## **Thematic Paper 1**

Linkages and Synergies Between International Instruments on Biodiversity and Climate Change









On behalf of



Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection

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# Linkages and Synergies Between International Instruments on Biodiversity and Climate Change

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## **Key Messages**

- Scientific evidence highlights the linkages between the global challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss; however, coordinated policy responses that ensure synergies between related policies at the international and national / local level are still limited.
- A number of legal and policy mechanisms and tools currently exist that can support synergies between the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), as well as coordinated implementation of climate and biodiversity commitments.
- The CBD Conference of the Parties (COP) has been quite active in addressing climate change-related considerations; in the climate process, on the other hand, parties should focus more on integrating biodiversity considerations in their deliberations. However, UNFCCC COP 26 witnessed a wave of increased recognition of the role of nature within the climate regime. This can be seen as a promising step toward bridging the climate and biodiversity agendas.
- The ongoing negotiations on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework (GBF) under the CBD provide the necessary legal and policy space to strengthen such synergies in the overall context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

## Introduction

A growing body of scientific evidence indicates that biodiversity loss and climate change are two highly interlinked environmental and socio-economic challenges. The linkages are showcased, in particular, in recent major global assessments by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (for further information, see Thematic Paper 2: Linkages Between Biodiversity and Climate Change and the Role of Science-Policy-Practice **Interfaces for Ensuring Coherent Policies and** Actions). In a nutshell, a circular relationship is observed between the two: while climate change has impacts on ecosystems and is one of the main drivers of biodiversity loss, actions and policies aiming to mitigate climate change and adapt to it can have negative impacts on biodiversity. In turn, biodiversity, if conserved and used sustainably, can help mitigate climate change by enhancing ecosystems' capacity for carbon capture and storage and help society and ecosystems adapt to change through increasing ecosystem resilience. The high degree of interdependence within living systems is translated into scientific uncertainties and complex interplays and feedbacks, both at the ecosystem and the policy-making levels. This means that policy action (or lack thereof) to address climate change has impacts on biodiversity and ecosystems and vice versa (CBD, 2019; Pörtner et al., 2021).

The need for synergies between international forums addressing biodiversity and climate change necessitates an integrated approach to the two challenges. Partly as a result of the complexities and uncertainties noted above, however, integrated policy solutions addressing both challenges remain limited. This paper will provide an overview of:

- Developments in general international law supporting the principle of mutual supportiveness, as well as challenges regarding its application.
- Institutional settings and legal provisions enabling a synergistic approach under the CBD and the UNFCCC.
- Opportunities for synergies from the international to the national and local levels.

Opportunities for synergies at the international level include, among others, the ongoing CBD negotiations on the GBF; work on considerations of biodiversity and ecosystems under the UN-FCCC, including the UNFCCC COP 26 focus on nature; efforts under the Joint Liaison Group of the Rio Conventions; and work in the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals. These processes could be used to create legal and policy space to strengthen linkages and synergies while minimising trade-offs; they could also enable the sectoral transformations required to address drivers of both climate change and biodiversity loss. The paper will further highlight national implementation instruments under the CBD and the UNFCCC that may be used to promote a synergistic approach to implementation. It will illustrate this analysis with two brief case studies showcasing efforts in China and South Africa.

## BOX 1 THE CASE FOR MUTUAL SUPPORTIVENESS

Although they were negotiated simultaneously under the umbrella of the 1992 Rio Summit, the UNFCCC and the CBD do not explicitly refer to each other. The UNFCCC Preamble refers to the potential impact of increasing greenhouse gases (GHG) on natural ecosystems and the role of GHG sinks and reservoirs in terrestrial and marine ecosystems, while art. 2 refers to the stabilisation of GHG concentrations within a time frame allowing ecosystems to adapt. The CBD Preamble and art. 7(c) call for identifying and preventing the causes of biodiversity loss without specific mention of climate change. Albeit adopted later, neither the Kyoto Protocol nor the Paris Agreement refers to the CBD. The Paris Agreement includes several references to ecosystems. It also highlights the role of GHG sinks and the role of ecosystem integrity and sustainable management for resilience (Preamble and art. 4.1, 5, 7, and 8).

