



## IUCN views on the need for a Global Plan of Action to support species conservation in the Post-2020 global biodiversity framework

17 December 2019

This is IUCN's response to **Notification 2019-108** inviting submissions from Parties and others on views on possible targets, indicators and baselines related to the drivers of biodiversity loss as well as **on species conservation** and the mainstreaming of biodiversity across sectors. In this submission we focus on species conservation issues. These views are presented without prejudice to IUCN's final position on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

*In summary, this paper proposes that species conservation targets in the Post-2020 Global biodiversity framework need to be supported by a clear "Global Plan of Action for Species Conservation" to assist all stakeholders implement the action that needs to be taken to secure a future for species on this planet.*

### Conserving species to meet the objectives of the CBD and the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

*IUCN appreciates the opportunity to make this submission on species conservation following the productive discussions at SBSTTA-23, including the briefing by the Co-Chairs on 24 November 2019.*

The Convention on Biological Diversity makes clear that “the fundamental requirement for the conservation of biological diversity is the in-situ conservation of ecosystems and natural habitats and the maintenance and recovery of viable populations of species in their natural surroundings...”

The millions of species on land, in inland waters, and in the ocean have evolved over millennia and form the web of life that sustains the planet. Species and their populations are the building blocks of ecosystems, individually and collectively securing and sustaining the conditions for life. They provide food, medicine and raw materials. They are the basis of soil formation, decomposition, water filtration and flow, pollination, pest control and climate regulation. They are the primary source of income and resources for hundreds of millions of people around the globe. Species are also an essential part of the history, culture, tradition and folklore of every culture on Earth, and their aesthetic values and spiritual roles provide comfort and inspiration, as well as recreation. Species are also an essential focus for the sustainable use of wild living resources and for access to genetic resources and fair and equitable sharing of the benefits. Populations of wild species are fundamental to supporting sustainable livelihoods of many Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities – culturally, ecologically and economically.

It is the view of IUCN that a focus on species conservation will deliver not only the conservation and sustainable management of species but also the conservation of genes and ecosystems. Species cannot be conserved in the wild without conserving their habitats. And species conservation also leads to the conservation of genes, ecosystems and the services they provide. For example, if a species (whether animal, fungi or plant) is conserved across its range, its wild genetic diversity will also be conserved. (This does not negate the need for a target on the genetic level of biodiversity to conserve the evolutionary potential of life on earth). It is also well known that conserving species, such as top predators (e.g. tigers and sharks); pollinators (e.g. insects); and decomposers (e.g. earthworms) allows a better overall functioning of the ecosystem with, on the whole, better provision of services, including energy flow between trophic levels, and the maintenance of populations of prey species at manageable levels. Similarly, conserving the full array of organisms at the base of the

trophic pyramid sustains the web of life above. Also, well managed ecosystems better conserve the species that both depend on them and are their constituents.

## Progress towards Aichi Target 12

GBO-4 clearly shows that the world is not on course to meet this Aichi target 12.. This is probably partly because its success essentially relies on reducing and reversing pressures and drivers that are encapsulated, at least in part, in other targets (and as an outcome oriented target, its ambition level is necessarily relatively high). This has meant that the drivers of species decline (for example by integrating species considerations into multiple sectors, spatial and development planning) have not been addressed sufficiently. In the worst case scenario work programmes on species conservation (embracing knowledge including tools, conservation planning as well as targeted species conservation action) do not exist; in the best case such programmes are not well integrated into the day-to-day business of many government departments. This point is elaborated below.

## A new species target in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

IUCN welcomes the proposal that the overarching theory of change presented by the Co-Chairs includes proposed goals for species for 2030 and 2050. IUCN SSC's [Post 2020 Biodiversity Targets Task Force](#) has submitted a paper on *Potential elements, indicators and milestones* for a new species-focussed target. IUCN has proposed that this new species target (a successor to Aichi Target 12) should be an outcome based target. The target proposed is as follows:

*Halt overall species' population declines by 2030 such that they have recovered by 2050, prevent extinctions of all species, and improve the status of at least 30% of species by 2030 and 100% by 2050.*

The species component of biodiversity should also be included (together with genes and ecosystems) in a Mission for 2030 (e.g. *Halt the loss of species, ecosystems and genetic diversity by 2030; restore and recover biodiversity to ensure a world of people "living in harmony with nature" by 2050*) as well as a Goal for 2050 (e.g. *By 2050, all threatened species have recovered, and all use of species is sustainable, such that no species faces extinction risk elevated by human actions, (as indicated by a Red List Index of 1; see IUCN submission in response to Notification 2019-075)*).

