



Convention on Biological Diversity

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**Matters related to the work programme of the
Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform
on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services**

Review of findings from the summary for policymakers of the thematic assessment of the underlying causes of biodiversity loss and the determinants of transformative change and options for achieving the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity and their implications

Note by the Secretariat

I. Background

1. In decision [14/36](#), the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity invited the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services to understand and assess the behavioural, social, economic, institutional, technical and technological determinants of transformational change, and how those might be deployed to achieve the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity.
2. In decision [15/19](#), the Conference of the Parties welcomed the approval by the Plenary of the Platform, at its eighth session, of the undertaking, inter alia, of a thematic assessment on the underlying causes of biodiversity loss and the determinants of transformative change and options for achieving the 2050 vision (“transformative change assessment”), as outlined in its scoping report, as well as the important scientific contribution of that assessment to the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.
3. In decision [16/11](#), the Conference of the Parties took note of the information contained in the overview of previous and future assessments of the Platform, including the transformative change assessment, to be considered by the Plenary of the Platform at its eleventh session.
4. In the same decision, the Conference of the Parties requested the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice to consider the outputs of the Platform according to the schedule contained in the annex to the decision. In the schedule, the transformative change assessment is tabled for consideration at a meeting of the Subsidiary Body held before the seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

* CBD/SBSTTA/27/1.

5. At its eleventh session, the Plenary of the Platform approved the summary for policymakers of the transformative change assessment,¹ and accepted the chapters of the assessment, including their executive summaries.

II. Objective and scope of the assessment

6. In the first *Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*,² it was concluded that there were pathways for achieving the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity in conjunction with key human development goals. The pathways, however, required a fundamental transformative change, defined as a fundamental, system-wide reorganization across technological, economic and social factors, including paradigms, goals and values.

7. The authors of the summary for policymakers of the transformative change assessment focused on transformative change that deliberately contributes to meeting the global targets and goals of the Framework and to achieving the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity. They also built on and further clarified the definition of transformative change, focusing on what transformative change means, how it occurs and how to promote and accelerate it. Third, they considered the challenges and barriers to realizing transformative change.

8. The authors first describe, on the basis of literature and evidence from various scientific disciplines and knowledge systems, why transformative change is urgent, necessary and challenging. They also explain how transformative change is possible and list the strategies and associated actions that contribute to such change. Last, they present a study of the role of all actors, in a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society approach.

III. Summary of the background and key messages of the assessment

9. The Secretariat of the Convention has provided in the present section a summary of the main issues covered in the assessment, for ease of reference. For a more comprehensive overview, readers are encouraged to refer to the summary for policymakers of the assessment.

10. The authors of the summary for policymakers have identified three key messages (i.e. transformative change is urgent, necessary and challenging – but possible; strategies and actions for transformative change; and enabling transformative change: roles for all)

Transformative change is urgent, necessary and challenging – but possible

11. The authors indicate that transformative change is a process that involves fundamental, system-wide shifts in views (i.e. ways of seeing, thinking and knowing), structures (i.e. ways of organizing, regulating and governing) and practices (i.e. ways of doing, behaving and relating). The term “fundamental” relates to the depth, quality and direction of change and “system-wide” to the breadth of changes at the various levels and scales in a system. According to the authors, transformative change is urgent because there is a closing window of opportunity to avoid further biodiversity loss. They also consider transformative change as necessary because they deem that previous and current approaches have failed to address interconnected global challenges and crises. Last, they consider transformative change as possible because case studies demonstrate transformative potential and show substantial positive environmental and social consequences for nature and people.

12. Five overarching challenges to transformative change are identified in the assessment: (a) persistent relations of domination; (b) economic and political inequalities; (c) inadequate policies and unfit institutions; (d) unsustainable consumption and production patterns and individual habits and practices; and (e) limited access to clean technologies and uncoordinated knowledge and innovation systems.

¹ Available at www.ipbes.net/transformative-change-assessment.

² Available at www.ipbes.net/global-assessment.

13. Six broad and interrelated approaches highlight complementary insights for promoting and accelerating transformative change: (a) system approaches; (b) structural approaches; (c) inner transformation approaches; (d) empowerment approaches; (e) knowledge co-creation approaches; and (f) science and technology approaches.