When it comes to their objectives, the CBD and the UNFCCC "can generally be said to be converging" (van Asselt, 2011), as both conventions deal with aspects of the overall goal of environmental protection. One could thus assume that such converging objectives provide opportunities for achieving mutually supportive outcomes, while the scope for conflicts is limited. However, the academic community has focused more on potential conflicts between the two regimes (for instance, regarding decisions on the use of forest carbon sinks in the Kyoto Protocol) rather than potential synergies. Policy practice in the two forums has been mixed. CBD parties have indicated a willingness to link biodiversity and climate change-related issues and have been addressing climate change as a cross-cutting issue under the Convention. Importantly, in 2012, the CBD COP called for the coherent and mutually supportive implementation of the CBD and UNFCCC (CBD COP, 2012b). Recently, UNFCCC parties have also engaged in promoting synergies with the biodiversity community, as presented below.

The emerging general principle of mutual supportiveness builds upon the idea of international law as a "system". International rules should be applied and more generally understood as supporting each other, as well as fostering harmonisation and complementarity. It is a legal interpretation tool for use in the context of the increasing fragmentation of international law. In cases of tension between competing regimes, mutual supportiveness guides states to avoid subordinating one regime to the other. It also requires that states exert goodfaith efforts to negotiate, conclude, and implement instruments clarifying the relationship between potentially competing regimes. The general principle of mutual supportiveness thus comes into play to promote coherence not only between treaties but also between the outcomes of their governing bodies. These decisions may represent different ways of dealing with a problem but can still lead to mutually supportive outcomes (International Law Commission, 2006). Challenges to the application of mutual supportiveness may be legal, institutional, political, financial, or cognitive in nature. Examples include differences in party membership to international conventions; an unwillingness to expand a convention's mandate or interpret it in an adaptive manner; prioritisation of items other than synergies under a convention's agenda; and difficulties in pursuing collaboration effectively (at the international and national levels) due to knowledge gaps or resource constraints.

## Institutional and Legal Bases for Synergies Under the CBD

Despite the lack of explicit mention of climate change within the CBD text, the legal and policy implications of the impacts of climate change on biodiversity and of mitigation and adaptation measures have been progressively addressed by the CBD COP since 2000 (Morgera, 2011). As a result, several COP decisions integrate climate change-related considerations as a cross-cutting item in the thematic work programmes of the Convention (such as marine and coastal biodiversity, inland waters, mountains, and agricultural biodiversity) and aim to enhance synergies between the CBD and the UNFCCC at the institutional level. In fact, the CBD COP has been particularly active on the linkages between biodiversity and climate change, urging parties to promote synergies with the UNFCCC and highlighting the need for joint action to be undertaken by the secretariats of the three Rio Conventions (Maljean-Dubois & Wemaëre, 2017). In addition, a significant body of knowledge on interlinkages and policy implications has been accumulated in a series of technical reports. Highlights include the following.

- Establishment of two Ad Hoc Technical Expert Groups (AHTEGs) on Biodiversity and Climate Change, in 2001 and 2008, which have prepared a number of technical reports. These reports aimed to
  - Enhance an understanding of the interlinkages between biodiversity and climate change and promote the integration of biodiversity considerations in the implementation of the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol (AHTEG on Biodiversity and Climate Change, 2003).
  - Promote synergies among activities addressing biodiversity, desertification, land degradation, and climate change (AHTEG on Biodiversity and Climate Change, 2006).
  - Develop scientific advice to support the enhanced implementation of synergies under the UNFCCC Bali Action Plan and the Nairobi work programme (AHTEG on Biodiversity and Climate Change, 2009a, 2009b).
- An in-depth review of climate change as a cross-cutting issue under the CBD Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) (CBD, 2010) revealed that parties acknowledge the linkages between biodiversity and climate change action but face challenges in implementation, particularly with regard to climate change mitigation. In addition, a review of implementation indicated good progress in activities undertaken by the Secretariat of the CBD alone but limited progress when implementation involved collaboration with partners.

