

A close-up photograph of a young boy with dark skin and hair, looking intently at a small, bright green frog perched on his index finger. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with green leaves and a bright sky. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

# NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS IN THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (CBD)

ORIENTATING AN EVOLVING CONCEPT  
TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE CBD'S  
OBJECTIVES

November 2021

**About WWF:**

WWF is an independent conservation organization, with over 5 million supporters and a global network active in over 100 countries. WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the Earth's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by conserving the world's biological diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable, and promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.

**Authors:** Manuel Pulgar-Vidal, Vanessa Morales, Manuel Ruiz Muller, Gavin Edwards.

**Contributions from:** Lin Li, Claire Blanchard, Guido Brokenhover, Cristina Eghenter, Kirsty Leong, Pauli Merriman, Daniela Diz, Clement Metivier.

**Editor:** Rosalind Pidcock

**Front cover photo:**

© Greg Armfield / WWF-UK

**Back cover photo:**

© Annie Spratt / Unsplash

**Design:**

[www.cleancanvasstudio.co.uk](http://www.cleancanvasstudio.co.uk)

Copyright © 2021 World Wide Fund For Nature (formerly World Wildlife Fund), Gland, Switzerland. Any reproduction in full or in part must mention the title and credit the above-mentioned publishers as copyright owners.

**WWF International,**

Rue Mauverney 28, 1196 Gland, Switzerland  
Tel. +41 22 364 9111

# CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Overview  | 3  |
| 1. Nature-based solutions: The concept  | 4  |
| 2. The added value of NbS for meeting the CBD's objectives                          | 5  |
| 3. Orientating an evolving concept towards achieving the CBD's objectives           | 6  |
| 4. General Principles for NbS to set operational boundaries                         | 8  |
| 5. Pathways to include NbS into the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework process | 12 |
| Summary   | 14 |
| References  | 15 |

# OVERVIEW

**“Nature-based Solutions” (NbS)** is a concept that has rapidly influenced academic thought, penetrated narratives and become embedded in international and national environmental and development policy processes. NbS comprise a broad set of responses that use the power of nature/biodiversity to solve and address societal challenges. In doing so, NbS also serves to connect development, climate change and biodiversity policy goals.<sup>1</sup>

Over time, NbS have received attention from many quarters, particularly in the context of climate mitigation and adaptation agendas. These include: technical organizations (e.g. IUCN, OECD); scientific bodies (e.g. IPCC, IPBES); business and financial organizations (e.g. World Bank, World Economic Forum - WEF); IUCN, OECD, Civil Society Organizations; philanthropies (e.g. Bezos Earth Fund)<sup>2</sup> and at the country/international political level (e.g. European Union, United Kingdom, Norway and France, among others<sup>3</sup>; and has been prioritized by the UNFCCC and COP26 Presidency. But while NbS have received widespread support within the sphere of climate action, the concept is yet to be fully endorsed by the biodiversity community and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).<sup>4</sup> While the updated Zero Draft of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) did include a direct reference to NbS,<sup>5</sup> the reference was omitted from the First Draft that followed.<sup>6</sup>

This policy paper provides insights and a practical pathway for the role that NbS can play in the biodiversity conservation agenda in general, and in discussions about the Post-2020 GBF in particular. Based on existing conceptual advances and best practices, we propose a set of General Principles for streamlining NbS into the Post-2020 GBF in such a way that they can strengthen the likelihood of achieving the CBD’s objectives and the Post-2020 GBF’s ultimate vision and mission in a way that is coherent with other international processes, including the SDGs.

- 1 Strong and recent high-level calls for better connection and integration of biodiversity and climate change have been made in manifestos and declarations including the Beijing Call for Biodiversity Conservation and Climate Change (2019), the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People (2021) and the UK COP26 Presidency’s Nature Stream (2021), the 2021 G7 Ministers of Environment Communiqué, among others.
- 2 Pérez-Cirera, V., Cornelius, S. and J. Zapata. 2021. Powering Nature: Creating the Conditions to Enable Nature-based Solutions. WWF. Available [here](#)
- 3 Nature-based Solutions have received widespread support within the climate action agenda as evidenced by the call by the UK and France for 30% of the climate action budget dedicated to NbS; or the call for inclusion of NbS in Nationally-Determined Contributions; or prioritization of the concept as part of COP26 of the UNFCCC/Paris Agreement.
- 4 As an example of a respected and high-profile multisectoral and diverse set of stakeholders actively involved in climate change negotiations – NGOs, business organizations, academic institutions, donor agencies, etc. - and supportive of NbS, the “Call to Action for an Equitable, Carbon Neutral, Nature Positive World” (2020) describes the urgent need for a transition towards a nature positive economy and investment in NbS. Available [here](#)
- 5 CBD/POST2020/PREP/2/1. Update of the Zero Draft of the Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. August 17, 2020. Available [here](#)
- 6 CBD/POST2020/PREP/2/1. First draft of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. July 5, 2021. Available [here](#)

