

Updated and Additional Views on the Scope, Content and Structure of the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework: Input from NatureServe on Initial Discussion Document Released on January 30, 2019

As requested in CBD Notification 2019-008 (Notification SCBD/OES/PPP/JMF/87868 (2019-008)), NatureServe offers the following additional input regarding the scope, content and structure of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework with specific focus on the use of SMART indicators for tracking targets on a forward-looking, continual basis. We thank the Secretariat to the Convention on Biological Diversity for the opportunity to provide input.

Context:

- **Continual tracking of the new Post-2020 Targets** will provide critical, consistent and ongoing feedback to ensure that Parties to the Convention are able to be proactive, anticipatory and identify issues in progress and implement directional change, as needed, to ensure forward progress on the targets.
- Based on lessons learned from the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011 to 2020, there is likely to be substantial agreement among parties and other CBD stakeholders that the **Post-2020 Targets should have, at the outset, a suite of fit-for-purpose indicators.**
- According to the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership INF doc CBD/COP/14/INF/40 the **indicators should be SMART, actionable, scalable** (e.g. able to be used at national and even sub-national scales and easily aggregated to global scales). They should also be **able to be backcast and forecast through modeling**, to allow for improved understanding of alternative future scenarios. Ideally, **the suite of indicators should be integrated** to facilitate better understanding of the relationships between drivers, status, trends and policy response.
- Several decisions made by the Parties at COP14 support the **need for improved indicators and improved access to them.** Parties encouraged the development of data sets that can be disaggregated at different geographic scales and to share this information effectively (CBD/COP/14/L.2). They called for guidance on data sources to support analyses of progress used in national reports (CBD/COP/14/L.7) and urged organizations to make relevant trend and projection data openly available (CBD/COP/14/L.17). Finally, the Parties urged coordination with IPBES to serve the assessment needs for the post-2020 framework as well as the biodiversity and ecosystem services components of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (CBD/COP/14/L.22). They emphasized the continued need for work on scenarios and models to assess pathways towards a sustainable future (CBD/COP/14/L.22).
- Depending on the outcome of discussions during the intersessional period between COP14 and COP15, there **may also be a need for verification mechanisms which allow for calculation of voluntary national contributions and commitments** to determine their net impact on influencing progress on the targets. Such verification would also promote strengthened ambitions for national contributions. However, it is unclear how easily voluntary contributions could be accurately quantified to determine their relative contribution towards a target due to the complexity of biodiversity itself and the drivers effecting biodiversity loss.

Recommendations Regarding SMART Indicators and Targets and the Establishment of an Online Target Tracker:

Considering the above points, we invite Parties to the CBD to consider the development of an online indicator visualization tool that will allow Parties to continually explore and vet the proposed Targets as the framework develops to ensure the final negotiated suite of targets are measurable, actionable, and scalable over space and time. **Creation of a post-2020 Target Tracker will ensure that *measurable and meaningful indicators will be chosen and available at the outset* to track progress toward achievement of the Post-2020 targets and provide measurable context towards the 2050 Vision for Living in Harmony with Nature.**

An online platform, directly tailored to the new targets, would allow for continual tracking of the targets through the provision of regularly updated indicators upon the adoption of the new Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework. The platform could provide, at a glance, **the latest state of play for the indicators** chosen to track the post 2020 targets by drawing in **indicator updates as soon as they occur**. Some indicators get refreshed very regularly – e.g. WDPA is now updated monthly while other indicators may be updated less frequently.

We also propose that **this platform could be available shortly before/at COP15 to illustrate the process for tracking voluntary national contributions** through the medium of selected indicators, and to **illustrate the current status of progress at the outset of the post 2020 framework** in relation to the scale of ambition for the new targets.

