

Opportunities to strengthen links between national action on biodiversity and climate change

Prepared by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) & UNSW Center for Sustainable Development Reform (CSDR)¹

Forthcoming revisions of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) present opportunities to strengthen links between national action on biodiversity and climate change.

- In December 2022, Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) agreed to revise their NBSAPs to align with the new Montreal-Kunming Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).
- Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Paris Agreement are requested to submit the next round of NDCs and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) in 2025.
- The UNFCCC COP28 Presidency, CBD COP15 Presidency, and other partners have released a joint statement committed to fostering synergies in the design and implementation of these national plans and strategies.

Recent analysis conducted by CSDR and TNC examined NDCs, NAPs, and NBSAPs from 18 countries,² and revealed a significant gap in effectively aligning these plans.

- The lack of alignment may be partly due to the age of the reviewed documents and the evolving recognition of linkages between biodiversity and climate change. While national policies and guidance may have changed, the study shows that there is not a strong precedent or foundation of know-how for countries to go about integrating NBSAPs, NDCs, and NAPs.
- Integrated and synergistic approaches, as well as harmonized national targets and indicators, are essential to foster policy coherence, maximize the use of available resources, and increase the likelihood of successful implementation.

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² List of jurisdictions analyzed: Argentina, Australia, Bahamas, Barbados, Colombia, China, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Mongolia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Zambia.

The analysis identified existing climate-biodiversity synergies, but also many gaps that should be addressed to strengthen links and co-benefits between NBSAPs, NDCs and NAPs. Key recommendations follow.

- **Establish cross-cutting principles and structures to guide the updating of planning instruments (NBSAPs, NDCs, NAPs, and Low Emission Development Strategies) to maximize synergies between biodiversity and climate.**
 - When governments update biodiversity and climate plans, they often apply a set of principles to guide each step of the process. Including principles that promote policy coherence between biodiversity and climate plans are useful to identify synergies and ensure efficiency. For example, governments may adopt planning principles to safeguard biodiversity, prioritize use of ecosystem-based approaches when possible, and/or undertake integrated spatial planning.
 - Governments should strengthen institutional coordination during the planning and implementation of climate and biodiversity agendas. Governments can achieve this by creating governance structures for NDCs and NBSAPs, promoting data sharing, and setting expectations for cross-referencing relevant targets and indicators.
- **Prioritize nature-based solutions (NBS) within all relevant components of NBSAPs, NDCs, and NAPs.**
 - By setting explicit targets for NBS at a sectoral level, countries can accelerate implementation of NBS for climate mitigation, adaptation, and biodiversity conservation. This is particularly important for sectors with high dependencies and/or impacts on biodiversity such as agriculture, fisheries, infrastructure, energy, and transport.
 - Targets should be considered for all habitat types. Historically, NBS targets in NDCs have focused on agricultural and terrestrial forest interventions, while coastal, marine, grassland, montane, and inland water NBS targets have been less common.
 - Furthermore, targets should advance the development of necessary data and governance systems that enable NBS investment and implementation at a national scale.
- **Utilize area-based conservation targets to deliver on both GBF and climate commitments.**
 - To meet Target 3 (the '30x30' target) under the GBF, while supporting climate objectives, countries should integrate quantified area-based goals, as well as the qualitative elements, into updated national plans. This means disaggregating quantified goals for different biomes (i.e. terrestrial, freshwater, and marine and coastal) and for specific ecosystem types (e.g., rivers, mangroves, tropical forests, etc.). For instance, a healthy and resilient ocean plays a critical role in climate mitigation, being a natural carbon sink.
 - Likewise, area-based targets should be part of climate commitments, as ecosystems under protection offer significant climate benefits, including emission sequestration and storage and improved resilience to climate impacts for

communities, infrastructure, and wildlife. For example, free-flowing rivers are richer in biodiversity and more resilient to climate impacts than highly fragmented ones.

