

UNESCO inputs on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework

A. Key considerations and insights

Considerable efforts and time were spent on the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the development of the Aichi targets. The post-2020 global biodiversity should be based on a critical evaluation of what has been achieved and has not been achieved, why and what remains to be done. For the Aichi Targets that have not been achieved, these might need to be updated, to be reformulated slightly, but it should be avoided to embark on a long debate to develop entirely new targets, as they remain all relevant.

→ it would be crucial to evaluate the implementation of this plan and identify key bottlenecks that have resulted in limited progress towards the Aichi Targets.

The way people value and perceive biodiversity influences behaviour at the level of the individual, institutions and whole societies. More work is needed to understand the diversity of values that people hold for biodiversity, especially among non-Western societies and marginalized groups. The different ways of perceiving and valuing biodiversity depend on culture, gender, education, occupation, context (e.g. urban/rural) and/or a multitude of other influences. There is growing recognition of the need to understand these issues and to rethink about our relationship with nature and our values. Valorizing and improving the adoption of responsible behaviors as well as facilitating the activation of participatory processes and major involvement of citizens, youth and businesses as leaders of transformation is essential in the coming years. The role of education is therefore important as well as increasing specific training for educators. The sharing and exchange of good practices among people who operate in the field of education for sustainability need to be enhanced

→ to halt or reverse biodiversity decline it is vital to work on transformation of people's roles, actions and relationships with biodiversity. Understanding different values is also essential for gaining the consensus and cooperation needed to conserve biodiversity, which can only be achieved when multiple actors agree on common goals.

Biodiversity underpins human wellbeing in various ways. It is essential to integrate the post-2020 biodiversity framework with the Agenda 2030 and the sustainable development goals, with clear targets that address human development and biodiversity conservation simultaneously. UNESCO designated sites, and other strategies that can localise these targets, provide important means to advance and demonstrate that human development goals and biodiversity conservation can be mutually supportive objectives.

→ It is necessary to align the post-2020 biodiversity framework with Agenda 2030 with clear targets that address human development and biodiversity conservation simultaneously.

Targets should be clearly defined and linked to the mandate and work of the other biodiversity-related Conventions. Governing bodies of other biodiversity-related Conventions should discuss how they could contribute through the implementation of these Conventions and increase synergies among them. The importance of engagement by other biodiversity-related conventions in elaborating the post-2020 framework was also reiterated in the joint statement delivered on behalf of the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions (BLG) during the CBD COP 14. The framework should be used to reinforce synergies within the UN System, including through high-level support. While good practices exist at the working level, broader collaboration and support from different agencies, and the national Ministries with which they engage, can only enhance a more holistic approach to addressing post-2020 ambitions in relation to biodiversity.

→It is necessary to align the post-2020 framework with other biodiversity-related Conventions and to use it to enhance cooperation within UN system.

Climate change is a major driver of biodiversity erosion. Loss of biodiversity also accelerates climate change processes, as the capacity of degraded ecosystems to assimilate and store CO₂ tends to decrease, reducing the available adaptation options. We can witness this in many UNESCO designated sites around the world, several of which are acting as climate change observatories and as laboratories for the implementation of the SDG's. Synergies between the work of IPBES (Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services) and the IPCC (Intergovernmental Platform on climate Change) to strengthen the knowledge base to counteract the loss of biodiversity are welcomed and need to be encouraged.

→It is essential to give equal attention and priority to biodiversity and climate change.

Attempts to raise awareness of the biodiversity concept and communicate the complex issues involved are often given a relatively low political priority. Lack of awareness of biodiversity and its importance is common, with biodiversity sometimes perceived as only a resource to be exploited. Communication on biodiversity is a crucial issue that must be addressed to achieve the objectives of agenda 2030. A key challenge is to draw attention to the importance and urgency of biodiversity mainstreaming in the context of Agenda 2030, in order to achieve the high-level support necessary across governments, the UN system and civil society to inform the negotiations of a post-2020 global biodiversity framework. Another challenge is to elaborate a common powerful narrative to communicate biodiversity in political settings and to civil society. This narrative must be able to engage key stakeholders including youth, business and private sector in the process, and inspire them to become actors in this transformation towards resilient societies.

→ It is time to elaborate a common powerful narrative to communicate biodiversity in political settings and to civil society. Conserving biodiversity requires an inclusive approach that speaks to and involves everyone.

B. Specific recommendations and UNESCO highlights

1. Leverage the potential of culture for biodiversity conservation and for the 2030 Agenda

UNESCO¹ recognizes and promotes the importance of cultural knowledge and diversity as crucial drivers for the societal transformation and resilience needed to respond to biodiversity erosion. Culture is an intrinsic part of the human experience, and therefore no development can be sustainable without culture. UNESCO has contributed to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, notably through the SCBD-UNESCO Joint Programme on the Links between Biological and Cultural Diversity (2010-2020) ([UNEP/CBD/COP/13/INF/28](#)). The importance of culture in biodiversity conservation was reiterated at the Nature and Culture Summit which is also clearly reflected in the *Sharm El-Sheikh Declaration on Nature and Culture* ([CBD/COP/14/INF/46](#)). In order to achieve the 2050 vision of “Living in Harmony with Nature”, it is important to tackle the common drivers of loss of biological and cultural diversity simultaneously.

