

Ms. Elizabeth Maruma Mrema
Executive Secretary
Convention on Biological Diversity
413 Saint-Jacques Street, Suite 800
Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2Y 1N9

Dear Ms. Mrema:

We appreciate the invitation to provide input in response to the Secretariat's 25 June 2020 Notification No. 2020-0045 regarding peer review of draft documents for the twenty-fourth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 24).

To facilitate the preparation of documents for SBSTTA 24, One Earth supports the peer-review process, and we will provide comments on (1) the draft monitoring framework for the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework; and (2) an information document on indicators for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, prepared by UNEP-WCMC, in collaboration with the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership. This submission answers to this invitation, issued through the above notification, using the template attached.

Before commenting on the monitoring framework, we would like to share our top-level thoughts on recent scientific developments and the need to respond appropriately to the scale of the challenges we now face across three simultaneous crises -- biodiversity loss, climate change, and the COVID-19 pandemic. These are intimately related to the task at hand and should be addressed all at once.

Never has the Convention on Biological Diversity gained more prominence and urgency than it does at this moment in time. Recent research has shown that the destruction of natural ecosystems, largely through the conversion of natural habitat to agricultural land, will expose human populations to [novel zoonotic diseases](#). A single pathogen released unwittingly from the forests of central China brought the world to its knees, costing \$4 trillion to date. Here we see a shocking example of the need to protect natural ecosystems -- for the benefit of nature and humanity.

We must absolutely support sustainable livelihoods and food production, but there is now ample evidence that additional land conversion is not needed. Restoring degraded coplands could largely meet the needs of a growing population if smallholder farmers are supported to produce diverse, carefully selected crops that do not require the expensive chemical pesticides and herbicides often associated with genetically modified organisms. We would like to highlight [10 case studies](#) of farmers who are applying agroecological principles on degraded land to create resilient and healthy food systems. Combined with strategies to eliminate food waste and reduce meat consumption, we can meet the nutritional needs of 10B people on our current agricultural footprint.

It's also important to highlight the linkages between biodiversity loss and climate change. If we surpass 1.5°C in global average temperature rise, it will be difficult if not impossible to achieve the goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity. And if we fail to adequately protect our lands for ecosystem services and carbon sequestration, we will not be able to achieve the Paris Climate Agreement. Of the remaining 50.4% of the Earth's land in a natural/intact condition, only a very finite amount (1.5% of global land area) could be converted to human uses before we lose the 1.5°C window. Therefore, we must act boldly to enshrine strong and clear conservation goals in this critical decade.

Area-based targets are the fulcrum of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). While area-based targets alone will not guarantee positive biodiversity outcomes, without them measurement and verification of progress towards the goals is impossible. This is for three reasons: (1) They create the physical and political space to apply conservation measures. Conservation measures can and should be applied to working lands, but to achieve real progress towards reversing species decline and regenerating natural ecosystems, land must be set aside for nature to recover. (2) They provide the enabling framework to produce specific metrics of progress. Without clear boundaries it is difficult to model, for example, the presence of certain species, quantities of biomass, levels of degradation/intactness, changes in carbon or water content, etc. (3) They offer a foundation for a “common but differentiated” approach for signatories of the convention to contribute collectively. While biodiversity metrics will vary greatly from ecosystem to ecosystem, land area conserved (through protected areas or other conservation measures) is a common denominator -- the bedrock of the post-2020 GBF.

With a clearly underlying spatial framework in place, it is then possible to leverage new technologies to produce dynamically updating data products. In particular, we would like to stress the importance of using remote sensing alongside in situ sensors as a means to provide empirical evidence of progress towards the CBD targets. Without frequently updating datasets to measure against, indicators will update rarely, be low spatial resolution, be years out of date, and may not be accurately reflecting both the negative and positive changes countries are taking to improve biodiversity on their landscapes under the CBD goals. Technology platforms like Google Earth Engine, for example, are democratizing access to over 30 petabytes of high quality geospatial data products for analysis and visualization. With the unprecedented amount of data at the fingertips of scientists, governments, and citizens, we can ask better questions and derive meaningful insights at temporal and spatial scales never before possible.

One such useful insight is an index of remaining natural/intact habitat by country and ecoregion. One Earth funded a team of researchers to produce such an index -- the Global Safety Net (GSN1). This global-scale analysis reflects a diversity of ecosystem types and land conditions, producing an index of “nature wealth” for each country. The peer-reviewed paper, to be published in *Science Advances* September 2020, will be cited in our comments on Tables 1 and 2 of the Information Document. An interactive web application (GSNapp.org), created in partnership with Google Earth Engine, will allow individuals to retrieve high-level data on the extent of land, compiling 9 global data sets into 5 major categories -- Species Rarity Sites, High Biodiversity Areas, Large Mammal Landscapes, Intact Wilderness, and additional Climate Stabilization Areas. The app also indicates the overlap each country and ecoregion has with indigenous lands, which should be placed front and center in the post-2020 GBF. We hope that this framework may be of use in supporting a productive and cooperative set of agreements on the Components of the 2030 targets, monitoring elements and indicators outlined in the Monitoring Framework.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments below.

Sincerely,

Karl Burkart

Managing Director, One Earth (Rockefeller Philanthropy)

DISCLAIMER

One Earth notes that review comments are not being sought on the updated formulations of the proposed 2050 goals and the 2030 targets and its 2030 milestones, which are provided for context only and consideration of these will take place at the third meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG-3). The comments provided by One Earth on the draft monitoring framework and supporting informational documents don't represent, nor do they prejudice, our positions on goals, targets and indicators that will be expressed at OEWG-3 and do not indicate any agreement on what is currently included in the draft monitoring framework.

GENERAL COMMENTS

We note that the proposed monitoring framework, while referencing the role of indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) in safeguarding biodiversity, adequate indicators of IPLC leadership and participation are not yet present. Indigenous lands harbor 80% of the world's remaining biodiversity, far more than existing government protected areas. Given this critical role, One Earth recommends that SBSTTA elevate the importance of other area-based conservation measures (OECMs) and clarify designations therewithin to reflect the diversity of approaches to conservation across many different cultures and regions. It will also be important to further examine the role of communally held lands. The Rights & Resources Initiative will be releasing a report shortly that indicates as much as 50% of the world's land is under communal management. Many of these communities are not recognized by governments as tribal or indigenous groups, and in many cases they do not have legal tenure to the land they have sustainably managed for centuries. Protecting these communities and gaining their participation in long term conservation planning is key to achieving the goals of the CBD.

To keep our submission brief, please refer to our review of the Information Document on indicators for the draft goals of the GBF for comments on specific goals and indicators.