



High-Level Segment

2020 United Nations Biodiversity Conference, Kunming, People's Republic of China
“Ecological Civilization-Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth”

Roundtable C: Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Development

Deploying biodiversity and ecosystem-based approaches (“nature-based solution”) to contribute to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and related goals for climate change and food security; Linkages to UNFCCC COP 26 and the UN Food Systems Summit.

Context

The conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and the use of ecosystem-based approaches (“nature-based solution”) contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals, the 2030 Agenda and related goals for climate change and food security. For 14 of the 17 SDGs, nature is critical to their delivery and success, including those that relate to climate change, livelihoods, jobs, water security, food security, disaster prevention, and health, especially of vulnerable and marginalized populations. If biodiversity loss and degradation is not reversed and halted, hard won development gains will be lost and progress towards the SDGs will be jeopardized. There is an urgent need to address the interconnected challenge of food insecurity, climate change, land degradation and biodiversity loss and leverage opportunities to systemically transform our relationship with nature to put humanity on a safe pathway to achieve the SDGs.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Links with Biodiversity

Sustainable Development Goals 14 and 15 directly address biodiversity in aquatic and terrestrial environments respectively. Beyond these, the achievement of many other Goals is either directly or indirectly dependent on biodiversity. This recognition aids the mainstreaming of biodiversity into the relevant sectors and provides incentives for its conservation and sustainable use. Furthermore, many Sustainable Development Goals focus on the building of institutions and human capital (for example through education) and the strengthening of equality and rights, and these relate to the underlying drivers of biodiversity loss. Such SDGs therefore provide an enabling environment conducive to the improved governance of factors affecting biodiversity. Although some potential trade-offs exist between reaching the objectives of the Convention and attaining some of the SDGs – such as Goals 2 (food security), 7 (energy), 8 (economic growth) and 9 (infrastructure), these can be avoided or minimized through coherent and integrated decision making.

Biodiversity underpins sustainable food systems

Enhanced biodiversity in agricultural ecosystems contribute both to the sustainability and to productivity of agriculture. For example, food production is stabilized by diversity among and within crops. The diversity and abundance of pollinators is associated with improved yields and nutritional quality of crops dependent on animal pollination and biodiversity among crops and livestock, as well as among arthropods and other species in agricultural ecosystems including soil biodiversity, reduces the incidence of pests and diseases.

Systems that integrate multiple crops, livestock, fish and trees on farms, can further promote productivity and sustainability through synergistic interactions.

On the other hand, increasing the productivity and sustainability of agriculture is an essential element of reducing and reversing biodiversity decline; it can reduce pressure on forests and other biodiverse ecosystems and, with the appropriate policy measures in place, allow space for increased conservation and restoration activities. More sustainable agriculture can also provide habitats for biodiversity, improve connectivity to prevent isolation of species, and support the health and well-being of people through a cleaner, more diverse and resilient rural environment.

Biodiversity and climate action are intrinsically linked

Climate change and biodiversity loss are inseparable threats to humankind and must be addressed together. Climate change is already impacting biodiversity and is projected to have progressively greater impacts, with significantly greater risks to natural and human systems in a world warming to 2 degrees C above pre-industrial temperatures, compared to 1.5 degrees C above pre-industrial temperatures. Climate change will likely become the largest driver of biodiversity loss in the second half of this century. Thus, effective climate action is a prerequisite to slowing and reversing biodiversity loss.

Ecosystem-based approaches (or 'nature-based solutions') could make significant contributions to emission reduction effort required to keep climate change close to 1.5 degrees C. With appropriate safeguards, they could also enhance a wide range of ecosystem services, including water filtration, flood and coastal protection and soil health, as well as contributing to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. But there are important caveats to the use of 'nature-based solutions'. Firstly, while they are an essential part of the solution, the climate problem cannot be solved without stringent reductions in the use of fossil fuels. Secondly, the distributional impacts must be considered, and indigenous peoples and local communities must be fully involved in the development and implementation of land-based approaches. Thirdly, while many ecosystem-based approaches have co-benefits for biodiversity, this is not always the case, and careful assessment of synergies and trade-offs is required. In particular, tree planting is not always appropriate, especially non-native species in monoculture plantations. Fourthly, it is important to conserve and restore the role of species and genetic diversity in addition to ecosystem extent.

Guiding questions

- 1. How can your government ensure that biodiversity is integrated into national development plans so it contributes to the achievement of the SDGs?*
- 2. Which mechanisms, tools or incentives are needed to effectively integrate biodiversity across economic sectors, and which sectors will you now prioritize for such mainstreaming?*
- 3. How can national adaptation plans and nationally determined contributions under UNFCCC contribute to the post 2020 GBF and how can actions under the GBF contribute to the climate agenda?*
- 4. What actions will your government take to ensure food is produced in a way which works for nature, climate and people and support the outcomes of the Food Systems Summit?*
- 5. How will your government ensure a quick uptake of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework to ensure its successful implementation?*