

# BirdLife International advocacy priorities for species elements of the First Draft of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

We must adopt clear species outcomes and actions to ensure we are nature-positive by 2030. The inclusion of commitments on species is critical, given they are fundamental units of biodiversity, the building blocks of ecosystems, are relatively well monitored and have substantial public resonance. We welcome and recognise the importance of the species component of Goal A and the inclusion of Target 4 on species recovery and have some specific recommendations for their improvement.

## Goal A on conservation of ecosystems, species and genetic diversity

The wording of Goal A in the First Draft of the Global Biodiversity Framework is as follows (with red font indicating the problematic components discussed below):

### Current text

#### Goal A.

The integrity of all ecosystems is enhanced, with an increase of at least 15 per cent in the area, connectivity and integrity of natural ecosystems, supporting healthy and resilient populations of all species, the rate of extinctions has been reduced at least tenfold, and the risk of species extinctions across all taxonomic and functional groups, is **halved**, and genetic diversity of wild and domesticated species is safeguarded, with at least 90 per cent of genetic diversity within all species maintained.

#### 2030 Milestones

- Milestone A.1 Net gain in the area, connectivity and integrity of natural systems of at least 5 per cent.
- Milestone A.2 The increase in the extinction rate is **halted or reversed**, and the extinction risk is **reduced by at least 10 per cent**, with a decrease in the proportion of species that are threatened, and the abundance **and distribution of populations** of species is **enhanced or at least maintained**.
- Milestone A.3 Genetic diversity of wild and domesticated species is safeguarded, with an increase in the proportion of species that have at least 90 per cent of their genetic diversity maintained.”

#### 1. Increase ambition in reducing extinction risk

*Goal text:* the current wording in the 2050 Goal stating that “the risk of species extinctions across all taxonomic and functional groups is halved” implies that in 2050 there will still be substantial risk of extinctions, for example if the current number of threatened species was halved, 18,700 species would still be threatened, or the current 37,400 threatened species would have only moved halfway towards Least Concern status. Such substantial levels of extinction risk are inconsistent with the 2050 Vision of a world living in harmony with nature. We therefore recommend revising this wording to “the risk of species extinctions across all taxonomic and functional **groups is eliminated**”. Note that this refers to known threatened

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species, and human-induced extinction risk. With these clarifications, evidence suggests that eliminating such extinction risk (as measured using the IUCN Red List) by 2050 is feasible, with transformative change.

*Milestone A.2 text:* the current wording in the 2030 Milestone stating that “the extinction risk is reduced by at least 10 per cent” is insufficient in order to eliminate extinction risk by 2050 (see above, and Figure 1). We therefore recommend revising this wording to “the extinction risk is reduced by at least **20 per cent**”

## **2. Halt human-driven extinctions of known threatened species**

*Milestone A.2 text.* The current wording in the 2030 Milestone stating that “the increase in the extinction rate is halted or reversed” is insufficiently ambitious given that extinctions are irreversible. Immediate action is therefore required to prevent any further human-induced extinctions of known threatened species. This will be necessary to achieve the 2050 goal of a reducing the rate of all extinctions all species at least tenfold, given that some extinctions may result from natural events (e.g. volcanic eruptions). We therefore recommend revising this wording to “**human-driven extinctions of known threatened species are halted**”. We note that Parties already committed to this through Aichi Target 12, and [recent evidence](#) demonstrates that preventing the extinction of threatened species is feasible. Extinctions have considerable public resonance, and ‘halting human-driven extinctions’ is also much easier to understand and communicate than ‘reversing the increase in rate’. Finally, the wording in the first draft would require assessing the current extinction rate (i.e. over a recent baseline period yet to be defined) with sufficient precision that we could detect by 2030 if the rate has been stabilised or reduced. Given the challenges in quantifying recent extinction rates precisely, this would be extremely difficult.

## **3. Simplify and increase ambition to restore the abundance of species**

*Milestone A.2 text.* The current wording in the 2030 Milestone stating that “the abundance and distribution of populations of species is enhanced or at least maintained” is insufficiently ambitious in order to achieve “healthy and resilient populations of all species” by 2050 as called for in the Goal. Instead, average population abundance of species must increase by at least 20% by 2030 in order to restore baseline levels by 2050, as shown in Figure 2 below. “Enhanced” should be removed because it is too vague. “Distribution” should be removed because distributions can increase even if species populations are decreasing. “Populations of” should be removed because it distracts from a focus on the overall abundance of each species, noting that some populations may increase while others decrease- it is the overall trend that is important. We therefore recommend the revised wording “**the average population abundance of species is increased by at least 20 per cent**”.

Additional lower priority recommendations: The clause in the Goal on safeguarding genetic diversity is redundant given the following clause on maintaining 90% of genetic diversity. The clause in milestone A.2 on decreasing the proportion of species that are threatened is somewhat redundant given the preceding clause on reducing extinction risk. The clause in the Goal on “supporting healthy and resilient populations of all species” could be made more specific by stating “recovery of the average population abundance of species to 1970s levels”.

In summary, we propose the following revised text for Goal A (with bold font indicating revised wording):

### **Recommended Text**

#### **Goal A.**

The integrity of all ecosystems is enhanced, with an increase of at least 15 per cent in the area, connectivity and integrity of natural ecosystems, supporting healthy and resilient populations of all species, **human-driven extinctions of known threatened species are halted**, and the risk of species extinctions across all taxonomic and functional groups is **eliminated**, and genetic diversity of wild and domesticated species is safeguarded, with at least 90 per cent of genetic diversity within all species maintained.

#### **2030 Milestones**

(A.1) Net gain in the area, connectivity and integrity of natural **ecosystems** of at least 5 per cent.