# 1. NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS: THE CONCEPT

**Nature-based Solutions are defined as actions to protect, sustainably manage and restore natural or modified ecosystems with a view to addressing societal challenges**, while at the same time providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits.<sup>7</sup> These may include, for example, improving access to water, mitigating climate change, enhancing local agricultural production, reducing health risks from diseases originating in tropical forests and reducing exposure to natural disasters.

The notion of NbS can be traced to the late 2000s, as awareness rose among the conservation community about the critical role played by ecosystems in providing environmental services. It became increasingly recognized that humans could not only be passive beneficiaries of environmental services but could also engage proactively in utilizing and applying biodiversity and nature to address and solve a wider range of global problems beyond the realm of conservation per se (e.g. climate change, food and water insecurity, etc.).<sup>8</sup>

Nature-based Solutions integrate a broad multidisciplinary rationale to visualize development with positive and concrete environmental/biodiversity effects, effectively serving as a tool to prevent negative social, economic, cultural and environmental impacts arising from development and planning strategies. The effective and responsible application of NbS enhances biodiversity governance by strengthening indigenous and local communities' rights to their land and territories, traditional knowledge, culture and other dimensions of their livelihoods.

Clearly, not all interventions in nature qualify as NbS, however. **The three core dimensions of NbS – societal challenges, biodiversity net gain<sup>9</sup> and co-benefits for human well-being - are underpinned by the IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions.<sup>10</sup>** The criteria and indicators within the Standard provide a globally consistent framework for the design and verification of NbS. **Consequently, if an intervention or strategy is not designed to address these elements concurrently, it will fall outside the scope of a NbS approach.**

7 Cohen-Shacham, E., Walters, G., Janzen, C. and S. Maginnis (eds). 2016. Nature-based Solutions to Address Global Societal Challenges. IUCN, Gland. Available [here](#)

8 Cohen-Shacham, E., Walters, G., Janzen, C. and S. Maginnis (eds). Ibid. at 9, p. 3

9 This paper uses the definition of net gain according to Criterion 3 of the IUCN's Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions: "NbS design and implementation must avoid undermining the integrity of the system and instead, proactively seek to enhance the functionality and connectivity of the ecosystem." Available [here](#) (p10)

10 IUCN. 2020. Global Standard for Nature based Solutions. A user-friendly framework for the verification, design and scaling up of NbS. First Edition. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland. Available [here](#)



## 2. THE ADDED VALUE OF NBS FOR MEETING THE CBD'S OBJECTIVES

Based on the biodiversity net gain value, which derives from the NbS definition in Section 1, we could say that NbS can complement the Ecosystem Approach (EA) and the Ecosystem-Based Approach (EbA) in the context of the CBD and the Post-2020 GBF. The strengths of these three elements, individually and in combination, can positively drive biodiversity action and increase the chances of achieving the CBD's objectives.

Article 1 of the CBD establishes that its objectives, to be pursued in accordance with its relevant provisions, are "...the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources, including by appropriate access to genetic resources and by appropriate transfer of relevant technologies, taking into account all rights over those resources and to technologies, and by appropriate funding."

The "Ecosystem Approach" was adopted as the main framework of action for implementation of the CBD as early as 1995.<sup>11</sup> It is a broad strategy that integrates management of land, water and living resources in ways that promote conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way - thereby helping to achieve the three objectives of the CBD. The EA has a set of principles that guide its usage, which can be applied to and depend on the local or regional wider context.<sup>12</sup>

Later, the Ecosystem-Based Approach concept was developed, and under its latest definition, it is a strategy in the CBD, designed to enhance conservation of entire habitats, and biodiversity therein, as part of an overall adaptation strategy to reduce people's vulnerability to climate change.<sup>13</sup> The EbA is considered a set of different "approaches" which may include, for instance, ecosystem-based adaptation, climate adaptation services, forest landscape restoration and natural capital.<sup>14</sup>

While NbS, as a concept, has gained most traction in the climate community, the vision that underpins it spans a variety of issues, of which tackling climate change is only one. Nature-based Solutions place their main emphasis on addressing societal challenges but **biodiversity net gain as a core value of NbS<sup>15</sup> creates a convergence with the interests of the biodiversity conservation community and a connection with ecosystem approach and ecosystem-based approaches through which conservation goals can be met.** Nature-based Solutions also prioritize ecosystem-based or landscape approaches to achieve biodiversity net gain in their practical application at different levels and spatial scales. Similarly, while the EA and EbA focus on the essential structure, processes, functions and interactions between organisms and their environment both recognize that humans, with their cultural diversity, are an integral component of ecosystems.

