



September 2019

UNCCD secretariat proposal on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework

1. Background

Three-quarters of the land-based environment has been significantly altered by human actions. The average abundance of native species in most major land-based habitats has fallen by at least 20%, mostly since 1900. Land degradation has reduced the productivity of 23% of the global land surface, and up to US\$577 billion in annual global crops are at risk from pollinator loss. Land use change is the foremost direct driver of biodiversity loss with the largest relative global impact.¹

Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) is central to SDG target 15.3 which states *“By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world”*. The UNCCD Parties define LDN as *“A state whereby the amount and quality of land resources, necessary to support ecosystem functions and services and enhance food security, remains stable or increases within specified temporal and spatial scales and ecosystems”*.²

As habitat loss is the primary driver of species extinction around the world, conserving, restoring and sustainably managing ecosystems is recognized as the most effective way to protect existing target species. New tools are becoming available such as *“other effective area-based conservation measures”* (OECMs) which refer to *“a geographically defined area other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in-situ conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values”*.³

2. Moving towards a spatially-explicit framework for biodiversity conservation

LDN is a globally recognized approach to address desertification and land degradation. LDN is supported by a scientific conceptual framework and monitoring protocols for policies, programmes and spatially-explicit measures to avoid and minimize land degradation, and to restore the health and productivity of land resources (i.e., soil, water and biodiversity).⁴ This approach involves a variety of management strategies and practices, including protected areas and OECMs, that contribute significantly to biodiversity and habitat conservation.

The UNCCD secretariat and its Parties, in collaboration with key partners such as FAO, UNEP and IUCN, are leading capacity building and resource mobilization efforts to support the implementation and monitoring of LDN targets at national and sub-national levels. Likewise, considerable efforts will be needed to define and identify area-based targets for biodiversity conservation, describe their management protocols, and develop approaches to monitoring social, economic and environmental outcomes, both globally and at the national and sub-national level.⁵

¹ <https://www.ipbes.net/global-assessment-report-biodiversity-ecosystem-services>

² https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/ICCD_COP12_20_Add.1/20add1eng.pdf

³ <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/9b1f/759a/dfcee171bd46b06cc91f6a0d/sbstta-22-l-02-en.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.unccd.int/publications/scientific-conceptual-framework-land-degradation-neutrality-report-science-policy>

⁵ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2351989418302154>



Using the assessment and monitoring protocols for SDG indicator 15.3.1 (*“proportion of land that is degraded over total land area”*), over 120 countries have committed to set national and sub-national targets and implement spatially-explicit policies and measures to achieve LDN.⁶ Countries report on progress made towards their LDN targets every four years as part of the UNCCD and SDG reporting processes, which include metrics on land cover, land productivity, and soil organic carbon stocks.⁷

The UN General Assembly has recognized that LDN can act as an accelerator to achieve multiple SDGs, including poverty reduction, food and water security, climate adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation, and the enhanced resilience of communities and ecosystems.⁸ Guided by an integrated landscape approach, LDN measures address many objectives contained in Aichi Biodiversity Targets 5, 7, 11, 14 and 15. The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030) will be another important vehicle for accelerating the implementation of existing and the launching of new restoration targets that could be closely aligned with biodiversity goals.

3. Area-based targets for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework

Preamble

The post-2020 global biodiversity framework will require both species- and area-based targets.

Incorporating OECMs and similar non-traditional conservation tools into a new global framework of biodiversity targets will be novel, both in terms of the scale of ambition and the wide range of skills and knowledge required.

Area-based targets, at the national and sub-national level, should encompass the mandated implementation pathways of the CBD, UNCCD and UNFCCC, namely the conservation/protection, sustainable use/management, and rehabilitation/restoration of biodiversity, ecosystems and landscapes to achieve a wide range of societal benefits.

Area-based targets are most suitable for achieving multiple benefits and mainstreaming biodiversity conservation across sectors through concrete actions that:

- address the direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss,
- ensure the required enabling environment and stakeholder engagement, and
- harness the levers and means for implementing transformative policies, projects and programmes.

Area-based targets are effective in focusing the attention of policy- and decision-makers (including local communities and authorities) on discrete, time-bound objectives that are well understood, actionable and easily incorporated into planning processes at various levels.

Area-based targets recognize and engage a broad range of stakeholders in biodiversity conservation, offering great potential to focus activities at larger scales and improve connectivity across networks of protected and other conservation areas.

⁶ <https://www.unccd.int/actions/ldn-target-setting-programme>

⁷ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-15-03-01.pdf>

⁸ UN General Assembly resolutions 71/229 and 72/220



Target and Sub-Targets

In response to CBD notification 2019-075 and for the purposes of elaborating the UNCCD's proposal on a target framework approach for biodiversity, the following global target is suggested as a placeholder:

- Net Habitat Gain by 2030

Due to widely differing national circumstances, absolute numbers or percentages for area-based targets are best determined at the national and sub-national level.

