



THE BIODIVERSITY PLAN
For Life on Earth

A Beginner's Guide to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

Written by Adv. Kanisha Acharya-Patel (Researcher, [BLGI](#); Associate Fellow, [CISDL](#))

Please note that this article is intended for educational purposes and does not represent the views of any state.

What is the Global Biodiversity Framework?

The Kunming-Montréal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) was adopted on December 19th, 2022, at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP) in Montréal, Canada. It was developed to promote the timely and effective implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The CBD is an international agreement with three main objectives:

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

Note on the CBD: The CBD was adopted in 1992 and has been ratified by 196 parties. This means that 196 countries have agreed to be legally bound by the agreement (i.e. required to implement the CBD in good faith).

Parties that have signed onto the GBF have committed to demonstrating their progress towards meeting the GBF targets and updating their National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs) accordingly.² Parties to the CBD, are expected to:

1. Update their NBSAPs to show how the GBF will be implemented domestically and support the global goals and targets set out in the GBF; and
2. Comply with the monitoring framework for the GBF, which includes mechanisms for planning, monitoring, reporting and reviewing progress.

Note on Terminology: In international discourse countries are often called 'states'. If a state has formally agreed to be bound by an international agreement, it is considered a 'party' to that agreement.

Why Conserving Biodiversity is Important

Biological diversity (or 'biodiversity') is the key to the ability of the Earth to continue providing us with essential ecological goods and services and is therefore our species' life assurance policy.³ The goods and services provided to humans by biological diversity include food, fuel and building materials, air and water purification, moderation of floods, droughts and temperature extremes, pollination of plants, stabilization and moderation of the Earth's climate, and cultural and aesthetic benefits.⁴ Biodiversity also has intrinsic value: value in its own right, independent of human uses (i.e. biodiversity has value even if it does not directly or indirectly benefit humans).⁵

Despite ongoing efforts, biodiversity is deteriorating worldwide at unprecedented rates.⁶ This is largely due to changes in land and sea use, direct exploitation of organisms, climate change, pollution and invasion of alien species.⁷ The GBF recognizes the serious threat that the continued loss of biodiversity poses to nature and human well-being, and seeks to urgently respond to this threat by setting out a clear, measurable goals and targets for parties to follow.

History of the GBF: A Response to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets

The CBD identifies the loss of biological diversity as a common problem, sets overall goals and policies and general obligations, and organizes technical and financial cooperation, but the responsibility of achieving its goals largely rests with the countries themselves.⁸ In 2010, the parties set 20 biodiversity targets (termed the Aichi Biodiversity Targets) to set out a framework by which parties could implement the CBD and address biodiversity loss. However, as of 2020 none of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets had been met, largely because they did not adequately set out who was responsible for what, how biodiversity protection would be financed, and how progress would be measured and reported on. Global failure to meet the Aichi Biodiversity Targets resulted in the UN calling on the parties to come up with another framework to direct conservation efforts through 2030 and beyond, and this how the GBF came to be.

What Does the GBF Intend to Achieve?

The GBF has four long-term goals for achieving the 2050 vision for biodiversity, and 23 action-oriented global targets for urgent action over the decade to 2030 that will support the achievement of these four long-term goals by 2050.⁹ The GBF is intended to be implemented in a manner that is consistent with meeting the objectives of the CBD and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Long-term goals

Goal A is focused on the conservation of Earth's ecosystems and their species by restoring, enhancing and increasing the area of natural ecosystems, increasing the abundance of native wild species, and stopping or reducing extinction rates of species.

Goal B prioritizes the sustainable use of the components of biological diversity (i.e. using natural resources in a rate and manner that does not lead to the long-term decline in biodiversity, in order to meet the needs of present and future generations¹⁰).

Goal C is centered around access to genetic resources and the equitable sharing of benefits from the use of said resources. Access and benefit-sharing refers to the way in which genetic resources (i.e. any material from plants, animals or other living organisms that has monetary or non-monetary value¹¹) may be accessed, and how the benefits from their use are shared between the people or countries providing the resources (i.e. providers) and the people or countries that use them (i.e. users).¹² Genetic resources provide a crucial source of information to better understand our environment and can be used to develop a wide ranges of products (ex. medicine and cosmetics) and services (ex. agricultural and environmental practices and techniques) for human benefit.¹³ Genetic resources are not evenly distributed around the world, and therefore there must be agreements in place regarding access and benefit-sharing. For example, access to genetic resources may depend on using the traditional knowledge of Indigenous and local communities (i.e. the providers). Access and benefit-sharing rules recognize the value of this knowledge by requiring users to obtain permission to use it, and to share any benefits that result from its use with the Indigenous and local communities.¹⁴

Goal D speaks to the practical implementation of the GBF and requires that adequate means of implementation, including financial resources, capacity-building, technical and scientific cooperation, and access to and transfer of technology to fully implement the GBF are secured and equitably accessible to all parties. The GBF recognizes that enabling implementation mechanisms must be prioritized for developing countries, as they face specific challenges

that developed countries do not face (such as reduced technical and financial resources and access to information).