Strategies and actions for transformative change

14. The authors have identified five complementary strategies and associated actions to bring about transformative change, on the basis of their occurrence in the assessed literature: (a) conserving and regenerating places of value to nature and people; (b) driving systemic change in the sectors most responsible for biodiversity loss and nature's decline; (c) transforming economic systems for nature and equity; (d) transforming governance systems to make them integrated, inclusive, accountable and adaptive; (e) shifting societal views and values to recognize and prioritize fundamental interconnections between human beings and nature.

Enabling transformative change: roles for all

15. Values and worldviews play an important role in supporting transformative change visions. Deliberate transformative change is founded on visions grounded in sustainability-aligned values that are equitable, inclusive, respectful and adaptive and have impacts beyond any single scale. There is substantial potential for more collaboration among actor groups and for the development of new coalitions, which are more effective for transformative change than when actors pursue change individually. The underlying causes of biodiversity loss and nature's decline also create inequalities and injustices. Those who have benefited most from economic activities associated with biodiversity loss and nature's decline have greater capacity to act. The pursuit of transformative change by Governments contributes to policy coherence when it is based on a whole-of-government and nexus approach. Civil society plays an important role in bringing about transformative change and it is more effective in an enabling environment.

16. The summary for policy markers includes the 17 key messages reproduced below.

Transformative change is urgent, necessary and challenging – but possible

- Key message 1: “Transformative change for a just and sustainable world is urgent and necessary in order to address the global interconnected crises related to biodiversity loss, nature's decline and the projected collapse of key ecosystem functions. Delaying action to achieve global sustainability is costly compared with the benefits of taking action now.”
- Key message 2: “Transformative change is defined as fundamental, system-wide shifts in views, structures and practices. Deliberate transformative change for a just and sustainable world shifts views, structures and practices in ways that address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss and nature's decline. At the same time, it remains important to recognize and strengthen views, structures and practices that are aligned with the goal of creating a just and sustainable world, such as those of many indigenous peoples and local communities.”
- Key message 3: “Four key principles are responsive to and address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss and nature's decline and guide the process of deliberate transformative change. These principles are equity and justice, pluralism and inclusion, respectful and reciprocal human-nature relationships, and adaptive learning and action.”
- Key message 4: “Transformative change for a just and sustainable world faces challenges that are systemic, persistent and pervasive. Systemic challenges manifest as barriers that impede or prevent transformative change and reinforce the status quo.”
- Key message 5: “Weaving together insights from diverse approaches and knowledge systems, including indigenous and local knowledge, enhances strategies and actions for transformative change.”

- Key message 6: “Transformative change is possible, and it is characterized by the quality and direction of change. Both small-scale and large-scale changes contribute to transformative change for a just and sustainable world when they address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss and nature’s decline.”

Strategies and actions for transformative change

- Key message 7: “Five key strategies and associated actions have complementary and synergistic effects and substantial potential to advance deliberate transformative change for global sustainability. An integrated set of actions for each strategy shifts entrenched views, structures and practices in an adaptive way.”
- Key message 8: “Conservation that involves sustainable stewardship, notably by indigenous peoples and local communities, contributes to transformative change when it is inclusive, well resourced, and focused on places of high value to nature and people, and when the rights of indigenous peoples are recognized.”
- Key message 9: “Transformative changes in sectors that heavily contribute to biodiversity loss, including the agriculture and livestock, fisheries, forestry, infrastructure, mining and fossil fuel sectors, are crucial and urgent for advancing global sustainability and delivering social benefits to reach the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity.”
- Key message 10: “Transformative change strategies include transforming dominant economic and financial paradigms so that they prioritize nature and social equity over private interests.”
- Key message 11: “Inclusive, accountable and adaptive governance systems play a pivotal role in driving transformative change by involving diverse stakeholders in decision-making and addressing governance challenges.”
- Key message 12: “Shifting dominant societal views and values to recognize and prioritize human-nature interconnectedness is a powerful strategy for transformative change. These shifts can be facilitated through cultural narratives and by changing dominant social norms, facilitating transformative learning processes, co-creating new knowledge and weaving together different knowledge systems, world views and values that recognize human-nature interdependencies and ethics of care.”

