

The Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and CBD COP15

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In 2020, IGES and others reported that the United Nations' [*Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its accompanying Aichi Biodiversity Targets*](#) would be replaced by a new framework to guide biodiversity planning at the national level. This framework, known as the post-2020 global biodiversity framework (GBF), was due to be proposed for adoption at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Kunming, China, in October of that year. After repeated delays related to COVID-19, the first part of COP15 was convened in Kunming from 11-15 October 2021, mostly online. The second part was eventually scheduled for 7-19 December 2022, and moved to Montreal, Canada, which is the host city of the Secretariat of the CBD.

International Biodiversity Targets

The CBD is a multilateral environmental agreement between 196 national governments. Its objectives, outlined in Article 1 of the Convention, are:

- 1) the conservation of biological diversity;
- 2) the sustainable use of its components;
- 3) and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.

Parties to the Convention usually convene every two years at a meeting of the “Conference of the Parties” (COP), to negotiate decisions that are, essentially, refinements and updates to the original 1992 text of the Convention. In the early years of the millennium, the CBD produced, for the first time, a global plan for biodiversity, with targets for reducing biodiversity loss and the degradation of nature by 2010. This plan was succeeded by the more detailed Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 at COP10 in Nagoya, Japan, in 2010. As the successor to the Strategic Plan, the GBF was expected to be adopted in 2020 at COP15. Each of these plans was intended to provide a template for Parties to use for biodiversity planning and target-setting at the national level and, thereby, also at the subnational level. The Strategic Plan officially expired in 2020 and the biodiversity world has been waiting, since then, for its successor to take effect.

Perhaps the greatest urgency to adopt the GBF is because, without this framework, Parties have no common set of targets upon which to base their national targets. Parties will also be expected to report against these targets in their National Biodiversity Reports, to be submitted to the Secretariat of the CBD every few years. The GBF currently exists in draft form, but is expected to be adopted by the end of COP15 on 19 December 2022.

The GBF Process

The process for developing the GBF was set out in a COP14 decision in 2018. An

“Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework” of Party representatives was established to formulate the GBF, and a zero draft was produced at the working group’s first meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, in August 2019. The draft was subsequently reviewed and negotiated by Parties at three additional working group meetings, mostly online due to COVID restrictions. Elements of the draft were also negotiated at meetings of subsidiary bodies of the CBD. A complete first draft was produced at the first part of the third working group meeting, held online in 2021. However, the following draft, produced at the fourth meeting of the working group in Nairobi in mid-2022, is a working draft that contains well over 1,000 brackets. These brackets signify proposed text that has not been agreed on. Just before the second part of COP15, from 3-5 December 2022, a fifth working group meeting will be held, at the COP venue in Montreal. At this final working group meeting, Parties will endeavor to agree on as much of this text as possible, to reduce the amount of negotiation required at the COP itself. The challenge, it seems, is that each meeting brings with it the possibility of opening new discussions or reopening old ones.

GBF Content

The first draft of the GBF, from 2021, offers probably the best insight into the content of the framework. Although the current draft is more recent, the copious bracketed text makes it difficult to read. Much of the more recent text also lays out different, and often opposing, options.

The draft GBF consists of various elements, but the heart of it is a set of goals and targets, much like its predecessor. The Strategic Plan, however, had targets within a set of goals, while the GBF draft goals are separate to, and overlapping, its targets. The first draft of the GBF also has milestones within each goal, but it appears that the milestones may not be retained.

The Strategic Plan had five goals and 20 targets, while the first draft of the GBF has four possible goals and 21 possible targets, and the current draft has four possible goals and 22 possible targets, one of which (target 19) is divided into two. The GBF covers similar content to the Strategic Plan. Apart from the layout of the goals and targets, the main difference lies in the new dates attached to targets and goals, and their numerical values. In some cases, values are attached for the first time. For example, the Strategic Plan calls for invasive alien species and pathways to be identified, prioritised, controlled, or eradicated without specifying any quantity, while the GBF first draft proposes specifying a percentage reduction of invasive alien species. In other cases, the GBF first draft proposes increasing the numerical values in the Strategic Plan. For example, it proposes raising the percentage of ecosystems to be restored from 15% to 20%.

Another value that may be increased is the percentage of terrestrial, freshwater and ocean area under some form of protection. The quite widely publicised possible “30-by-30” target calls for protection of 30% of both land (including freshwater) and sea. This figure is up from 17% of land and 10% of sea under the Strategic Plan. This target is also worth mentioning because it brings into the discussion a mechanism that has not

been widely known until now: “other effective area-based conservation measures” (OECMs). In order to attain the ambitious new area targets, it is proposed to include areas that are not formally protected, but which are managed in such a way as to conserve biodiversity. Examples include areas under traditional forms of management by indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs).

Monitoring Framework for the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

An important complement to the GBF is the *monitoring framework for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework*. Also still in draft form, the monitoring framework was developed in parallel with the GBF itself, and its use in relation to the GBF was recommended at the 24th meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) to the Convention.

The purpose of the monitoring framework is to present various indicators to measure countries’ progress toward the goals and targets of the GBF. It consists of headline indicators that capture the overall scope of the goals and targets of the GBF, that can also be used for communication purposes; component indicators that fill in important gaps left by the headline; and complementary indicators for thematic or in-depth analysis of each goal and target.

A decision has been drafted for consideration by the Parties to adopt the monitoring framework at COP15. Part of another draft decision decides or requests Parties to use the monitoring framework in national reports.

In Conclusion

Although various other items are up for discussion at the much-anticipated second part of CBD COP15, attention will be focused on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. Parties will be under pressure to streamline the text rather than allowing it to proliferate any further. Any further delay could risk discouraging Parties from using the GBF as a basis for national biodiversity planning and reporting. This pressure to agree may make it more likely that the final GBF is less ambitious than expected. In that case, other mechanisms may be needed to encourage countries to pursue more ambitious biodiversity targets at the national and subnational level.

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