- A 2010 decision (Decision X/33) inviting parties to promote the importance of biodiversity considerations in REDD+ discussions under the UNFCCC conveyed a proposal to develop joint activities between the three Rio Conventions to the secretariats of the UNFCCC and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). It further mandated that the Secretariat of the CBD undertake activities through the Joint Liaison Group of the Rio Conventions (CBD COP, 2010).
- Three decisions were adopted in 2012 on biodiversity safeguards with regard to REDD+ (Decision XI/19), climate-related geoengineering (Decision XI/20), and integrating biodiversity considerations into climate-related activities (Decision XI/21). Importantly, the decision on biodiversity safeguards for REDD+ called for the coherent and mutually supportive implementation of the CBD and UNFCCC (CBD COP, 2012b, c, d).
- A 2014 decision on biodiversity and climate change and disaster risk reduction (DRR) (Decision 12/20) requested that the Secretariat of the CBD compile and share experiences with ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and DRR (CBD COP, 2014). The decision resulted in a synthesis of case studies published as Technical Series No. 85 (Lo, 2016).

The Voluntary Guidelines for the design and effective implementation of ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and DRR (Decision 14/5) were adopted in 2018 (CBD COP, 2018). They were published with complementary information as Technical Series No. 93. Importantly, the CBD SBSTTA has also invited the UNFCCC COP to consider the voluntary guidelines (CBD/SBSTTA/Rec/23/2). Both these guidelines and the synthesis of case studies mentioned above may provide valuable contributions to the planning and implementation of adaptation strategies. Finally, several of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 (Decision X/2) are explicitly or implicitly linked to climate change. These include, in particular, Target 5 on halving habitat loss, Target 7 on sustainable agriculture, aquaculture and forestry, Target 11 on protected areas, Target 15 on ecosystem restoration, as well as other targets related to indirect drivers of land use change (CBD COP, 2010).



## Institutional and Legal Bases for Synergies Under the UNFCCC

In the UNFCCC process, parties have shown less willingness to integrate biodiversity considerations in their deliberations, with exceptions regarding forests and land use management relevant to climate change mitigation and adaptation objectives. Indeed, "the space given to biodiversity in secondary UNFCCC law is very limited" (Maljean-Dubois & Wemaëre, 2017). The potential neglect of biodiversity considerations was particularly raised following the promotion of the enhancement of carbon sinks in the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and the REDD+ mechanism. There were concerns in particular that CDM would provide an incentive to develop large-scale monoculture plantations rather than protect biodiversity-rich primary forests (van Asselt, 2007). While CDM rules allow developing countries hosting CDM forestry projects to impose conditions to protect biodiversity, very few countries have done so (Maljean-Dubois & Wemaëre, 2017).

Under the Warsaw Framework for REDD+, parties adopted a set of decisions on the coordination of results-based finance, institutional arrangements at the national level, guidance on forest monitoring systems, information on safeguards, the assessment of reference levels, and modalities for measurement, reporting, and verification. While the objectives of REDD+ are in line with biodiversity goals, and the prevention of deforestation offers opportunities to address biodiversity loss, trade-offs may be inevitable in some cases, as carbon and biodiversity hotspots are not always congruent (Maljean-Dubois & Wemaëre, 2017). That said, UNFCCC parties have agreed on a set of safeguards—which include biodiversity conservation—to be applied when implementing REDD+. Parties have further requested that countries develop an information system on how the safeguards are addressed and respected (Decision 1/CP.16) (UNFCCC COP, 2011).

Recently, space for biodiversity and ecosystems in UNFCCC deliberations has been opening up, possibly as a result of increased scientific understanding of the interlinkages between the two issues, focused policy initiatives, and awareness-raising activities, including on ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) and nature-based solutions (NbS) to climate change (for further information, see Thematic Paper 3: Nature-Based Solutions: An Approach for Joint Implementation of Climate and Biodiversity Commitments). Several knowledge products have been produced under the Nairobi work programme (NWP) on impacts, vulnerability, and adaptation to climate change, including a 2017 synthesis report on "Adaptation planning, implementation and evaluation, addressing ecosystems and areas such as water resources." Following decisions by the UNFCCC COP in 2011 (Decision 6/CP.17) and the CBD COP in 2010 (Decision X/33), two technical workshops were held back-to-back in 2013 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in close coordination with the Secretariat of the CBD and the NWP team at the UNFCCC Secretariat. The first was a technical workshop on ecosystem-based approaches for adaptation under the NWP, and the second was a sub-regional workshop on the integration of climate change and EbA in national biodiversity planning processes.

