

## Nature-based solutions for the post-2020 nature, climate and sustainable developments agendas

**Climate change and biodiversity loss are the most important – and interdependent - human-induced environmental challenges that society faces today, threatening people’s lives and wellbeing. Nature-based solutions are key to tackling both these challenges and therefore must be integrated within the post-2020 biodiversity, climate and sustainable development agendas. Here we summarise the key messages and propose ways that this can be done<sup>1</sup>.**

### SUMMARY

- **Climate change is an existential threat to biodiversity**, but nature can also help society address climate change; **nature-climate linkages** must be explicitly addressed in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Sustainable Development Goals.
- **Urgent action is critical**, not only to address the climate and biodiversity emergencies, but also to ensure restoration is still possible. As the climate warms and ecosystem functionality decreases, the possibility of successful restoration diminishes.
- **Nature-based solutions (NbS) are key to meeting the UNFCCC’s Paris Agreement** goals of mitigating and adapting to climate change; they can provide over 30% of the climate mitigation action needed by 2030 to prevent global temperature rise above 1.5°C, above which the IPCC warns we would see damaging and irreversible impacts to all life on earth<sup>2</sup>.
- However, the **current Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) committed by Parties to the Paris Agreement are vastly inadequate**, putting us on course for a 2.8°C rise if implemented fully, or a 3.5°C rise based on current policies, with **limited inclusion of NbS**.
- **Biodiversity is fundamental to the delivery of NbS** for effective climate action. **Intact, biodiverse ecosystems**, such as forests, wetlands, grasslands and oceans, are particularly efficient and cost-effective NbS, as they sequester and store significantly more carbon when compared to monoculture tree plantations, agriculture and grazed lands, in addition to conserving biodiversity and providing a range of other ecosystem services. They are also more resilient, functional and able to adapt to a warming climate.
- NbS are not a substitute for an urgent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and a nature-sensitive renewable energy transition, but an important **part of an overall approach to effective and timely climate action**.
- NbS that protect and restore ecosystem integrity are not only **economical, effective and straightforward to implement**, but address both the climate and biodiversity emergencies simultaneously.
- To achieve biodiversity, climate and sustainable development objectives, **a specific focus on appropriate NbS in the post-2020 framework and climate action agenda is required**.

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](http://www.birdlife.org/post2020) or contact:

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## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE POST-2020 FRAMEWORK

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In order to avert the worst impacts of the climate and biodiversity emergencies, BirdLife believes that the following **elements** should be reflected within the post-2020 biodiversity framework:

- **Measurable milestones, SMART<sup>3</sup> targets and indicators, together with implementation strategies**, are needed to assist Parties to implement and report against clearly defined goals.
- NbS, that prioritise ecological protection and restoration, need to be planned and implemented at **landscape scale**, using an ecosystem approach. This should include cumulative impact assessment and land use planning at ecologically relevant scales and link to other post-2020 targets.
- Very often, natural, carbon-rich, high integrity and intact ecosystems, such as forests, grasslands, peatlands, mangroves and other wetlands, are under significant pressure by humans; they need to be **valued, protected, buffered and connected** by ecological corridors provided through restoration and sustainable agriculture and land/sea management.
- **NbS actions in order of priority** include: (1) protect and conserve remaining carbon- and biodiversity-rich intact ecosystems; (2) connect and buffer fragmented carbon- and biodiversity-rich sites; (3) enable degraded natural ecosystems to regrow naturally; (4) actively restore degraded ecosystems with a view to increasing biodiversity and ecosystem resilience; and (5) sustainably manage non-protected ecosystems.
- **Joined-up policies and action** at all levels on climate and biodiversity are essential. The post-2020 global framework should commit Parties to incorporate NbS that protect and restore biodiversity and ecosystem integrity into both National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to meet the Paris Agreement<sup>4</sup>.
- NbS should be **mainstreamed across sectors**, with government policies, investments and development plans framed to be both climate and biodiversity-positive, with cross-sectoral activities, that address more than one area across nature, climate and development, favoured.

BirdLife would like to see **ambitious but realistic commitments**, and clear **strategies to ensure their implementation**, by 2030 in terms of specific **NbS-related targets** including<sup>5</sup>:

- Relating to a **climate mitigation target**: A global target could be for **NbS to deliver at least 30% of the global climate mitigation needed by 2030**, by the following process: (1) review current NDCs and proportion of carbon emissions reductions from NbS; (2) map nature and carbon at national scale<sup>6</sup>; (3) estimate the potential for increased ambition through enhanced NbS which address the elements listed above; (4) use these maps to underpin spatial planning to identify, locate and **implement enhanced, nationally-appropriate NbS to deliver the global target**.
- Relating to an **area-based target**: Coherent targets are needed which support the wider uptake of NbS and integration into NDCs, whether through carbon accounting or area-based conservation measures (for protected and conserved areas, as well as habitat retention and restoration). These should consider the type and/or percentage area needed to achieve climate action and biodiversity conservation globally and given the national context, and should measure outcomes in terms of carbon, ecosystem-based adaptation and biodiversity, as appropriate.
- Relating to a **mainstreaming/renewable energy** target(s): Effective climate action requires a rapid transition to renewable energy; as for any other infrastructure, such development must, wherever possible, not negatively impact NbS as well as wider biodiversity, and targets, policies and implementation strategies must be coordinated at all scales and across all sectors.
- Relating to a **species**-based target(s): There is a need for monitoring and further studies, including modelling, to understand the impacts of climate change on biodiversity, and how this relates to NbS and livelihoods, particularly in developing countries. Critically, NbS can enhance species' resilience to climate change (e.g. when employed at ecologically-relevant scale to ensure inclusion of potential climate gradients), and thus contribute to a wider species conservation target.

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<sup>1</sup> Please see our separate position papers on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework at [www.birdlife.org/post2020](http://www.birdlife.org/post2020)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

<sup>3</sup> Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Realistic & Time-bound, to which we add Unambiguous & Scalable: Green et al. 2019 <https://doi.org/10.1111/cobi.13322>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/srcl/>

<sup>5</sup> For more details, see BirdLife's separate position papers on species and site-based conservation targets for the post-2020 framework and renewable energy development for the post-2020 nature, climate and sustainable development agendas

<sup>6</sup> e.g. The RSPB (BirdLife in the UK) nature-carbon map: <https://rspb.maps.arcgis.com/apps/CasCade/index.html?appid=2b383eee459f4de18026002ae648f7b7>