As explained in the [paper from the SSC Task Force](#), the proposed target aims to not only prevent human induced extinctions but also and significantly to prevent further decline of species that are currently 'Near Threatened' or 'Least Concern', as well as those in the Threatened categories of 'Vulnerable', 'Endangered' and 'Critically Endangered'. It also aims to restore species 'Extinct in the Wild'.

## Supporting governments and other stakeholders implement the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

It is essential that governments and other stakeholders address both the direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss. According to the recent IPBES Global Biodiversity Assessment these direct drivers (subject of this notification) are land/sea/inland waters use change (habitat destruction; agriculture, forestry, fisheries, aquaculture, mining, urbanization, canalization); direct and indirect exploitation; climate change; pollution (by chemicals, fertilizers, light and noise); invasive alien species. IUCN has submitted proposed wording for targets tackling direct drivers.

Such driver targets need to be linked to state targets – to all three components of biodiversity. Without a clear linkage between direct drivers and measures to improve the status of species, genes and ecosystems, the work done to tackle the biodiversity crisis will be far from optimal.

**The Species Threat Abatement and Restoration (STAR):** If the state of species is adopted explicitly as an outcome target, it is possible to determine what pressures must be reduced to reduce the overall extinction of extinction species. This can be assessed either globally or nationally, or at any subnational spatial scale. An approach to do this, Species Threat Abatement and Restoration (STAR), has been presented at CBD SBSTTA 22 and 23 and COP14 (side events and INF docs: most recently CBD/SBSTTA/23/INF/13) and has benefitted considerably from the input of Parties.

It works by combining information on species distributions, the extinction risk of species, and the pressures leading to that increased extinction risk; it then identifies which pressures are contributing to extinction risk at the chosen scale (country, site, landscape etc.).

This allows governments to identify the actions necessary to tackle those pressures and thus contribute to national and global policy targets for species conservation. So, the extent to which land-use change, invasive species and over-exploitation, for example, are contributing to species extinction risk can be made clear, and the places where they are causing the biggest increase within a country can also be identified. This in turn allows a clear translation into the day-to-day work of governments (and other stakeholders) in their planning.

STAR therefore facilitates the generation of targets that can allow **specific actors** (State and non-state) the opportunity and responsibility to identify how the **specific actions** they undertake in **specific places** stand to contribute towards planetary biodiversity target for 2030 and 2050.

STAR allows the abatement of threats to be directly linked changes in the extinction risk of species within a country (or other spatial scale). It follows that it also facilitates a much more explicit and strategic relationship between targets.

### The Abu Dhabi Call for Global Species Conservation Action

[The Abu Dhabi Call](#) comes from the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) Leaders' Meeting in Abu Dhabi, 6-9 October 2019, and calls attention to the need for urgent and effective action to address the unprecedented, unsustainable and growing impacts on wild species from human activities. It promoted the need for clear and ambitious targets on **species** supported by an ambitious Global Plan of Action for Species.

SSC draws attention to the imperative to:

- Take emergency measures to save those species at the highest risk of extinction (i.e. species in the IUCN Red List categories 'Vulnerable', 'Endangered' and 'Critically Endangered');
- Re-establish species currently classified as 'Extinct in the Wild' in their natural habitats and restore and rehabilitate degraded ecosystems'
- Tackle key threats that are driving species' population declines and extinctions: lack of incentives for landowners, managers and Indigenous Peoples and local communities to retain wild species and natural habitats; damaging practices in agriculture, extractive and infrastructure sectors, fisheries, and forestry; overexploitation including wildlife crime; conflicts between humans and wildlife, emerging infectious diseases; the disruption of water flow ((over abstraction, canalisation, dam construction); inadequate management of waste and discharges; invasive alien species; and increasingly, climate change and ocean acidification.
- Create land/waterscapes that are ecologically connected thus enabling long-term viability of species populations, including in the context of climate change (noting that the ability of species to move will be the most important factor enabling them to adapt to a changing climate.)