Enabling transformative change: roles for all

- Key message 13: “Shared positive visions and their development are especially important for recognizing socioecological interdependencies, the agency of non-human life forms and an ethics of care, and thereby for inspiring transformative change ... Visions, which include narratives and stories, are desirable future states of people and nature, including Mother Earth, shaped by values and world views, and often include defined goals and intentional efforts to attain such future states.”
- Key message 14: “Transformative change is system-wide; therefore, achieving it requires a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach that engages all actors and sectors in visioning and contributing collaboratively to transformative change.”
- Key message 15: “Governments are powerful enablers of transformative change when they foster policy coherence, enact and enforce stronger regulations to benefit nature and its contributions to people in policies and plans (e.g., regulations, taxes, fees and tradable permits) across various sectors, deploy innovative economic (including financial) and fiscal tools, eliminate, phase out or reform environmentally harmful subsidies, and promote international cooperation.”
- Key message 16: “Civil society organizations, by fighting against biodiversity loss and nature’s decline, point to the need for transformative change. Social mobilizations to pursue

change, however, have often triggered responses that do not possess key aspects of transformative change. Civil society initiatives and environmental defenders have faced violence and rights violations. Protecting them supports transformative change.”

- Key message 17: “Well-designed policies, as well as business and private sector initiatives and tools, aimed at transformative change for a just and sustainable world provide economic incentives that influence socioeconomic development and consumption practices.”

IV. Implications of the assessment for work undertaken under the Convention

17. In the background section of the Framework (sect. A), it is recalled that, as stated in the first *Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*, nature can be conserved, restored and used sustainably while other global societal goals are simultaneously met through urgent and concerted efforts fostering transformative change.

18. The purpose of the Framework is defined in its section B as to catalyse, enable and galvanize urgent and transformative action by Governments, and subnational and local authorities, with the involvement of all of society, to halt and reverse biodiversity loss.

19. The Framework is also built around the theory of change (sect. E). While section E does not contain any explicitly reference to transformative change, it refers to the same basic principle, as it is underlined therein that urgent policy action is required globally, regionally and nationally to achieve sustainable development so that the drivers of undesirable change that have exacerbated biodiversity loss can be reduced and/or reversed.

20. The authors of the summary for policymakers emphasize the importance not only of strategies and actions (i.e. what people do) but also of principles and shifts in views, structures and practices underlying the action (i.e. how they do it). That finding is in line with the Framework, as section C of the latter contains a list of considerations with which the implementation of the Framework must be consistent (e.g. a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach).

21. Some of the targets of the Framework contribute to the five key strategies identified in the summary for policymakers to enable transformative change, for example, Target 3 contributes to strategy 1, Targets 5, 7, 10 and 15 to strategy 2, Targets 15 and 18 to strategy 3, Target 22 to strategy 4 and Target 21 to strategy 5.

22. Respecting the considerations for the implementation of the Framework will therefore contribute to transformative change.

23. Of the decisions adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its fifteenth and sixteenth meetings, only one explicitly refers to transformative change, namely, decision [15/17](#) on the long-term strategic approach to mainstreaming of biodiversity within and across sectors, in which the Conference of the Parties emphasized the importance of intensified mainstreaming action to achieve the transformational change needed.

24. A few other decisions contribute to the implementation of the strategies identified in the summary for policymakers, such as decision [16/16](#) on further work on ecologically and biologically significant marine areas, which contributes to the implementation of strategy 1 of the assessment. Decision [16/17](#), on the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity and of island biodiversity, supports transformative change in fishery, which is part of strategy 2 of the assessment, while decision [16/5](#), on institutional arrangements for the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in the work undertaken under the Convention, can also be considered as contributing to strategies 1 and 4.

25. The authors of the summary for policymakers define transformative change as a system-wide shift in values and behaviours, necessary for the effective implementation of the Framework by 2030,

towards the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity. They conclude that the underlying causes of biodiversity loss and nature's decline can only be addressed through a voluntary transformative change.

26. The transformative change assessment can be used to:

(a) Build awareness of the need for transformative change and promote and support the use of the strategies and associated actions to bring about transformative change;

(b) Support the evaluation of the contribution of conservation policies and actions to transformative change;

(c) Encourage Governments, civil society organizations and all other relevant organizations to take into account the findings of the assessment, as it is a system-wide approach, requiring the engagement of all actors and sectors.

V. Recommendations

27. Recommendations related to the transformative change assessment are contained in document CBD/SBSTTA/27/3.