**NBS CAN COMPLEMENT THE ECOSYSTEM APPROACH (EA) AND THE ECOSYSTEM-BASED APPROACH (EBA) IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CBD AND THE POST-2020 GBF. THE STRENGTHS OF THESE THREE ELEMENTS, INDIVIDUALLY AND IN COMBINATION, CAN POSITIVELY DRIVE BIODIVERSITY ACTION AND INCREASE THE CHANCES OF ACHIEVING THE CBD'S OBJECTIVES**

11 The Ecosystem Approach was endorsed at COP 5 of the CBD. See, UNEP/CBD/COP/5/23. Decision V/6 (Ecosystem Approach). Adopted in May 2000 in Nairobi, Kenya. Available [here](#)

12 COP5, Decision V/6, Ecosystem Approach. Available [here](#)

13 CBD/WG2020/3/3/Add.2 Glossary for the first draft of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. July 16th, 2021. Available [here](#)

14 Cohen-Shacham, E., Walters, G., Janzen, C. and S. Maginnis (eds). Ibid. at 9, p. 23

15 The other core dimensions highlighted by IUCN are: social change, co-benefits, economic feasibility and balance of trade-offs. IUCN. 2020. Global Standard for Nature based Solutions. A user-friendly framework for the verification, design and scaling up of NbS. First Edition. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland. Available [here](#)

The EA, EbA and NbS each have their own objectives and are distinct from one another in their essential features. However, the complementarity of the three approaches is clear. **NbS as a *practical tool* and the EA/EbA as conservation strategies can follow mutually supportive pathways, while remaining distinct concepts and retaining their individual integrity. The former strives to overcome a wide range of social challenges and the latter guides with the vision of “living in harmony with nature” in the context of the Post-2020 GBF.**

Furthermore, the definition of NbS in the CBD Secretariat’s Note overlaps with that of IUCN but includes an important addition: “Nature based solutions are broader than ecosystem-based approaches and include benefits for biodiversity, water quality/quantity, sustainable land management, etc.”<sup>16</sup> With this broader remit comes *added value* in terms of meeting the overall vision and mission of the CBD. For example, responsible implementation of NbS is guided by measurable standards which help minimize the trade-offs between, for instance, climate change and biodiversity conservation goals.<sup>17</sup> Stretching across societal challenges, biodiversity and socio-economic benefits, NbS require an integrated whole-of-government approach to environmental policy and the recognition that initiatives focusing on biodiversity/nature should be considered alongside social and economic policy, not funded and championed solely through environment ministries.

### 3. ORIENTATING AN EVOLVING CONCEPT TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE CBD’S OBJECTIVES

NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS CAN POSITIVELY AND ROBUSTLY CONTRIBUTE TO THE REALIZATION OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY’S OBJECTIVES AND THE GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK’S ULTIMATE 2050 VISION AND MISSION

Nature-based Solutions is an evolving concept and tool, but one which is here to stay. As practical solutions that can have a positive effect on conservation and contribute to the realization of the CBD’s objectives, it makes sense that NbS should be reflected in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework process or related Decision(s). By developing a set of General Principles for NbS and inserting them in the Post-2020 GBF process, tailored specifically to inform interventions focused on achieving biodiversity conservation goals.

But there is a bigger picture. **As the leading body for promoting nature and human well-being and a landmark in international law, the CBD has a role to play in ensuring that the increasingly complex and connected challenges the world faces are met with solutions that are future-looking and fit for purpose.**

<sup>16</sup> A Note by the Executive Secretary of the CBD suggests definitions for “NbS”, “Ecosystem-based Approach” and “Ecosystem Approach”, among other terms used in the draft GBF. See, CBD/SBSTTA/24/INF/11. Annotation for Terms and Concepts Used in the Language of Interim Updated Post 2020 Goals and Targets. June 15, 2020. Available [here](#)

<sup>17</sup> The IUCN Global Standard for NbS provides an initial general conceptual and operational framework for NbS as a way to standardize application, scale up impacts and prevent negative outcomes. See, IUCN (2020) *Ibid*, at 15.