Any numerical targets or sub-targets should clearly distinguish between protected areas and other sustainable use/management or restoration designations.

Based on current evidence, the following 2030 global sub-targets are suggested as placeholders:

1. Protected and relatively intact areas should be doubled to 35% of the total land surface, including well-connected systems of protected areas and OECMs, and managed, where appropriate, as ecological networks;
2. All production and mosaic landscapes should transition to more sustainable use and management practices – and when complete certified as such – to improve ecosystem functioning and achieve a wider range of social and economic benefits; and
3. Two billion hectares of degraded and modified ecosystems, including freshwater habitat, should be under some type of rehabilitation or restoration regime to recover their long-term health and productivity.

Area-based targets should be prioritized according to their importance for the diversity and richness of biodiversity and ecosystem services but also have explicit qualitative elements related to species representation, governance regimes, management equity and effectiveness, and connectivity and integration into the wider landscape and seascape.

The design and implementation of area-based policies and measures as part of an integrated landscape approach will have the greatest potential for optimizing benefits for people and nature while minimizing trade-offs with economic growth and equitable development.

Target Framework Approach

The UNCCD secretariat proposes the following target framework approach for formulating, implementing and monitoring area-based targets (at the national and sub-national levels) that encompass a continuum of protective, restorative and management actions aimed at halting and reversing biodiversity loss **to achieve a global target of Net Habitat Gain by 2030.**

The LDN conceptual framework and its response hierarchy could easily be adapted or modified for area-based targets to achieve explicit biodiversity outcomes.



Area-based targets would be nationally determined and implemented through temporally- and spatially-explicit policies and measures to:

- **avoid species and habitat loss**, fragmentation and degradation through the conservation, set aside and protection of natural and semi-intact ecosystems,
- **minimize species and habitat loss**, fragmentation and degradation by transitioning to more sustainable use/management practices in human dominated or production landscapes, and
- **reverse species and habitat loss** by rehabilitating and restoring degraded ecosystems, where feasible, to recover the requisite biodiversity to ensure the integrity of ecosystem functions and the delivery of a full suite of ecosystem services.

The LDN target framework approach highlights the importance of multi-sectoral coordination, involving all relevant stakeholders, to drive a transparent process that translates global ambition into specific, achievable, actionable and measurable national and sub-national targets.

National ownership of area-based targets in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework will require significant political will, capacity building and resource mobilization. The following step wise approach could serve as a guide:

1. Bring together diverse ministries, sectors and stakeholders, preferably building on existing forums and platforms, to mobilize partnerships, leverage commitment and finance, and review the relevant legal, policy and institutional frameworks;
2. Conduct assessments on the status of and trends in biodiversity as well as the direct/indirect drivers of loss, fragmentation and degradation, using internationally recognized methodologies, indicators and metrics to set baselines;
3. Conduct similar assessments on the status and trends of ecosystem services, particularly those contributing to climate stabilization, disaster risk reduction, food and water security;
4. Map and prioritize biodiversity habitat areas within a response hierarchy (i.e., avoid, minimize and reverse) to set specific, achievable, measurable and time-bound targets;
5. Identify the most appropriate policies, programmes and measures as well as other enabling factors needed to achieve these targets;
6. Estimate the costs, identify potential funding sources and foster public-private partnerships, including with civil society, indigenous peoples and local communities;
7. Build capacity for the design, planning and financing of gender-responsive transformative projects and programmes at various scales that deliver multiple benefits;⁹
8. Monitor, report and communicate progress towards achieving targets using core and supplementary indicators available in existing processes (e.g., NBSAPs, SDGs, UNCCD, UNFCCC);
9. Mainstream targets into NBSAPs and national legislation and development priorities by establishing long-term management and planning processes across sectors to replicate and scale up successes.

⁹ <https://knowledge.unccd.int/knowledge-products-and-pillars/access-capacity-policy-support-technology-tools/checklist-land>



4. Conclusion

Area-based targets are extremely effective in focusing the attention of policy- and decision-makers on discrete, time-bound objectives that are well understood, actionable and easily incorporated into planning processes at various levels. In most cases, human needs and aspirations must be fully considered for area-based biodiversity targets to be formulated and successfully implemented at the scale required.

There is great potential for cost-effective synergies between the LDN targets, NDCs and post-2020 biodiversity targets in terms of design, implementation, financing and monitoring. A UNCCD COP14 decision *“Invites Parties, that have committed to voluntary land degradation neutrality targets, to implement measures to accelerate their achievement by fostering synergies among the Rio conventions and other multilateral environmental agreements, including the consideration of joint programming activities at the national and sub-national level”*.

The UNCCD secretariat stands ready to share its experiences and lesson learned in implementing the LDN target framework approach with the aim of supporting the formulation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and its successful implementation.