Furthermore, the Adaptation Committee advised addressing the linkages between biodiversity and climate change adaptation at the 14th NWP Focal Point Forum, held in conjunction with UNFCCC COP 26. Following the UNFCCC Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) mandate to prioritise the thematic area of biodiversity and adaptation under the NWP with a focus on forests and grasslands, the NWP established an expert group on biodiversity and adaptation in July 2020 comprised of policy-makers, practitioners, and researchers. The resulting scoping paper on knowledge gaps in integrating forest and grassland biodiversity and ecosystems into adaptation strategies was launched during the 14th NWP Focal Point Forum. Drawing from country case studies, the scoping paper reviews the role of biodiversity and ecosystems in climate change adaptation strategies, highlights interlinkages among international institutions and agreements, identifies knowledge gaps and needs, and discusses approaches and strategies for addressing such knowledge gaps (UNFCCC, 2021). It is expected that expert group members and the wider community will address these knowledge gaps through co-designed initiatives and knowledge products. Additional priority areas under the NWP-including oceans, coastal areas, and ecosystems; drought, water scarcity, and land degradation neutrality; and agriculture and food security-also provide opportunities for integration of biodiversity considerations. The respective expert groups under each of these thematic areas have also been focusing on producing knowledge products. The Enhancing Resilience of Oceans, Coastal Areas and **Ecosystems Through Collaborative Partnerships** report was also launched during the 14th NWP Focal Point Forum.

## BOX 2 SYNERGIES

Synergies can be achieved through different means and at different levels. "Soft" collaboration mechanisms at the international level include institutional coordination and knowledge exchange through collaboration between secretariats and scientific bodies, as well as joint communication activities in relevant forums. "Hard" synergies are achieved through policy coherence and are slower to accomplish, as they require intergovernmental negotiations within different bodies with differing mandates. Additional difficulties stem from the increasingly complex arrangements governing global environmental problems, such as climate change and biodiversity loss. Such governance arrangements include an array of legal, institutional, and financial mechanisms involving various governmental and non-governmental actors, on top of the relevant multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). Responsibility for creating rules is thus shared among multiple organisations with diverse memberships operating at different scales.

With regard to "hard" synergies, Goeteyn and Maes (2013) have assessed the potential to cluster biodiversity and climate change conventions based on the example of chemicals-related conventions. They argue that such clustering would be "almost an impossible political task." One major problem would be the legal autonomy of both conventions and the role of their respective COPs and different major players. Instead, they argue, interagency cooperation could be stimulated at the level of secretariats (Goeteyn & Maes, 2013). Such "soft" synergies have the potential to build bridges between institutions and delegates, with a potential spillover effect to the domestic level. They can thus promote the development of synergistic domestic legislation and policy.

International norms, however, do not travel unidirectionally top-down (i.e., from the international to the domestic and local level). On the contrary, as attention is directed to local interpretations and in view of the complexity of the institutions and actors involved, research reveals a multidirectional spread of norms (Scott, 2019). Setting up coordination mechanisms at the **domestic level**—such as inter-ministerial bodies, multistakeholder platforms, or joint monitoring mechanisms of climate and biodiversity goals can thus lead to synergistic implementation, with the potential to also reach the international level from the bottom-up.

### **Mechanisms**

Improving coordination between and through the secretariats is routinely mentioned as a way to increase synergies among the Rio Conventions. The Joint Liaison Group (JLG) between the Rio Conventions can support this cooperation. Established in 2001, the JLG is comprised of members of the secretariats of the CBD, the UNFCCC, and the UNCCD, and officers of the conventions' subsidiary bodies. It was designed as an informal forum for exchanging information, exploring opportunities for synergistic activities, and increasing coordination.