In a context where “build back better” and other powerful trend-setting slogans are being used to stimulate bold measures for post Covid-19 recovery and create a new momentum for the development and environmental movement, NbS could be recognized as a tool to effectively drive a new and ambitious era of biodiversity conservation and recovery.

Indeed, as mentioned, NbS is increasingly being reflected in declarations and manifestos by leading economies, organizations within the development and environmental communities, coalitions of NGOs, the academic sector and philanthropic donors. In July, the G7 leaders committed to increasing finance contributions for NbS through to 2025 and to maximize the synergies of climate and biodiversity finance.<sup>18</sup> The World Economic Forum (WEF) has also embarked on a mission to modify how business is done by endorsing the notion of Nature Positive and NbS and reassessing the role of nature and biodiversity as core to sustainable business and development models.<sup>19</sup>

The coming decade will be decisive for halting biodiversity loss and tackling climate change, which means the window for embedding NbS as a means for achieving both goals simultaneously is narrowing fast. The current momentum represents a unique opportunity for an ambitious Post-2020 GBF<sup>20</sup> to prominently and coherently reflect NbS - and in doing so, kickstart an ambitious and new long-lasting phase in the history of human and social development.

In the past, the separation and specialization of the biodiversity and climate change communities have unnecessarily hampered coordination, consistency and coherency in visions, language, decisions and overall actions pertaining to NbS.<sup>21</sup> Given that nature, through multiple ecosystem-based approaches, serves to reach different social/development goals including those under the SDGs and the Post-2020 GBF itself,<sup>22</sup> we must prevent setting climate goals without fully understanding biodiversity goals and vice versa. By becoming responsive to NbS, the Post-2020 GBF can create a virtuous circle which brings together parallel science and independent entities (e.g. IPCC and IPBES) in ways that enhance the mutual benefits and minimize potential trade-offs.<sup>23</sup>

18 G7 2030 Nature Compact, July 19th 2021. Available [here](#)

19 World Economic Forum. The Future of Nature and Business. New Nature Economy Report II. Switzerland, 2020. Available [here](#)

20 The degree and content of the ambition is still a matter of contention. Some Parties and stakeholders suggest that the Post 2020 GBF should remain a broad, biodiversity centered plan; others suggest the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity should explicitly link biodiversity to equity, human rights, gender, tenure rights, wellbeing, etc.; others feel the Post 2020 GBF should focus on addressing all direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss. Some have argued also that narrowing coverage of the Post 2020 GBF will limit possibilities of achieving the 2050 vision. See, CDB/POST2020/PREP/1/INF/1. Synthesis of Views of Parties and Observers on the Scope and Content of the Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. January 24, 2019. Available [here](#)

21 Deprez, A. et al. describe a process as a result of UNCED (1992) where the CBD, UNFCCC and the Convention to Combat Desertification are connected in spirit and as part of a global impulse to protect the environment but hardly refer to one another in their actual text. They have “drifted apart” and only recently are efforts underway to bring them together through collaboration among Secretariats, coordination in implementation and funding, looking at policy coherence in decisions, etc. The spillover effect of this situation is noticeable in discussions surrounding the Post 2020 GBF and the disconnect with other MEAs and processes. See Deprez, A., Rankovic, A. and Landry, J. Aligning High Climate and Biodiversity Ambitions in 2021 and Beyond: Why? What? How?

Background note for the February 9-10 informal workshop: “Aligning high climate and biodiversity ambitions in 2021 and beyond” IDDRI. Available [her](#)

Specific content in the CBD with regards to NbS would also allow for better alignment with key international processes and communities, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), climate change and desertification communities, among others.

Conversely, **if the Post-2020 GBF misses this opportunity to prove itself as a forward-looking governance body for interventions in nature, the role of establishing the boundaries within which the biodiversity element of NbS operates would fall outside of the CBD.** Increasingly, the CBD might find itself out of step with various international processes and the global momentum towards NbS if it fails to become responsive to this fast-evolving concept. A role for the CBD in reconciling approaches that are different in origin (EA, EbA and NbS) but which tackle common concerns for humanity would ensure the CBD's vision and mission stay relevant for the challenges the world faces now and in the future.