The World Heritage Convention does not only protect natural sites but also numerous cultural landscapes (defined as combined works of nature and people) that are important for biodiversity conservation. A culture perspective also serves as an avenue for sustainability and synergies between biodiversity-related conventions. Culture is an enabler and driver of sustainable development, as clearly illustrated in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The role of heritage as a major lever for sustainable development is specifically reflected in the SDG target 11.4: *Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage*.

UNESCO’s Man and the Biosphere programme (MAB), launched in 1971 pioneered many initiatives designed to understand interactions between people and their environment. The World Network of Biosphere Reserves comprises today 686 sites in 122 countries, including 20 transboundary sites. Biosphere reserves are established on the fundamental principle that people are part of ecosystems, and that the ecological, cultural and societal systems are mutually dependent.

Many indigenous and local communities are reliant on biodiversity and have a particular relationship with their landscapes and seascapes. They do not necessarily see a distinction between humans and nature, and often accord deeply spiritual importance to animals and plants. Biodiversity is central to many cultures and culture itself plays a crucial role in how biodiversity is perceived and managed. The contribution of intangible cultural heritage to environmental sustainability is recognized in many fields such as biodiversity conservation,

¹ UNESCO is the only UN agency with a specific mandate in the field of culture. The organization carries this responsibility notably through its six Culture Conventions.

sustainable natural resource management, climate change, and natural disaster preparedness and response.

In relation to the implementation of Article 8(j) of the Convention, the Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS) programme of UNESCO has been particularly engaged. UNESCO has supported the development of work on a key indicator for monitoring Aichi Target 18, namely the status and trends of linguistic diversity and numbers of speakers of indigenous languages. In line with the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages, the process may wish to consider relevant inputs from discussions and reports from 2019 celebration.

Common actions for safeguarding both diversities have to be undertaken, through a comprehensive approach based on the understanding that culture and nature should not be separated. An increasing focus on the ethics of biodiversity conservation and its sustainable use, drawing on the approaches used in UNESCO's work on the ethics of climate change should be encouraged.

2. UN decade of Ocean

The post-2020 global biodiversity framework should take into account the UN decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, proclaimed by the UN General Assembly to start in 2021, with the aim of advancing ocean science and sustainable use of the oceans and reversing the decline in the health of the ocean ecosystem. We advise close collaboration with UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) in preparing for and contributing to the implementation plan to ensure the Decade and its outcomes can contribute to the 2050 Vision of "Living in Harmony with Nature".

Concretely, to gain greater understanding of trends in marine biodiversity status and change, the Decade will make use of the historical baseline data stored in UNESCO-IOC's Ocean Biogeographic Information System and will be updated with new long-term data acquired through systematic and globally coordinated long-term monitoring networks under the auspices of the Global Ocean Observing System, a UNESCO-IOC led programme that is co-sponsored by UN Environment, the World Meteorological Organization and the International Science Council.

3. Biodiversity as a life-long cultural and learning process

Education and training are to be a strong component of the post-2020. Education is essential for the sustainable and equitable use of biodiversity and its conservation. It is also crucial for mainstreaming biodiversity. The erosion of indigenous and local knowledge and the associated decline in sustainable traditional land use threatens biodiversity and ecosystems

services, as well as communities' contributions to accomplishing SDG 4 (inclusive and quality education). It is therefore vital to integrate biodiversity into education and learning programmes.

Education on biodiversity is to be transformed as a life-long cultural and learning process, concerning both young people and adults, individuals and communities, which provides competencies and knowledge, but also values and sensitivity capable of orienting decisions in many sectors, professional, political, commercial, research, as well as citizens' everyday choices: consumption, tourism, food, etc. involving all the aspects of society.

There is a need to enhance actions in the communication, education and public awareness (CEPA) Programme of work as in the current Plan of Action 10 (strengthening formal and informal education on biodiversity).

4. Scales

Focus on implementation of solutions and across borders

The international community should be focusing on identifying and sharing solutions to speed up implementation. Biodiversity crosses borders. Solutions and implementation will be successful through transboundary cooperation accounting for the connectivity of ecosystems at a regional and global scale. Connectivity conservation can link up UNESCO-designated sites and enhance their protection. Concepts such as solidarity² with human beings and with ecosystems and other living species across the planet and generations should be further explored in the framework.

Set concrete national targets

Countries should be invited to identify national targets and concrete actions to achieve them and this should be followed by an evaluation if the cumulative actions planned will be sufficient to achieve the new overall targets. Targets should become a national commitment engaging all stakeholders (not only the Ministry in charge of Biodiversity but all the government should implement biodiversity targets as well as key stakeholders of society including business, citizens and media).

Given that natural World Heritage properties being the world's most iconic natural areas with highest degree of international recognition and prestige, it is worth considering setting specific targets on World Heritage, at both global and national levels. At the IUCN World Parks Congress in Sydney in 2014, it was recommended that World Heritage sites should serve as models of conservation and have a good outlook in the face of global change, as a litmus test of the success of protected areas globally ("[The Promise of Sydney](#)"). Such an initiative will help further upscaling efforts made towards achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Target 11.

² **Mathevet R.**, (2012). *La solidarité écologique, Ce lien qui nous oblige*. Actes Sud, Arles. 210p.

Focus on the enabling environment

Interdisciplinary research and data sharing is needed to enhance understanding of biodiversity decline, and to identify policy responses that take into account science, sociology, economic paradigms and cultural norms. The framework should identify policies and subsidies that drive biodiversity loss for government to abolish them or adjust them; factor in the actual costs of biodiversity loss in national policies; identify and implement policies that provide incentives for conservation and sustainable use.