The online indicator visualization platform could show the agreed targets and their associated date stamped indicator updates at national and global levels **using the kind of visualisation approaches now online through the Biodiversity Indicators Dashboard**, using both historic trend data and, where available, any forward extrapolations or modelled data to show the timeframe between 2020 and 2030 (the life of the new Strategy). Such a system could also integrate the scenario models being developed for IPBES to allow Parties and others the ability to **explore and visualize alternative futures and pathways towards the targets and the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity** (therefore supporting Decision CBD/COP/14/L.22).

This platform would also address the following key elements highlighted in the January 30th, 2019 Discussion Document reflecting upon key Decisions from the 14th Conference of the Parties and broad-based input from the consultation to date:

- Decision 14/34 established a set of principles to guide the process ensuring it is ‘transformative, comprehensive, catalytic, visible, knowledge-based, transparent, efficient, results-oriented, iterative and flexible’. The implementation of an online platform for tracking the new targets in real time with immediately established baselines will ensure that the implementation process for the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework embodies these principles;
- The Post-2020 Framework should include a ‘coherent, comprehensive and innovative communications strategy’. While this will require a broad-based approach, an online indicator visualization platform for tracking the targets would be one important element as it would facilitate easy access for both the public and policy-makers as well as at a high-political level to

the current status in implementation of the Post-2020 Framework, thereby mobilizing support and action from all stakeholders;

- Decision 14/3, in part, calls for the integration of mainstreaming approaches into the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. Increasing flexible access to scalable biodiversity indicators will help in this regard by lowering the threshold by which a sector can access useful information at relevant scales to guide conservation friendly practices;
- Decision 14/2 highlighted the need for the Post-2020 Framework to leverage transformational change. One key aspect of leveraging transformational change is having the ability to accurately and continually track progress in order to facilitate priority conservation measures and identify policies that are successful (and by extension those that aren't) to guide more effective and transformational action. Also, transformational change, requires establishing a framework and targets that can be understood and used by those sectors that are behind the main drivers of biodiversity loss and that can be scaled from national to global levels to facilitate coordinated, targeted and prioritized action.
- Decision 14/27 highlighted the need for a process for aligning national reporting under the Convention and its Protocols and Decision 14/28 focused on the evaluation of the effectiveness of policy measures. Both of these needs can be addressed, in part, through the establishment of an online indicator visualization platform that streamlines national reporting and allows flexible and scalable access to evidence-based indicators for conducting counter-factual policy evaluation;
- Indicators should be identified and developed in parallel to the development of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework – the proposed online indicator visualization platform would begin as a means to provide a detailed assessment of each target to promote the selection of targets that can be easily measured across scales using existing indicator methodologies; and,
- The Post-2020 global biodiversity framework should have a focus on implementation and have an effective process for monitoring and an effective review process to improve transparency and accountability – again using an online indicator visualization platform to allow for the continual tracking of the targets at national, regional and global scales would ensure that the focus is on implementation and that progress is being continually tracked in a transparent fashion.

NatureServe's Responses to Questions Posed in the Discussion Document:

11. What could constitute an effective structure for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, what should its different elements be, and how should they be organized?

There are multiple frameworks that could be successfully applied to structure the post-2020 targets. It is important that the framework chosen ensures a simple, focused and integrated approach to action and tracking progress that also allows for mainstreaming action into the key sectors and actors primarily involved in driving biodiversity loss. If the current framework is maintained, it would be helpful to allow for more consideration on the Targets within this framework, to ensure they are SMART and that they can be integrated across the framework categories to better identify, understand and evaluate the relations between driver's and state, for instance, and thus, better target effective policy. The framework chosen should not result in hundreds of targets but rather be structured to ensure a simple, focused and integrated approach to action and progress tracking.

12. In the context of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, what would 'ambitious' specifically mean?

Ambitions in a general sense should focus on achieving clearly articulated and feasible milestones by 2030 that bring the world much closer to the 2050 vision. While ambition is important, it is equally important that targets are clearly worded, easily measured and time-bound to define specific milestones that need to be individually (national scale) and collectively (global scale) met. Ambitious but vaguely worded targets that are not easily measured will unlikely move the world towards the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity.