Each of the COPs of the three conventions has encouraged the JLG to facilitate cooperation at the national and international levels, identify possible areas of joint activities, and enhance coordination (CBD COP, 2002; UNCCD COP, 2003; UNFCCC COP, 2003). At its fifth meeting (January 2004), the JLG identified three priority issues for joint collaboration: adaptation, capacity building, and technology transfer.

Since its establishment, the JLG has met several times and has developed a number of cooperative activities. In 2004, it outlined options for enhanced cooperation, including the promotion of complementarity among national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) under the CBD, the national action programmes (NAPs) of the UNCCD, and the national adaptation programmes of action for least developed countries under the UNFCCC; collaboration among national focal points; collaboration among the Conventions' scientific bodies; development of joint capacity-building activities to promote synergy in implementation; and facilitation of exchange of information and experience, including improving inter-accessibility of available web-based data (CBD, UNCCD and UNFCCC, 2004). In 2012, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Rio Conventions, the JLG facilitated the publication of three joint reports on gender, forests, and adaptation.

Obstacles to the functioning of the JLG include institutional, financial, and political constraints. At its 2009 meeting, the JLG noted a disconnect between the roles and mandates given to it by each convention, which results in limitations when considering the implementation of requested activities (JLG, 2009). Predictable funding is also lacking, which has impacts on the organisation of activities. Importantly, limitations may also be related to certain parties' or executive secretaries' prioritisation of other issues within each convention's vast agenda or even "political opposition to a defragmentation of these regimes" (Maljean-Dubois & Wemaëre, 2017). With its last physical meeting held in 2016, virtual JLG meetings resumed in 2020 and 2021, at which participants identified areas for enhanced cooperation. These areas include the development of a joint capacity-building initiative focusing on synergies and complementarity in the implementation of the three conventions and cooperation in the framework of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030 (CBD, 2021a).

One example of a joint outreach activity by the three secretariats is the Rio Conventions Pavilion, a platform convened at the margins of the COP meetings of the three conventions aiming to raise awareness and share information about the latest practices and scientific findings linking biodiversity, climate change, and sustainable land management. Launched in 2010, the Rio Conventions Pavilion has brought together partners to successively examine cross-cutting topics such as ecosystem restoration, gender mainstreaming, and protected areas planning as a means to achieve commitments under the three conventions. CBD parties have welcomed the Rio Conventions Pavilion as a mechanism to enhance collaboration and increase the visibility of synergies among the agreements (CBD COP, 2012a).

Furthermore, the development of synergies between the conventions' scientific bodies and cooperation between the IPCC and IPBES can promote scientific linkages, common understanding, and cognitive consistency (for further information, see Thematic Paper 2: Linkages Between Biodiversity and Climate Change and the Role of Science-**Policy-Practice Interfaces for Ensuring Coherent** Policies and Actions). Consistent implementation can further be achieved through an integrated approach to financial support, including through the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Green Climate Fund. This would, however, require addressing significant challenges regarding developing cooperation on finance between the Rio Conventions, other UN agencies, and financial institutions (for further information, see

**Thematic Paper 6: Delivering Financing for Joint** Biodiversity and Climate Solutions). In this regard, the executive secretaries of the three Rio Conventions have suggested the establishment of a joint Project Preparation Facility to secure finance for large-scale projects that integrate actions on land degradation, biodiversity loss, and climate change. First proposed in 2017 through a joint statement, the facility would support the identification and preparation of integrated projects and ensure that all countries, particularly less-developed ones, can access existing sources of financing (CBD, UNCCD & UNFCCC, 2017). Based on a submission by the UNCCD Secretariat, the proposal could be addressed at the 2022 session of the Forum of the UNFCCC Standing Committee on Finance, which will discuss the topic of "Finance for nature-based solutions."