Global targets for urgent action

The 23 GBF targets for urgent action (i.e. to be achieved by 2030) are divided into three categories: reducing threats to biodiversity (targets 1-8), meeting people's needs through sustainable use and benefit-sharing (targets 9-13), and tools and solutions for implementation and mainstreaming (targets 14-23). The threats to biodiversity that targets 1-8 intend to address include human induced extinction of species, unsustainable use, harvesting and trade of wild species, and the negative impacts of invasive species, pollution, climate change and ocean acidification on biodiversity and ecosystems. One of the landmark takeaways from the GBF is its "30 by 30" target (i.e. target 3), which calls for the conservation and management of at least 30% of the earth's land and sea by 2030 through protected areas and other area-based conservation measures. Importantly, this target explicitly calls for a decolonized approach to conservation, where the rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities (including over their traditional territories) are recognized and respected.¹⁵

Targets 9-13 prioritize the sustainable management and use of biodiversity (including wild species and areas under agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries and forestry), restoring and enhancing nature's contributions to people (ex. regulation of air, water and climate), improving human health and well-being, and taking effective legal, policy, administrative and capacity-building measures to ensure the fair and equitable sharing of benefits that arise from the use of genetic resources and traditional knowledge. The tools and solutions for implementation under targets 13-23 focus on integrating biodiversity considerations into all private and public sector decision-making processes, establishing legal, administrative and policy measures to reduce business' negative impacts on biodiversity, substantially increasing the level of financial resources to implement national biodiversity strategies and action plans (particularly in developing countries), and strengthening capacity-building, development of and access to technology, data, knowledge and research. The tools and solutions also focus on increasing public awareness and education around sustainable consumption and waste reduction and strengthening decision-making processes by ensuring representation of diverse perspectives (i.e. those of Indigenous and local communities, women and girls, children and youth, persons with disabilities and other groups that have historically been excluded) and ensuring protection of environmental human rights defenders.

Consistency with the CBD Goals

The goals and targets of the GBF are to be implemented in accordance with the three objectives of the CBD.¹⁶ As mentioned above, the 23 GBF targets for urgent action are divided into three categories. The targets are intended to assist in achieving the objectives of the CBD quickly and effectively because the targets are SMART (i.e. specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound).¹⁷ The first two categories are aligned with the objectives of the CBD. The first category is focused on reducing threats to biodiversity, which is consistent with the first CBD objective of conserving biological diversity. The second category is focused on meeting people's needs through sustainable use and benefit-sharing, which is consistent with the second and third CBD objectives: sustainable use of the components of biodiversity and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits from the use of genetic resources. This means that achieving these targets will allow countries to successfully meet the CBD objectives. However, achieving these targets depends on parties' abilities to practically implement the GBF, and this is where the third category of targets comes into play. The third category sets out tools and solutions for implementation that will allow for the GBF targets to be met, thereby supporting the achievement of the CBD objectives in a timely and effective manner.

Consistency with the UN Sustainable Development Goals

The CBD stemmed from the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, where world leaders agreed on a comprehensive strategy (termed the Earth Summit) for achieving sustainable development (i.e. meeting our needs while ensuring that we leave a healthy and viable world for future generations).¹⁸ The GBF explicitly recognizes this link by calling on the General Assembly of the UN (i.e. the main

policy-making body of the UN) to acknowledge the GBF and take into account the progress in its implementation when monitoring progress towards the SDGs.¹⁹

By 2030, the GBF aims to catalyze urgent action to halt and reverse biodiversity loss and put nature on a path to recovery, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda) and its 17 SDGs.²⁰ The Agenda recognizes that eradicating poverty, combatting inequality, conserving the planet and creating inclusive and sustainable economic growth are all linked to each other.²¹ The GBF and the Agenda are inherently connected because biodiversity and healthy ecosystems contribute directly to human well-being and development priorities (such as ending hunger and mitigating climate change).²² The GBF and the SDGs are mutually supportive, as implementation of one contributes to the achievement of the other.²³ The GBF's 2030 mission will help achieve the 2050 vision of a world that lives in harmony with nature: where biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and wisely used, ecosystem services are maintained, a healthy planet is sustained and benefits essential for all people are delivered.²⁴

Potential Limitations and Challenges of the GBF

The GBF prioritizes an equitable approach to biodiversity conservation: one that recognizes the additional financial and technological support that developing countries will require to implement the GBF, affirms the contribution and rights of Indigenous and local communities, and aims to enable participation of marginalized groups such as women, youth, persons with disabilities and gender-diverse people. In theory, the GBF will respect the rights and traditional knowledge of Indigenous and local communities, give developing countries equal footing in decision-making, and look beyond an anthropocentric view of nature (i.e. the value of biodiversity is measured by its benefits to humans).