In addition it is important to:

- Recognise the scale of transformational change needed and mainstream species into national and regional development planning, including spatial plans for land, freshwater, and the ocean;
- Ensure that globalisation and trade agreements and financial flows do not further threaten species or their populations, and instead support sustainable use and species recovery;
- Remove harmful subsidies that lead to depletion, destruction and degradation of species and habitats on land, in freshwater / inland waters and the ocean; and
- Establish and strengthen policy, legal and institutional frameworks for species conservation and sustainable use that are transparent and accountable.

### Gaps in the current policy landscape: A Global Plan of Action for Species to implement the post-2020 species target of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

The three Rio Conventions, the biodiversity-related conventions and the Sustainable Development Goals all cover species conservation and have stimulated a great deal of action. However, ‘biodiversity governance’ has developed organically over 45-50 years and it is now timely to identify, strategically what is needed to achieve species conservation and assess policy landscape gaps. For example, CITES tackles international trade but does not cover legal trade nor illegal exploitation *within* country; Ramsar does excellent work to conserve wetlands and peatlands but other biomes are not covered by similar conventions. The SDGs highlight the need to tackle illegal trade in wildlife but overlook the benefits of sustainable legal trade.

The development of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework is an opportunity to lay out ***all the work that needs to be done to help Parties and other stakeholders achieve new global targets for species*** that bring together and include, but go beyond the work of the current policy instruments.

IUCN believes that Parties may require capacity building and support for species conservation to both make clear the synergies between conventions (e.g. when targets addressing desertification and degradation also meet targets to improve the status of species) and bring clarity, efficiency and an optimal approach to this vast challenge.

- Commit to clear and ambitious targets on **species** conservation in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, supported by an ambitious Global Plan of Action for Species (detailing a Programme of Work).
- Fulfil species' conservation commitments through the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, Convention on Biological Diversity, the other two ‘Rio’ and biodiversity-related conventions;
- Take urgent action to establish, protect and effectively and equitably manage protected and conserved areas, and other areas critical for the conservation of species, in particular Key Biodiversity Areas
- Respect the linkages between many rural people and sustainable use of wild living resources and their contribution to conservation, livelihoods and the UN Sustainable Development Goals;

It is envisaged that such a Global Plan of Action for Species (a Programme of Work for species) would be implemented through NBSAPs realigned to the Post-2020 Framework and include the following key elements:

- Knowledge or assessments to determine the status, threats and distribution etc. of species: The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species; national Red Lists; Key Biodiversity Areas; Ecosystem Red Lists etc.
- Conservation planning to develop strategies for action: single and multi-species plans, national threat abatement plans (linked to STAR) and national spatial plans.
- Species conservation action: for species that need targeted conservation action

These elements can be shortened to Assess-Plan-Act (A-P-A). The Plan will be for all relevant stakeholders.

A Global Plan of Action for Species also needs to be accompanied by communications strategies.

### **Implementation of the Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and workings of the Convention**

It is timely to re-orient the work of the convention. This would greatly assist Parties to discuss, share experience and increase focus on the actions necessary to implement individual targets, including a target on species conservation. Such a focus would allow tracking of progress towards 2030; ensure that action to tackle direct and indirect drivers is linked to work to maintain and enhance the status of biodiversity. It would help facilitate review, monitoring and transparency and contribute to the achievement of the Post-2020 Framework as a whole.

Post-2020, the Programmes of Work of the Convention could be aligned with and addressed under the successors to the Aichi Targets. This would facilitate much more strategic relationship between targets given that discussion of work carried out to support their achievement could be linked to

discussion of progress on implementation. This is needed to bring about efficiencies in the way that the Convention is run and how time is managed - and thereby help Parties (and other stakeholders) align their work to the targets and Mission, as well as with reporting.