- Commitments should prioritize protection and conservation of under-represented ecosystems in the existing national system of protected and conserved areas, as well as ecosystems that offer carbon sequestration or resilience benefits. Peatlands and coastal wetlands such as mangroves and seagrass are examples of ecosystems that possess both high conservation value and high carbon potential.
- Include measures and actions to improve adaptation and resilience of ecosystems to climate change through protected and conserved areas, including networks and corridors to allow movement of species (terrestrial, inland waters, coastal and marine).
- **Use national biodiversity and climate finance plans to align investment in biodiversity and climate policies and strategies.**
 - With donor and MDB commitments increasingly committing a share of climate finance to nature, countries have an opportunity to channel resources from international and national climate funds to biodiversity action with climate co-benefits.
 - Countries should aim to align national budgets and procurement policies to advance climate-smart, nature-positive financial flows. They should also mobilize nature-positive climate investment from the private sector in advancing key sector transitions, including increasing the use of NBS.
 - National biodiversity finance plans, committed to under Target 19(b) of the GBF, represent an immediate opportunity to apply these recommendations.

The study emphasized the need to integrate climate and biodiversity planning to achieve net-zero, nature-positive sectoral transitions.

- **Food and agriculture.** Mainstream biodiversity and climate change considerations into agriculture sector planning instruments. Incorporate biodiversity into climate resilience and adaptation strategies for agriculture, including regenerative agriculture using indigenous species and biodiversity-friendly techniques. Consider the biodiversity implications of developing alternative fuels.
- **Clean energy transition.** Use NBS to safeguard and enhance the performance of renewable energy. Identify opportunities for land reclamation and restoration while phasing out fossil fuels (e.g. restoring mines, pipelines). TNC data tools such as [naturebase](#), [SiteRight](#), and [Hydropower by Design](#) can support planning and implementation of nature-positive clean energy transitions. While all energy solutions have impacts on biodiversity, special consideration should be given to hydropower impacts on freshwater ecosystems.
- **Other sectors, such as forestry, fisheries, tourism, health, infrastructure, mining, manufacturing and processing, water and sanitation, and finance,** also require sectoral transitions to tackle the climate and biodiversity crises together.

National actions to ensure full, equitable, inclusive, effective and gender-responsive representation and participation in decision-making, and access to justice and information, are key components of the GBF that are not strongly featured in the studied NBSAPs, NDCs or NAPs.

- Future NBSAPs, NAPs, and NDCs need to better integrate indigenous and traditional knowledge for biodiversity management and climate action. No countries analyzed for this study included a specific commitment, or qualification, regarding the importance of equitable governance of protected areas or other effective conservation measures (OECMs).
- By ensuring meaningful participation of all interested groups, including human rights defenders, indigenous peoples, local communities, nature-dependent people and people from diverse ages and social and ethnic groups, and by establishing mechanisms to safeguard vulnerable populations' rights and interests, decision-making processes can become more inclusive and effective in addressing biodiversity and climate challenges.
- Gender, and measures to advance gender equality, are a significant gap in current NBSAPs. Future NBSAPs, NDCs, and NAPs should prioritize alignment with GBF Target 23 on gender. Countries should consider the measures proposed in the UNFCCC and CBD Gender Action Plans as a starting point, but there is also a need for clear policy recommendations and capacity building to support countries to sufficiently address these issues.

Looking ahead

- As countries update their NDCs, NAPs and NBSAPs, they must pioneer new approaches to capitalize on synergies between climate and biodiversity action.
- By adopting the recommendations outlined in this briefing note, governments can foster greater integration, coherence, and effectiveness in their efforts to address the intertwined crises of biodiversity and climate change.
- TNC staff are engaged in NBSAP update and NDC/NAP enhancement processes at some level in 49 countries in all regions. TNC and CSDR aim to support countries to update their NBSAPs and enhance NDCs/NAPs in a coherent and mutually reinforcing manner and aim to provide science, spatial planning and policy analysis to promote coherence and synergistic approaches across the NBSAPs, NAPs, and NDCs.
- At the global level, parties to the CBD and the Paris Agreement should ensure that the indicators adopted for the GBF are built into the indicator set proposed for the GGA, with a view to ensuring coherence in action, reducing reporting burden, and harmonizing monitoring across implementation processes.

Suggested reference: Northrop, Eliza, Ben Milligan, Phil James, Rebekah Mawson, Carolina Hazin, Suzanne Ozment, and Ximena Apestegui. 2023. "Opportunities to Strengthen Links between National Action on Biodiversity and Climate Change." The Nature Conservancy and University of New South Wales Center for Sustainable Development Reform.