However, the GBF has been criticized for ignoring the issues of equity, the development needs of four-fifths of the global population and matters of historical responsibility²⁵. For example, the GBF puts the burden of climate change mitigation on the ability of ecologically important areas in the Global South to store carbon, while downplaying the urgency of reducing the Global North's industrial emissions. Additionally, the GBF's requirements for monitoring and reporting progress on targets may be considered onerous for developing countries due to limited scientific, technical and financial resources.²⁶ Experts have noted that the GBF 'risks perpetuating historical injustices, colonial legacies, and power imbalances by imposing Western conservation models in the Global South'.²⁷ Further, the American Bar Association has critiqued the GBF on the basis that it does not threaten business as usual and only calls for weak protections for biodiversity areas and disappointing funding commitments.²⁸

How Should Parties Implement the GBF?

Global biodiversity targets will need to be translated into parties' domestic laws and policies by clearly defining the practices and behaviours that must be changed, who needs to make these changes (i.e. population groups and sectors), the resources (ex. financial, technological, etc.) that are required, and how progress will be monitored.²⁹ Implementation of the GBF should also effectively consider different viewpoints on the value of nature, including:

- nature for nature (i.e. conserving nature for nature's sake),
- nature for society (i.e. conserving nature for the benefits it provides to humans), and
- nature as culture (i.e. conserving the cultural/relational value of nature).³⁰

For more information on the GBF please visit the **Convention on Biological Diversity Website:**
<https://www.cbd.int/gbf/>

Date written: January 2024

-
- ¹ Convention on Biological Diversity (adopted 5 June 1992, entered into force 29 December 1993) 1760 UNTS 79 (CBD) art 1.
- ² 'The Global Biodiversity Framework – what's next for financial policy and regulation?' (United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative, 2 February 2023) <<https://www.unepfi.org/themes/ecosystems/the-global-biodiversity-framework-whats-next-for-financial-policy-and-regulation/>> accessed 26 October 2023.
- ³ Sustaining Life on Earth: How the Convention on Biological Diversity Promotes Nature and Human Well-being (Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity 2000) i <<https://www.cbd.int/doc/publications/cbd-sustain-en.pdf>> accessed 26 October 2023 (Sustaining Life).
- ⁴ Ibid 4.
- ⁵ Anne W Rea and Wayne R Munns Jr, 'The Value of Nature: Economic, Intrinsic, or Both?' (2018) 13(5) Integ Environ Assess Manag <<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5790155/pdf/nihms927655.pdf>> accessed 26 October 2023.
- ⁶ United Nations Environment Programme, Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (18 December 2022) UN Doc CBD/COP/15/L.25 (GBF) 4 (s A para 2).
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Sustaining Life (n 5) 8.
- ⁹ GBF (n 8) 8 (s G para 30 & s H para 31)
- ¹⁰ CBD (n 1) art 2.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² 'Convention on Biological Diversity: Introduction to Access and Benefit-Sharing' (Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2011) 3 <<https://www.cbd.int/abs/infokit/revise/web/all-files-en.pdf>> accessed 26 October 2023.
- ¹³ Ibid 2.
- ¹⁴ Ibid 10.
- ¹⁵ GBF (n 8) 9 (s H para 31).
- ¹⁶ GBF (n 8) 6 (s C para 16).
- ¹⁷ 'Global Framework Sets Targets for 2030 to Live in Harmony with Nature by 2050' (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 11 January 2023) <<https://sdg.iisd.org/news/global-framework-sets-targets-for-2030-to-live-in-harmony-with-nature-by-2050/>> accessed 26 October 2023.
- ¹⁸ Sustaining Life (n 5) 8.
- ¹⁹ GBF (n 8) 3.
- ²⁰ GBF (n 8) 7 (s F para 29).
- ²¹ United Nations General Assembly Resolution 70/1 (25 September 2015) UN Doc A/Res/70/1 5 (para 13) <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_70_1_E.pdf> accessed 26 October 2023.
- ²² 'Biodiversity and the Sustainable Development Goals' (Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2018) 1 <<https://www.cbd.int/cop/cop-14/media/briefs/en/cop14-press-brief-sdgs.pdf>> accessed 26 October 2023.
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ GBF (n 8) 7 (s F para 28).
- ²⁵ 'The Global Biodiversity Framework and the North-South Divide' (2022) 12(2) J of the Foundation for Agrarian Studies <https://ras.org.in/the_global_biodiversity_framework_and_the_north_south_divide> accessed 26 October 2023.
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ Laura Pereira et al, 'Equity and Justice should underpin the discourse on Tipping Points' (2023) EGU sphere (preprint repository) 4 <<https://egusphere.copernicus.org/preprints/2023/egusphere-2023-1455/egusphere-2023-1455.pdf>> accessed 26 October 2023.
- ²⁸ Zak Smith, 'Countries adopt insufficient global conservation targets for 2030' (American Bar Association, 30 June 2023) <https://www.americanbar.org/groups/environment_energy_resources/publications/trends/2022-2023/july-aug-2023/countries-adopt-insufficient-global-conservation-targets/> accessed 26 October 2023.

²⁹ Andrea Perino et al, 'Biodiversity post-2020: Closing the gap between global targets and national-level implementation' (2021) 15(2) Society for Conservation Biology s 2.1

<<https://conbio.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/conl.12848>> accessed 26 October 2023.

³⁰ <https://besjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/pan3.10146>