## In conclusion

The global community must recognise the irreplaceable and vital role of species and their populations and massively scale up efforts to conserve all species; to ensure that their use is sustainable, and that their benefits are equitably shared. If we do not address species conservation in a targeted and concerted fashion, we erode the very foundations of our traditions, economies, livelihoods, food security, health, ecosystems, and even the existence of life worldwide. **IUCN stands ready to take forward the ideas in this paper and help elaborate a ‘Global Plan of Action for Species Conservation’** and assist governments and all relevant stakeholders in its implementation.

## Annex 1 – Targets and indicators

IUCN has proposed targets to address direct drivers. In addition, it is crucial that targets addressing the indirect drivers of unsustainable consumption are incorporated into the framework.

Regarding indicators for post-2020 targets for species, drivers, and mainstreaming, IUCN is a long-standing member of the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership (BIP), and recommends that CBD Parties draw from the BIP as the authoritative source of robust and institutionalised indicators for tracking progress against targets in the post-2020 biodiversity framework.

Data mobilised against IUCN standards are used to generate many of these indicators, documented in “Biodiversity” in 2015 (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14888386.2015.1075903>). Specifically regarding targets for species, drivers, and mainstreaming, the following indicators are particularly relevant:

- Species target (ceasing extinctions, halting declines by 2030, restoration by 2050 – successor to Aichi Target 12)
  - Indicator: Living Planet Index (<http://livingplanetindex.org/home/index> & <https://www.bipindicators.net/indicators/living-planet-index>).
  - Indicator: Wild Bird Index (<https://www.bipindicators.net/indicators/wild-bird-index> & <https://pecbms.info/trends-and-indicators/indicators/>)
  - Indicator: Red List Index (<https://www.bipindicators.net/indicators/red-list-index>)
  - Indicator: Extinctions prevented by conservation action (<https://www.bipindicators.net/indicators/number-of-extinctions-prevented>)
  - Indicator: Number of species extinctions (<https://www.bipindicators.net/indicators/number-of-species-extinctions-birds-and-mammals>)
- Drivers/mainstreaming targets
  - Ecosystem conversion (agriculture, forestry, etc. – successor to Aichi Target 7)
  - Indicator: Red List Index (forest specialist species: <https://www.bipindicators.net/indicators/red-list-index/red-list-index-forest-specialist-species>)
- Unsustainable harvest & trade (wildlife, fisheries, plants, fungi – successor to Aichi Target 6)
  - Indicator: Red List Index (impacts of utilisation: <https://www.bipindicators.net/indicators/red-list-index/red-list-index-impacts-of-utilisation>)
  - Indicator: Red List Index (impacts of fisheries: <https://www.bipindicators.net/indicators/red-list-index/red-list-index-impacts-of-fisheries>)
  - Indicator: Red List Index (internationally traded species: <https://www.bipindicators.net/indicators/red-list-index/red-list-index-internationally-traded-species>)
- Pollution (successor to Aichi Target 8)

- Indicator: Red List Index (impacts of pollution:  
<https://www.bipindicators.net/indicators/red-list-index/red-list-index-impacts-of-pollution>)
- Invasive species (successor to Aichi Target 9)
  - Indicator: Red List Index (impacts of invasive alien species:  
<https://www.bipindicators.net/indicators/red-list-index/red-list-index-impacts-of-invasive-alien-species>)
  - Indicator: Invasive species policy response  
<https://www.bipindicators.net/indicators/adoption-of-national-legislation-relevant-to-the-prevention-or-control-of-invasive-alien-species>)
  - Indicator: Trends in invasive alien species vertebrate eradications  
<https://www.bipindicators.net/indicators/trends-in-invasive-alien-species-vertebrate-eradication>)
  - Indicator: Trends in numbers of invasive alien species introduction events  
<https://www.bipindicators.net/indicators/trends-in-numbers-of-invasive-alien-species-introduction-events>)
- Climate change (successor to Aichi Target 10)
  - Red List Index (reef-building corals: <https://www.bipindicators.net/indicators/red-list-index/red-list-index-reef-building-corals>)
  - Red List Index (impacts of climate change)

In addition to these it is felt that indicators on restoration of species should be included e.g.

- Indicator: Number of species with action or recovery plans [being implemented]
- Indicator: Number of species Extinct in the Wild successfully restored to natural habitats

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