## 4. GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR NBS TO SET OPERATIONAL BOUNDARIES

**Inserting NbS in the Post-2020 GBF coherently is critically important.**

In fact, the Post-2020 GBF also acknowledges that “effective implementation of the framework requires implementation support mechanisms commensurate with the ambition set out in the goals and targets of the framework and with the transformative changes required to reach them.”<sup>24</sup> This means acknowledging and using technical tools and mechanisms (such as NbS) which can adapt and contribute to the CBD objectives, and do so in the context of the scope and reach outlined in this report.

The Zero Draft of the Post-2020 GBF *did* include direct references to NbS,<sup>25</sup> but the manner in which NbS were included (i.e. as targets) left some room for improvement.<sup>26</sup> For example, under Targets 7 and 10, NbS and the EbA were used in *conjunction*,<sup>27</sup> leading to potential confusion about the role and objectives of two very distinct instruments (see explanation in Section 2 above). NbS appeared to be inserted as “add-on” targets in the text without fully reflecting alignment with the CBD nor the Post 2020 GBF vision, mission, tools for implementation and other sections of the Zero Draft.<sup>28</sup>

22 Nature-based Solutions cut across various SDGs including SDG 1 (Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing), and various others. Current targets 7 through 12 in the updated Zero Draft also relate to and emphasize nature's contribution to people (development). Nature-based Solutions can directly enhance human well-being by contributing to realization of policies pertaining to, for example, climate change adaptation and mitigation, food security, small-scale agriculture, natural resources management, etc. whilst at the same time supporting improvements in biodiversity and ecosystem conditions.

23 The different climate change and biodiversity communities can influence policy processes in ways that could create risky trade-offs. See, Deprez, A., et al. *Ibid*, at 24 and discussion on how carbon dioxide removal measures, for example, could have negative impacts on biodiversity or prove highly inefficient. A recent report reveals how California Air Resources Board's methodology for the state's forestry carbon crediting methodology is flawed and that US\$410 million is being overpaid to projects. See, Song L. and Temple, J. The Climate Solution Actually Adding Millions of Tons of CO<sub>2</sub> into the Atmosphere. ProPublica and MIT Technology Review. April 29, 2021. Available [here](#). A similar conclusion was reached in an article analyzing the Cash for Clunkers Program (scrapping of old vehicles for new ones to combat emissions and climate change), which spent US\$3 billion, grossly misplaced incentives and did not address consumer behavior. See, Linn, J. Cash for Clunkers 2.2: Targeting Scrappage Subsidies to Cut Costs. Common Resources, Dec. 22, 2020. Available [here](#)



At the COP15.1 many Parties/Ministers underlined in their statements the importance of NbS and their integration into the Post 2020 GBF, resulting on its mention as a footnote in the Kunming Declaration, as “Ecosystem-based approaches may also be referred to as “Nature based solutions” as per SBSTTA recommendation 23/2, paragraph 4”.<sup>29</sup> Somehow bringing back the concept alongside EbA or indistinctly using them as if they were exactly the same raises a contradiction, as the CBD Glossary for Draft 1 defines Nature based Solutions as a broader concept than Ecosystem based Approaches, acknowledging they are different concepts. Recognizing the above, **if the CBD embraces this opportunity to set the operational boundaries for the biodiversity element of NbS, a set of core General Principles for NbS inserted into the Post-2020 GBF process would be a useful step forward** and would ensure high quality/integrity NbS interventions. General Principles can serve various other functions. They could help to identify potential synergies between issues (i.e. climate change action and biodiversity conservation) and opportunities for complementarity between policy goals and ambitions, as well as stimulate improved coordination between climate change and biodiversity governance structures. In addition, General Principles for NbS could help to recognize and strengthen indigenous rights and those of local communities.

Addressing all such societal concerns is often beyond the scope and realm of biodiversity conservation alone.



- 24 Update of the Zero Draft of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. Note by the Co-Chairs. CBD/POST2020/PREP/2/1. Implementation Support Mechanisms, page 6. Available [here](#)
- 25 CBD/POST2020/PREP/2/1. Update of the Zero Draft of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. Ibid. at 5.
- 26 Co-Chairs at the first Contact Group meeting of CBD SBSTTA 24, under Agenda Item 3 CG #1 on Add.2/Rev.1 expressed concerns that NbS were not clear to all Parties and indicated that it may be more suitable to further enhance references to the EbA instead (May 5, 2021).
- 27 Target 7 of the Zero Draft of the Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework: By 2030, increase contributions to climate change mitigation, adaptation and disaster risk reduction from nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based approaches, ensuring resilience and minimizing any negative impacts on biodiversity. Target 10: By 2030, ensure that, nature-based solutions and ecosystem approach contribute to regulation of air quality, hazards and extreme events and quality and quantity of water for at least [XXX million] peoples.
- 28 Deprez et al. discuss how, often, integration, coordination and coherency in international processes is limited to adding-on or lumping concepts, references., issues, etc. Rather than simply linking, they call for aligning broader ambitions. Deprez, A, et al. Ibid, at 24
- 29 Kunming Declaration. Declaration from the High-Level Segment of the UN Biodiversity Conference 2020 (Part 1) under the theme: “Ecological Civilization: Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth”. Footnote, page 4. Available [here](#)