### **Opportunities**

The ongoing GBF negotiations under the CBD provide a valuable opportunity for enhancing synergies between the two processes. While the negotiations have been delayed due to the continuing impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic, awareness of the interlinkages between biodiversity loss and climate change increases through knowledge exchanges and publications, including the scientific outcome of the IPBES–IPCC workshop on biodiversity and climate change (Pörtner et al., 2021). The **theory of change** employed in the GBF considers the long-term strategies and targets of other MEAs, including the UNFCCC, for delivering synergistic benefits. The GBF updated zero draft (CBD, 2020) included a number of provisions that could be used to enhance synergies to that regard, including a target calling for increasing contributions to climate change mitigation, adaptation, and DRR through NbS and ecosystems-based approaches, ensuring resilience and minimising any negative impacts on biodiversity (Target 7). Another provision required ensuring that NbS and the ecosystem approach contribute to the regulation of air quality, hazards and extreme events, and water quality and quantity (Target 10). Synergies through the strengthening or establishment of cooperation mechanisms among MEAs and other relevant international processes, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, were considered an enabling condition, while the integration of biodiversity into policies and assessments was highlighted as a tool for implementation. The subsequent first draft (CBD, 2021) avoided reference to NbS, a term that remains debated (for further information, see Thematic Paper 3: Nature-Based Solutions: An Approach for Joint Implementation of Climate and Biodiversity Commitments).

However, it still calls on parties to contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation through ecosystem-based approaches and ensure that these efforts avoid negative impacts on biodiversity (Target 8). It also addresses enhancing nature's contributions to air quality, water quality and quantity, and protection from hazards and extreme events for all people (Target 11). The first draft also calls for the full integration of biodiversity into relevant policies and assessments (Target 14) and notes that efficiency and effectiveness will be enhanced by integration with relevant MEAs, including through the strengthening or establishment of cooperation mechanisms (CBD, 2021, para. 16) (for further information, see Thematic Paper 4: Good Governance for Integrated Climate and Biodiversity Policy–Making).

In the **UNFCCC** realm, opportunities for enhanced collaboration can be explored under:

- The NWP, which is also mandated to support the work of constituted bodies of the Convention, such as the Least Developed Countries
   Expert Group and the Adaptation Committee.
- The Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP), which aims to strengthen the efforts of local communities and indigenous peoples to respond to climate change, facilitate the exchange of experience, and enhance their engagement in the UNFCCC process. COP 26 advanced the role of local communities and indigenous peoples in ecosystem protection and climate action by establishing a facilitated exchange between LCIPP members on ecosystem management during the LCIPP second 3-year workplan for 2022–2024.



The COP 26 nature campaign led by the UK Presidency aimed "to raise ambition on tackling the drivers of climate change and biodiversity loss, mobilise financing to protect and restore critical ecosystems, and kick-start a just rural transition towards sustainable land use." It elevated the role of biodiversity and ecosystems within the climate regime, giving impetus to integrated solutions through a series of events. Nature Day focused on synergies between the Rio Conventions, NbS, nature-positive investments, and strengthening the role of local communities and indigenous peoples. A series of pledges and commitments with a focus on nature included the Glasgow Declaration on Forests and Land Use, signed by 141 countries, and the United Kingdom's contribution of up to GBP 40 million in international climate finance to establish the Global Centre on Biodiversity for Climate to address critical research gaps (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, The Rt Hon George Eustice MP, and The Rt Hon Greg Hands MP, 2021). Mirroring ongoing controversies, the COP 26 negotiated outcome does not include references to NbS, which were removed from the draft at the last stage of negotiations. It does, however, recognise the interlinked "crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, and the critical role of protecting, conserving and restoring nature and ecosystems in delivering benefits for climate adaptation and mitigation, while ensuring social and environmental safeguards" (UNFCCC COP, 2021).

The momentum for a synergistic approach to the two challenges is also growing outside the CBD and the UNFCCC, as dozens of initiatives worldwide aim to integrate nature into adaptation and resilience strategies. For example, the Leaders' Pledge for Nature, born at the UN Summit on Biodiversity in September 2020, united 84 countries and many actors-including the GEF, businesses, cities, and civil society-in a commitment to address interrelated and interdependent environmental challenges, scale up NbS and ecosystem-based approaches, and promote convergence between climate and biodiversity finance. The High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, an intergovernmental group of 70 countries cochaired by Costa Rica and France, aims to gather public support for nature and a new global deal for nature and people, with the central goal of protecting at least 30% of world's land and ocean by 2030. The Natural Climate Solutions Alliance, convened by the World Economic Forum and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, seeks to increase financing for natural climate solutions.

