



Marine and coastal biodiversity conservation in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework

Covering 71% of the globe, the ocean is our life support system. The post-2020 global biodiversity framework must therefore secure the healthy functioning of the marine environment – which includes the contiguous coastal areas - to retain the intrinsic as well as tangible values and benefits of marine biodiversity for future generations.

SUMMARY

- The conservation status of marine and coastal biodiversity is deteriorating, with a recent global analysis of threats to seabirds led by BirdLifeⁱ mirroring those reported in the IPBES global assessment.
- Over-exploitation of marine resources (e.g. by-catch in fisheries, overfishing, harvesting), climate change (which is causing high levels of ocean acidification, deoxygenation and warming), invasive alien species, changes in the seascape (e.g. offshore wind farms), and pollution (including from oil, marine debris including plastic, artificial light, etc.) are major drivers of loss of marine biodiversity.
- Connectivity should be maintained within the marine environment and between the marine and the terrestrial and freshwater environments. International cooperation and a coherent network of marine protected areas are fundamental building blocks for connectivityⁱⁱ.
- Targets should aim at protecting, restoring and building the resilience of marine ecosystems and addressing all mentioned drivers of biodiversity loss. Targets should be ambitious, but realisticⁱⁱⁱ.
- The decreasing abundance of marine biodiversity and the consequent negative implications for the functioning of marine ecosystems is not so much attributed to the weaknesses of the current Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, but to its limited implementation, in particular the maintenance of the socio-economic mechanisms and coherence of international policies that allow biodiversity to thrive in conjunction with the sustainable use of resources.

This paper focuses on specific marine outcome-oriented targets of the framework. Elements related to enabling conditions and means of implementation, planning and accountability modalities, mechanisms and tools (monitoring, reporting and review) and cross-cutting approaches and issues are addressed in other, dedicated BirdLife position papers, available at www.birdlife.org/post2020.

BirdLife International is the world's largest nature conservation partnership, with 115 partners. Through our unique local-to-global approach, we deliver high impact and long term conservation for the benefit of nature and people.

For more information, see www.birdlife.org/post2020 or contact:

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE POST 2020 FRAMEWORK

In order to avoid the continued deterioration of marine life and the loss of seabirds and other marine species and habitats, BirdLife believes that the following **principles and provisions** should be reflected in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework:

- Elements of the new framework are **equally relevant to marine and coastal as other ecosystems**.
- The framework should be **streamlined, with SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Results-based, and Time-bound) targets and accompanying indicators**. The framework should not be a long list of targets with conservation aims for each type of ecosystem.
- When appropriate, targets should have **specific indicators for coastal and marine ecosystems** to enable countries to better track the health of the marine environment.
- The new framework should be guided by the **ecosystem-based management** approach to conservation and the **precautionary principle**. Activities developed under **national jurisdiction** should not negatively affect biodiversity beyond national boundaries, including the **High Seas**.
- **Connectivity and international cooperation** is critical to promote the persistence of populations of marine migratory species and other mobile species, alongside a wide variety of ecological functions^{iv}.
- The post-2020 framework should inform updates of the targets under **Sustainable Development Goal 14** – Life below water (particularly those with a deadline of 2020).

BirdLife would like to see ambitious but realistic commitments by 2030 on the following proposed target **themes and elements**:

- Minimising the incidental catch (or **by-catch**) of non-fish species in fisheries operations;
- Minimising **waste and catch** of non-target fish species and impacts on associated or dependent species;
- Avoiding **overfishing** and maintaining or restoring marine biological resources, including fish stocks, at levels capable of avoiding adverse effects on the natural structure and function of ecosystems;
- Halting marine wildlife population declines caused by **illegal and unsustainable harvesting**;
- Halting overall species' **population declines** by 2030, prevent human-driven **extinctions** of known threatened species, and improve the **status** of 30% of known threatened species by 2030^v;
- Controlling or eradicating priority **invasive alien species** on all globally important islands^{vi};
- Documenting, retaining and restoring the value of all sites of significance for biodiversity, including key biodiversity areas, through **protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures** covering at least 30% of marine environments^{vii}. BirdLife adheres to IUCN's Global Conservation Standards of MPAs^{viii}, and therefore supports that a MPA target applies to different MPA categories on a continuum from fully protected areas with no take, through to multiple use areas;
- Bringing to zero the disposal of land and sea-sourced **pollutants** on to the marine environment [particularly oil and debris, including ghost nets and plastics];
- Promoting **nature-based solutions** to climate change that integrate and support biodiversity, prioritising conservation and restoration of natural ecosystems, in order to build a healthy, productive and resilient ocean^{ix};
- **Restoring** fragile marine ecosystems as well as habitats and other ecologically sensitive areas.

ⁱ Dias, M.P., et al. (2019). Threats to seabirds: A global assessment. *Biological Conservation*. Vol. 237:525-537

ⁱⁱ For more details, see BirdLife's position paper on connectivity and international cooperation in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

ⁱⁱⁱ For more discussion on targets and the wider structure of the framework, see BirdLife's separate position papers on the key elements needed and implementation for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework (www.birdlife.org/post2020).

^{iv} For more details, see BirdLife's position paper on connectivity and international cooperation in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework (www.birdlife.org/post2020).

^v For full details, please refer to BirdLife's position on a species-focused target for the post-2020 framework (www.birdlife.org/post2020).

^{vi} Holmes, N.D, et al, 2019. Globally important islands where eradicate on invasive mammals will benefit highly threatened vertebrates. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0212128>

^{vii} For full details, please refer to BirdLife's position on a site conservation target for the post-2020 framework (www.birdlife.org/post2020).

^{viii} https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/content/documents/applying_mpa_global_standards_final_version_050418.pdf

^{ix} Please refer to BirdLife's position on nature-based solutions for the 2020 nature, climate and development agendas (www.birdlife.org/post2020).