One specific area that is both feasible and would greatly lead to progress towards the 2050 Vision would be to ensure the conservation of Key Biodiversity Areas and other sites of global significance for biodiversity <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/f608/8caf/71b9bcd5f00870cc5cf39b66/sbstta-22-inf-37-en.pdf>. The value of all key biodiversity areas and other sites of global significance for biodiversity should be documented and retained through protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures. The rationale for identifying and protecting all areas of importance for biodiversity is provided by the recent paper by Visconti et al. (2019) Science <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/early/2019/04/10/science.aav6886>

13. What, in real terms, does 'living in harmony' with nature entail, what are the implications of this for the scope and content of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and what actions are needed between now and 2050 to reach the 2050 Vision?

Living in Harmony can mean reaching an equilibrium where nature is no longer in decline and, in fact, historical loss is being reversed through active measures such as habitat restoration. To measure this and achieve this, we need targets and indicators that measure the status and trends in key aspects of biodiversity including ecosystem extent and condition, number of species at risk and areas secured for protection at a minimum.

14. What would be the elements and content of an actionable 2030 mission statement for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework?

The elements of the 2030 mission statement should include specific and measurable goals that can be disaggregated into a set of actionable and measurable targets.

15a. What does 'SMART' targets mean in practical terms?

SMART should mean that targets can be continually calculated across space and time (i.e. regularly tracked across the entire globe), scalable from national to regional to global scales to promote a more coherent structure for national target formulation, involve existing indicators where baselines can be readily established, distance to target can be repeatedly and relatively easily calculated, and projections forward can be generated using proven models. Targets should be able to be broken down into step-wise, sequential measures that allow for transparency and consistency in progress and provide a concrete road map towards success.

15b. How should the set of targets in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework relate to existing Aichi Biodiversity Targets?

Evaluations in progress have been and will be (e.g. Global Biodiversity Outlook 5) conducted to identify which targets had the greatest progress and why. These targets will all have one thing in common: they will have been measurable. For any targets in the current plan that still do not have indicators to track progress, we must seriously question whether they should be retained in the Post-2020 framework unless clear plans are in place to generate means to measure progress. Rather it would be good to focus on retaining existing clearly measurable targets and add additional meaningful targets that can also be measured to strengthen progress going forward.

15c. How should the set of targets in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework align with other global targets, including those adopted under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

Where possible, the targets should align with other existing targets to ensure focused approaches and streamlined reporting that takes advantage of existing indicators and datasets. Increasing the already high reporting burdens on countries will reduce, rather than increase, likelihood for success. Having a synergistic and focused set of targets that can be easily translated across conventions and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will focus and align biodiversity conservation efforts.

16. What form should voluntary commitments for biodiversity take and how should these relate to or be reflected in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework?

Voluntary commitments should be encouraged and bound by the chosen targets with accompanying guidelines on how these commitments can be quantified. If the commitments can be quantified, then there is a chance that commitments in the aggregate can be evaluated and measured to determine how much the entire set of voluntary commitments move the world towards a particular target. Without this ability to quantify, it will be difficult to determine what impacts the commitments might have.

17. How could a post-2020 global biodiversity framework help to ensure coherence, integration and a holistic approach to biodiversity governance and what are the implications for the scope and content of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework?

The simplest way is to adopt targets that can be easily cross-referenced and linked to targets already in place in other conventions and the SDGs allowing for the same indicators and datasets to be accessed and invested in. This would ensure the sustainable production of essential data and indicators and streamline reporting (reducing reporting burden) and would help to focus the key actors/sectors affecting biodiversity on the same set of actions.

18. How can the post-2020 global biodiversity framework incorporate or support the mainstreaming of biodiversity across society and economies at large?

The process by which Targets are established should include involvement by the key sectors driving biodiversity loss in order to ensure buy-in, ownership and understanding of actions that need to be taken to stem the loss. The targets chosen should be step-wise in nature with concrete steps that involve and rely on those key sectors driving biodiversity loss.