(A.2) **Human-driven extinctions of known threatened species are halted**, extinction risk is reduced by at least **20 per cent**, with a decrease in the proportion of species that are threatened, and the **average population abundance of species is increased by at least 20 per cent**.

(A.3) Genetic diversity of wild and domesticated species is safeguarded, with an increase in the proportion of species that have at least 90 per cent of their genetic diversity maintained.

### **Indicators for Goal A**

It is critical to add a Headline indicator "Trends in population abundance" in order to measure progress towards Milestone A2, and as a complement to measuring trends in extinction risk through Headline indicator A.0.3 Red List Index.

Population abundance and extinction risk are two distinct and complementary dimensions of the species component of biodiversity. We note that the Living Planet Index (the best-known indicator of population abundance), which was proposed as a Headline indicator in previous drafts of the monitoring framework, has now been replaced by Proposed Headline indicator "A.0.4 The proportion of populations within species with a genetically effective population size > 500". Although the latter is described as "near ready", few (and highly biased) data are available to report on this metric at present. By contrast, the Living Planet Index already contains data on nearly 28,000 populations of nearly 5,000 species spanning five decades, has established methods for addressing potential bias. Additional population abundance metrics such as the Wild Bird Index are based on standardised and systematic monitoring schemes that are designed to address potential biases and deliver representative metrics. While an additional indicator on genetic diversity is desirable, this should not be at the expense of dropping an existing, well-established and informative indicator of population abundance.

**We therefore recommend adding a Headline indicator "Trends in population abundance".**

## Target 4 on species conservation actions

The wording of Target 4 in the First Draft of the Global Biodiversity Framework is as follows (with red font indicating the problematic components discussed below):

### Current text

#### Target 4.

“Ensure active management actions to enable the recovery and conservation of species and the genetic diversity of wild **and domesticated** species, including through ex situ conservation, and **effectively manage human-wildlife interactions to avoid or reduce human-wildlife conflict.**”

#### 1. Focus on wild species.

The addition of domesticated species to this target is a worrying distraction from the urgent actions needed to conserve wild species. We recommend that conserving the genetic diversity of domesticated species is covered under Target 10 on sustainable agriculture, and hence that the words “and domesticated” are deleted here.

#### 2. Focus on threatened species

The purpose of this target is to promote the species-specific recovery actions needed to prevent extinctions, improve the conservation status and recover the abundance of threatened species for which mitigating threats (the focus of other targets) will be insufficient to achieve this. Recovery and conservation of *non-threatened* species will typically be achieved not through “active management actions” but through reducing threats (targets 5-8), transitioning to more sustainable production systems (target 10), and conserving and restoring natural habitats (targets 1-2) and important sites for biodiversity (target 3). We therefore propose the insertion of the word “threatened”.

#### 3. Focus on species conservation

The issue of human-wildlife conflict is best dealt with elsewhere, such as under Target 9 (which is about the benefits to people from wild species). It is unrelated to species conservation, which is the focus of Target 4.

We therefore recommend the text is revised as follows:

#### Recommended Text

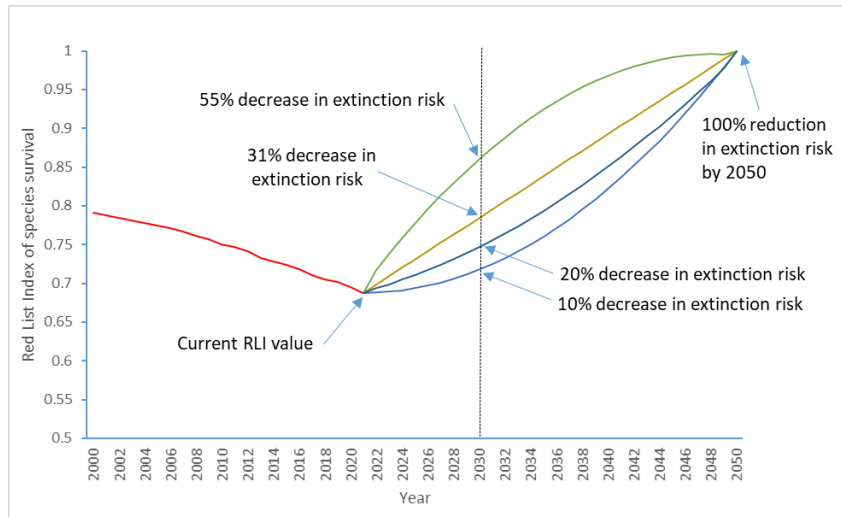
“Ensure active management actions to enable the recovery and conservation of **threatened wild** species **and their** genetic diversity, including through ex situ conservation.”

#### Indicators for Target 4

Neither of the proposed Headline indicators (on human-wildlife conflict and plant genetic resources for food and agriculture) address the primary focus of the target (active management actions to ensure the recovery of species).

We therefore propose the addition of (or replacement with) a Headline indicator “Proportion of species requiring intensive recovery actions to avoid extinction that are under active recovery management”.

**Figure 1.** Recent trends in the Red List Index (red line, showing recent declines of 4-5% per decade), and potential trajectories towards zero extinction risk by 2050, including linear trends (yellow line), a concave trend curve (green line) and convex trend curves (dark and light blue lines). Dotted line indicates the 2030 timeframe for Target 4 in the draft post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. A reduction in extinction risk of 20% by 2030 is plausible given recent trends and given time-lags in species recovery, while enabling 100% reduction by 2050 to be achievable.



**Figure 2.** Recent trends, proposed 2030 milestone and projected trends required to meet proposed 2050 levels for the Living Planet Index.