Broader processes where integration could be promoted at a higher political level include:

- The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030 declared by the UN General Assembly and led by the United Nations Environment Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, which aims to massively scale up the restoration of degraded and destroyed ecosystems as a proven measure to fight the climate crisis and enhance food security, water supply, and biodiversity.
- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes numerous goals related to biodiversity, ecosystems, and climate, with an emphasis on their indivisible nature and an integrated approach for their implementation.
- The "One Health" approach, which aims to design and implement policies in a collaborative, multisectoral, and transdisciplinary manner to achieve better public health outcomes, recognising the interconnection between people, animals, plants, and their shared environment.

Finally, space for integrated implementation of biodiversity and climate commitments can be provided at the **domestic level** through the design and implementation of national-level instruments implementing the CBD and UNFCCC. Many **NBSAPs** include climate-related aspects, following Aichi Targets 10 and 15, with regard to climate change impacts on coral reefs and ecosystem resilience and biodiversity's contribution to carbon stocks through conservation and restoration, respectively (Lo, 2016). In addition, as per COP guidance, parties need to mainstream biodiversity concerns and implement NBSAPs in coordination with other national strategiesincluding, in particular, poverty-eradication strategies, sustainable development strategies, strategies to adapt to climate change and combat desertification-and sectoral strategies (CBD COP, 2008). That said, challenges in adoption, coordinated implementation, and monitoring remain (UNEP, 2018). These challenges include knowledge, resource, and capacity gaps, as well as law and governance-related challenges such as legal and institutional fragmentation and matters related to land tenure and public participation. Their careful design, however, can assist with minimising trade-offs and avoiding negative impacts on communities and livelihoods (for further information, see Thematic Paper 5: From National to Local Implementation: A Collaborative, Multi-Level Effort to Achieve Joint Climate and **Biodiversity Goals**).

Opportunities for integrated implementation at the domestic level are also provided under the UNFCCC. Under the Cancun Adaptation Framework, EbA is listed as one of several approaches in the NAP Technical Guidelines for conducting vulnerability and risk assessments, which can assist with the integration of biodiversity considerations to enhance ecosystem resilience (LDC Expert Group, 2012). Technical guidance and advice to consider the differentiated adaptation needs of vulnerable groups, communities, and ecosystems have also been developed under the LDC Expert Group (Decision 6/CP.16) (UNFCCC COP, 2011). Under the Paris Agreement, parties are requested to communicate their nationally determined contributions, some of which include ecosystem-oriented visions for and propose a range of conservation, restoration, and agroforestry adaptation approaches (UNFCCC, 2016).

## BOX 3 NATIONAL APPROACHES TO SYNERGISTIC IMPLEMENTATION: THE CASES OF CHINA AND SOUTH AFRICA

China seeks to integrate policy action on climate change adaptation and mitigation, as well as nature protection, through its "Ecological Red Line" strategy, which uses large-scale spatial planning to strengthen climate and ecological security. The aim of this approach is to safeguard environmental security by establishing a stringent ecological protection system and regulatory requirements for the protection of ecological functions and the security of environmental quality and natural resource utilisation, as well as to promote the balance of economic, social, and ecological benefits. This goal includes improving the carbon sequestration function of ecosystems, supporting climate change mitigation, and conserving biodiversity by conserving the most important and environmentally sensitive areas in the country and by addressing climate change through NbS. Ecological red lines are delineated according to a baseline for ecological function protection, a bottom line for environmental quality security, and an upper limit for natural resource utilisation.

The Chinese strategy aims to promote synergies between climate actions and ecological protection through, among others, strengthening strategic planning at the macro level; enhancing integration in planning; formulating an action plan for peaking carbon dioxide emissions before 2030; coordinating the formulation and revision of relevant laws and regulations; promoting the integration of standards; enhancing the integration of environmental and economic policies; advancing synergy between pollution control and carbon reduction; coordinating climate change adaptation and ecological conservation and restoration, including through NbS and a holistic approach to biodiversity conservation; promoting the integration of statistical surveys, environmental assessments, management systems, monitoring systems, and oversight and law enforcement; and promoting key regions and industries to play a leading role in experimenting with the feasibility of certain practices.