19. What are the lessons learned from the implementation of the current Strategic Plan: And how can the transition from the current decade to the post-2020 framework avoid further delays in implementation and where should additional attention be focused?

A key lesson is that targets need to be co-established with the indicator community to avoid the situation with the current plan where the indicators were not formally identified and endorsed until 6 years into the 10 year plan, and also to avoid targets that have no means by which to measure progress.

To avoid delays, we need to identify and adopt indicators at the same time as the targets are adopted and those indicators need to have baselines established at the beginning of the adoption of the post-2020 plan in order to allow us to measure distance from target and track these continually to ensure we know if nations, regions and the globe are moving towards or away from targets. An online indicator visualization system would also streamline our ability to continually track target progress.

20. What indicators, in addition to those already identified in decision XIII/28, are needed to monitor progress in the implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework at the national, regional and global scales?

We should not limit ourselves to the AHTEG list of generic and specific indicators endorsed in 2016 but be open to new and improved means to measure progress towards targets. This includes new indicators brought into the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership, employed by the IPBES assessments and developed by Parties and used in their 6th National Reports.

21. How can the effectiveness and implementation of the NBSAPs be strengthened, what additional mechanisms or tools, if any, are required to support implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and how should these be reflected in the framework?

It would be helpful to provide a more structured template for NBSAP development that helps Parties identify their targets and ensure their national targets are synergistic and aligned with the global targets. This would help to align shared and proven conservation actions and align reporting. As well, this would promote the use of the same data and indicators and identify key gaps in data needed to be filled which could lead to coordinated and directed action by the Group on Earth Observations – Biodiversity Observation Network to fill these priority gaps. The BIP Dashboard is a recently developed tool that allows countries to track progress at the national level and we need to expand this to a global online platform for visualizing indicators to track the new targets.

23. How can the Global Environment Facility support the timely provision of financial resources to assist eligible Parties in implementing the post-2020 global biodiversity framework?

It would be helpful if the GEF provided funds not only for conservation action but also for supporting biodiversity monitoring, indicator development and tools for tracking progress in order to ensure that the funded conservation actions are effective. Currently, many conservation actions and national targets are essentially ‘blind’ in that we do not have the appropriate data, particularly at national levels, to evaluate their effectiveness and determine if we are moving towards or away from targets.

24. What additional mechanisms, if any, are required to support the review of implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and how should these be integrated into the framework?

It would be helpful to recognize the existing and continually expanding BIP Dashboard as a means to enhance national reporting going forward. It would also be helpful to establish an online indicator visualization platform that allows for the continual review of implementation and tracking of targets via the near real-time provision of up to date indicators at multiple scales.

27c. How should issues related to subnational governments, cities and other local authorities be reflected in the scope and content of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework?

As mentioned earlier, targets should be selected whenever possible to be easily scaled from global to regional to national levels. In many cases, data and indicators exist to also track targets at subnational and local scales. Our proposed online indicator visualization platform (Post-2020 Target Tracker) has the ability to disaggregate data to these scales in many instances thereby supporting the integration of subnational and local reporting into the process.

28f. How should issues related to the engagement of the private sector be reflected in the scope and content of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework?

As mentioned earlier, it will be important to engage key sectors driving biodiversity loss in the formulation of the targets in order to promote buy-in, ownership and action from these important sectors. Leaving them out of the process will risk the establishment of a post-2020 global biodiversity framework that is not able to successfully engage and influence these key actors and sectors. The same can be said for other important actors and stakeholders in the process including youth, civil society, indigenous peoples and local communities.

29. How should the post-2020 global biodiversity framework address issues related to communication and awareness and how can the next two years be used to enhance and support the communication strategy adopted at the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to ensure an appropriate level of awareness?

There are some synergies through improved implementation and our ability to continually track targets via an online platform which would provide the dual purpose of increasing communication and awareness of the targets and progress towards achieving these targets which could, ultimately, lead to increased public support.