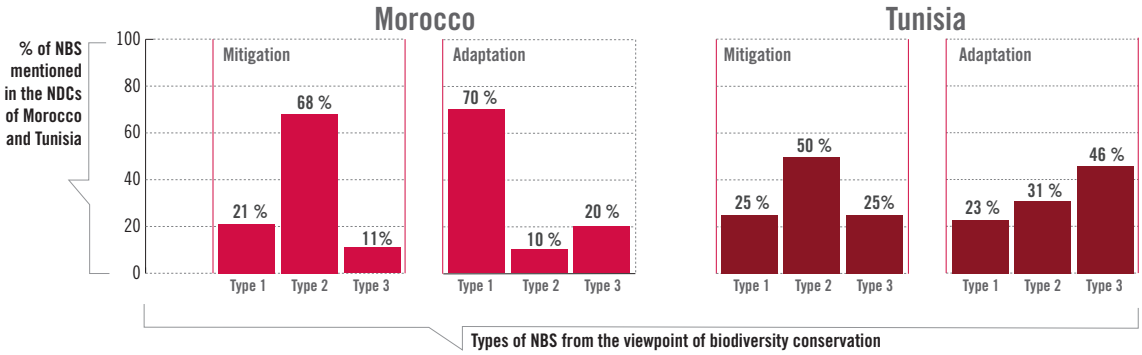
Figure 1. Percentage of NBS actions mentioned in the NDCs of Morocco and Tunisia, according to their level of ambition for biodiversity protection



Using the definition recently adopted for NBS[1], this research identified three key types of NBS in the NDCs, which differ according to their implications for biodiversity protection. In **type 1**, we find approaches based on the protection or restoration of ecosystems, such as natural forests or coastal ecosystems. **Type 2**, on the other hand, concerns approaches based on ecosystem engineering actions, aimed at specific processes or organisms, such as the restoration of agricultural soils, the use of legumes, or sand dune stabilisation with plants. Finally, **type 3** includes actions based only partly on ecosystems, and incorporated into broader territorial or sectoral reorganisation programmes, such as the development of organic farming, the definition of new eco-tourism zones or better promotion of seafood products. Type 1 NBS are those that most explicitly integrate biodiversity protection objectives. For NBS of types 2 and 3, actions as currently set out in the NDCs seem to focus more on the use of ecosystems for specific productive objectives. The challenges for biodiversity differ depending on the type.

In Figure 1 we see that among the measures identified in the NDCs of Morocco and Tunisia, NBS corresponding to types 2 and 3 are predominant, with the exception of the NBS listed for adaptation in Morocco's NDC.

From the viewpoint of biodiversity, the priority is to support the implementation of type 1 NBS. In general, their implementation first requires legal and financial innovations, accompanied by political support and greater resources than those available today. For type 2 NBS, it is necessary to reinforce the focus on biodiversity in projects' technical characteristics. For type 3 NBS, biodiversity will need to be supported in the different arbitrations taking place during sectoral and territorial reorganisations.

For a more detailed analysis, see Rankovic, A. *et al.* (2017). Implementing nature-based solutions in climate policies: What's in it for biodiversity? - First lessons from Morocco and Tunisia. IDDRI, *Studies* N°07/17.

1. Motion 077 ("Defining Nature-based Solutions") adopted at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in 2016: https://portals.iucn.org/congress/motion/077