The following 11 General Principles have been developed taking into account similar but distinct sets of principles, primarily the Ecosystem Approach Guidelines, the We Stand Together with Nature<sup>30</sup> manifesto, the IUCN NbS Global Standards and the NbS Guidelines from Oxford University.

# 1

**Express measurable biodiversity benefits.** Nature-based Solutions, seen in the context of broader societal problems and challenges, reflect a visible and measurable biodiversity benefit, associated, for example, with a net gain in the biodiversity related result.

# 2

**Alignment and coherence.** Nature-based Solutions, in all cases, ensure sustainability and alignment with CBD objectives, as well as with policy goals, objectives and targets of other relevant international agreements.

# 3

**Preventive nature.** Nature-based Solutions are a tool to prevent the potential of negative social, economic, cultural and environmental impacts in development and planning strategies. They integrate a broader multidisciplinary rationale to visualize development with positive and concrete environmental/biodiversity effects, including net gains.

# 4

**Measurable standards.** Nature-based Solutions respond to measurable standards which, as far as possible, help minimize the trade-offs between, for instance, climate change and biodiversity conservation goals, including through best practices by implementing actors.<sup>31</sup>

# 5

**Coherence with EA & EbA.** Nature-based Solutions prioritize ecosystem-based or landscape approaches to achieve biodiversity net gain values in their practical application at different levels and spatial scales.

# 6

**Informed by science.** Nature-based Solutions reflect best available science and evidence, including integration of relevant traditional knowledge of indigenous and local communities, where appropriate, into planning and implementation phases.

# 7

**Recognition of and respect for indigenous rights.** The application of NbS enhances biodiversity governance by strengthening indigenous and local communities' rights to their land and territories, traditional knowledge, culture, and other dimensions of their livelihoods.

# 8

**Incentivize participation and transparency.** Nature-based solutions are grounded in informed, inclusive participation of a broad set of social actors; transparent decision-making processes; adaptive features to improve and enhance long term sustainability; and monitoring and accountability along implementation stages.

# 9

**Social and ecological responsibility.** Nature-based Solutions reflect and respect the interests and expectations of social actors, indigenous and local communities in particular, and are driven by rigorous ecological principles.

# 10

**Local benefits and healthy ecosystems.** Nature-based Solutions deliver measurable local benefits for communities and provide for maintenance and recuperation of healthy and resilient ecosystems.

# 11

**Contribute to implementation.** Nature Based Solutions must positively and measurably contribute to the implementation of the agreed 2030 Global Biodiversity Framework.

30 "We Stand Together with Nature" supports the four Together With Nature Principles for nature-based solutions to responsibly tackle the climate crisis, restore biodiversity, and benefit planetary health and human wellbeing. Available [here](#)

31 WWF-UK. Systemic Nature-based Solutions. A Shift to Landscape Level Restoration and Sustainable Agriculture. Policy Brief, March 2021.

**These General Principles will add a layer of safeguards, paving the way for responsible implementation of high quality/integrity NbS as a tool, but also extending beyond NbS to other tools that intervene nature,** as well as to other conventions. In addition, these principles can be complemented by specific language to mitigate concerns regarding the potential for NbS to inadvertently lead to “greenwashing”, delaying or distracting from decarbonization and ineffective or irresponsible off-setting. With respect to the latter, some NbS could in very limited circumstances provide a climate offsetting opportunity, but appropriate standards for carbon offsetting must be adhered to and NbS must never be permitted to undermine decarbonization efforts or unnecessarily prolong the use of fossil fuels.

## **5. PATHWAYS TO INCLUDE NBS INTO THE POST-2020 GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK PROCESS**

Just as the content of the principles is critical in terms of coherently reflecting NbS in the CBD, so is the placement. Below are four potential pathways for inclusion of the above General Principles for NbS in the Post-2020 GBF process:

### **OPTION 1**

#### **A REFERENCE TO NBS IN A COP DECISION**

The NbS General Principles could be part of a specific and independent COP Decision that agrees on a definition and includes the General Principles as a guiding reference for future uses of the concept and applications of NbS – as a tool - in the biodiversity context.

### **OPTION 2**

#### **A REFERENCE TO NBS IN THE SPECIFIC RELEVANT DECISION APPROVING THE POST-2020 GBF**

The COP will approve and adopt the Post 2020 GBF through a Decision. Nature-based Solutions could be explicitly part of this Decision through the proposed General Principles. If this was the case, the text of the Post-2020 GBF would probably also require coherent inclusion of the NbS concept.

### OPTION 3

## INSERTING NBS IN A PREAMBLE OR “RATIONALE” SECTION IN THE POST-2020 GBF

Neither the Zero nor First Drafts of the Post-2020 GBF included a preambular or a rationale section – as did the Key Elements of the Strategic Plan 2011-2020, including the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. However, nothing precludes these initial and introductory sections being added as part of the next set of refinements. This type of section/space could include the NbS General Principles to inform and inspire overall implementation of the GBF with regards to NbS in particular.

### OPTION 4

## INSERTING NBS UNDER ENABLING CONDITIONS SECTIONS OF THE POST-2020 GBF

The Post-2020 GBF indicates that appropriate consideration of a set of enabling conditions will facilitate the implementation of the GBF and that additionally, effective action on these enabling conditions will contribute to the attainment of other societal objectives. This may be the appropriate section to reference NbS or the General Principles as one of the prominent tools available to address conservation coherently with other societal objectives - which connects with the notion of “societal challenges” for which NbS were specifically designed.

Further to the options laid out above, if as part of the political process, Parties to the CBD consider that Nature Based Solutions concept should be integrated into a GBF target, then we suggest it could be included in target 8 of the draft 1 of the GBF and reflected in a way that makes clear:

1. The difference and interrelation between the concepts of Ecosystem-based Approaches and NbS, consistently with the Kunming Declaration and SBBSTA recommendation 23/2 para 4.
2. The need to ensure that NbS respect specific safeguards, ensuring they are nature-positive and respect and promote IPLC rights.

If Parties are unable to agree to include NbS in the Post 2020 GBF at CoP 15, then a process to further develop the concept in the CBD process must be initiated, starting at COP15 and finalizing at COP16 (two years after) with a clear decision and process forward. **But the one thing that is critically important is that the CBD should not miss the opportunity to have a clear and strategic role, as nature’s governance body, to shape the NbS unstoppable process.**



# SUMMARY

The concept of Nature based Solutions (NbS) has gained traction within some countries, the private sector and a wide range of stakeholders, including finance, NGOs and academia, and is here to stay. While NbS are not primarily targeted towards conservation, they carry significant mutual benefits for development, climate action and biodiversity conservation at the level of institutions, policy goals, agendas, projects and in situ interventions and finance, including alignment with other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs). Although the concepts are distinct in terms of origin and primary focus, it's clear that Ecosystem Approaches, Ecosystem based Approaches and Nature based Solutions are highly complementary in terms of having a coherent strategy for responding to the challenges the world faces and the tools to do so responsibly, sustainably and equitably.


As the leading governance body for biodiversity, there are multiple benefits to the CBD responding to the global momentum towards NbS. By seizing the “moment” presented by the Post-2020 GBF to incorporate a set of principles to guide the operation of NbS with respect to biodiversity, this not only keeps the CBD relevant and forward-looking as a governance body but also, crucially, keeps the CBD at the table in terms of how the perception and real-world utilisation of NbS evolves.

With time running out towards COP 15 in Kunming, China, it is critical to undertake efforts to build and create consensus that this is an unmissable opportunity. This consensus must be built based on the will of the Parties to move this concept/tool forward, recognising the convergence trend between the climate and nature agendas and the efforts of other actors, such as civil society organizations, sub-national governments, businesses and youth, that could help catalyse action on nature, unleashing public and private resources in pursuit of ambitious high quality, high integrity NbS that benefits nature, climate and people.

Given the critical urgency of our times, the world is marked by strong commitments to accelerate and drive a robust and transformative environmental and sustainable development agenda, which takes advantage of a renewed animus for long-lasting change among wide sectors of society. The window for meaningful action is closing. The Post-2020 GBF must respond to an expectant world.

# REFERENCES

- CBD/SBSTTA/24/INF/11. Annotation for Terms and Concepts Used in the Language of Interim Updated Post 2020 Goals and Targets. June 15, 2020. Available at <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/46bf/8fcc/4fc82767c058517caa96892d/sbstta-24-inf-11-en.pdf>
- CBD/POST2020/PREP/2/1. Update of the Zero Draft of the Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. August 17, 2020. Available at <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/3064/749a/0f65ac7f9def86707f4eaefa/post2020-prep-02-01-en.pdf>
- CDB/POST2020/PREP/1/INF/1. Synthesis of Views of Parties and Observers on the Scope and Content of the Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. January 24, 2019. Available at <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/de9c/8c12/7c0cb88a47f9084e5d0b82eb/post2020-prep-01-inf-01-en.pdf>
- CBD/SBSTTA/24/3/Add.2. Post 2020 Biodiversity Framework: Scientific and Technical Information to Support the Review of the Updated Goals and Targets and Related Indicators and Baselines. February 5, 2021. Available at <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/a00b/c37b/d8e83f95a469e837ff681d44/sbstta-24-03-add2-en.pdf>
- Cohen-Sachan, E., Walters, G., Janzen, C. and Maginnis, S. (eds.) (2016) Nature-based Solutions to Address Global Societal Challenges. IUCN, Gland. Available at <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2016-036.pdf>
- Deprez, A., Rankovic, A. and Landry, J. Aligning High Climate and Biodiversity Ambitions in 2021 and Beyond: Why? What? How? Background note for the February 9-10 informal workshop: "Aligning high climate and biodiversity ambitions in 2021 and beyond" IDDRI. Available at <https://4post2020bd.net/workshop-aligning-high-climate-and-biodiversity-ambitions-in-2021-and-beyond/>
- IUCN (2020), IUCN Global Standard for Nature based Solutions. A user-friendly framework for the verification, design and scaling up of NbS. First Edition. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland. See <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2020-020-En.pdf>
- Linn, J. Cash for Clunkers 2.2: Targeting Scrappage Subsidies to Cut Costs. Common Resources, Dec. 22, 2020. Available at <https://www.resources.org/common-resources/cash-clunkers-20-targeting-scrappage-subsidies-cut-costs/>
- Oxford University. Getting the Message Right about Nature Based Solutions, February 1, 2021. See <https://www.naturebasedsolutionsinitiative.org/news/new-paper-getting-the-message-right-on-nature-based-solutions/>
- Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2004) The Ecosystem Approach, (CBD Guidelines) Montreal: Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Available at <https://www.cbd.int/doc/publications/ea-text-en.pdf>
- Song L. and Temple, J. The Climate Solution Actually Adding Millions of Tons of CO2 into the Atmosphere. ProPublica and MIT Technology Review. April 29, 2021. Available at <https://www.propublica.org/article/the-climate-solution-actually-adding-millions-of-tons-of-co2-into-the-atmosphere>
- The World Bank (2008) Biodiversity, Climate Change and Adaptation: Nature-based Solutions from the World Bank Portfolio. Available at <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/7785>
- UNEP/CBD/COP/5/23. Decision V/6 (Ecosystem Approach). Adopted in May 2000 in Nairobi, Kenya. Available at <https://www.cbd.int/decision/cop/?id=7148>
- World Economic Forum. The Future of Nature and Business. New Nature Economy Report II. Switzerland, 2020. Available at <https://www.weforum.org/reports/new-nature-economy-report-ii-the-future-of-nature-and-business>
- WWF-UK. Systemic Nature-based Solutions. A Shift to Landscape Level Restoration and Sustainable Agriculture. Policy Brief, March 2021.
- Kunming Declaration. Declaration from the High-Level Segment of the UN Biodiversity Conference 2020 (Part 1) under the theme: "Ecological Civilization: Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth". Footnote, page 4. See: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/df35/4b94/5e86e1ee09bc8c7d4b35aaf0/kunmingdeclaration-en.pdf>



**OUR MISSION IS TO STOP THE  
DEGRADATION OF THE PLANET'S  
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND  
TO BUILD A FUTURE IN WHICH  
HUMANS LIVE IN HARMONY  
WITH NATURE.**



Working to sustain the natural world for the benefit of people and wildlife.

together possible™ panda.org

© 2020

© 1986 Panda symbol WWF – World Wide Fund for Nature (Formerly World Wildlife Fund)  
® “WWF” is a WWF Registered Trademark. WWF, Avenue du Mont-Bland, 1196 Gland, Switzerland. Tel. +41 22 364 9111. Fax. +41 22 364 0332.

For contact details and further information, please visit our international website at [www.panda.org](http://www.panda.org)