The newly released outlines of China's National 14th Five-Year Plan reiterate the strategy to tackle climate change and ecological protection in a coordinated manner. The plan calls for integrated governance of land, forest, wetlands, grasslands, rivers, lakes, and seas, and uses spatial planning and ecological red lines to protect ecosystems. Moreover, building a protected area system based on national parks is considered an important foundation for biodiversity conservation and ecosystem restoration, as well as for realising China's vision of an Ecological Civilization and fulfilling its CBD commitments and climate pledges.

### **Further information**

Ministry of Ecology and Environment. (n.d.). Drawing a "Red Line" for Ecological Protection to Mitigate and Adapt to Climate Change – Nature–Based Solution Initiative

Ministry of Ecology and Environment. (2021). Guiding Opinions on Integrating and Strengthening Efforts in Climate Action and Ecological and Environmental Protection South Africa's NBSAP is closely linked with the National Framework for Sustainable Development, which recognises the role healthy ecosystems play in sustainable development, as well as the Climate Change Response Strategy and the National Action Programme Combating Land **Degradation to Alleviate Rural Poverty, which** both incorporate biodiversity-related matters. The NBSAP recognises that biodiversity conservation contributes to enhanced socio-economic benefits and climate change resilience. The ecosystem services that are currently the focus of investment in South Africa, related to water and DRR, both have climate change adaptation elements. Among its other objectives, the NBSAP seeks to harness the potential of both ecological infrastructure and EbA to deliver multiple sustainable development services and benefits across landscapes and contribute to the well-being of society (Environmental Affairs, 2016).

At the same time, support for a coordinated programme of work on EbA is provided by an overall strategy envisaged in the National Climate Change Response White Paper, implemented by the 2013 Long Term Adaptation Scenarios Flagship Research Programme; the 2014 Biodiversity Sector Climate Change Response Strategy, which identified opportunities for climate change responses to support sustainable livelihoods; and the 2015 Climate Change Adaptation Plan for South African Biomes.

## **Further information** Department of Environmental Affairs. (2015). **South Africa's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2015–2025**

Department of Environmental Affairs and South African National Biodiversity Institute. (2016). Strategic Framework and Overarching Implementation Plan for Ecosystem–Based Adaptation (EbA) in South Africa: 2016–2021



### BOX 4

# PRACTICAL STEPS TO ENHANCE MUTUAL SUPPORTIVENESS AND THUS SYNERGIES AMONG THE CONVENTIONS

- The secretariats of the Rio Conventions may enhance coordination (on the basis of CBD art. 24(1)(d) and UNFCCC art. 8(2)(e)), including through the JLG.
- The secretariats may provide the information required to promote coordination under agenda items on international cooperation for consideration by relevant convention bodies, including the COP and subsidiary bodies.
- Parties of each convention may consider establishing a process for ongoing regime interaction to ensure coherence and synergy at the decision-making, institutional, and implementation levels. Such a process may involve a permanent platform for dialogue and coordination, coordinated reporting, or joint sessions of subsidiary bodies. For example, the parties could recognise and enhance the legitimacy of the Rio Conventions Pavilion—a GEF-supported informal platform for dialogue on the synergistic implementation of the three conventions—and support it through predictable financing.
- IPCC and IPBES member countries may expand efforts to build the knowledge base and address research gaps in integrated solutions to climate change and biodiversity loss.

- > UNFCCC parties may build on the outcomes from COP 26 in Glasgow to promote the role of nature in general—and biodiversity, in particular—for climate action and enhance coordination with the CBD, including through a process to agree upon and scale up NbS.
- CBD parties may reaffirm in the GBF the centrality of ecosystems for climate change adaptation and mitigation, accompanied by clear conservation, restoration, and finance-related goals.
- Parties of each convention may suggest joint and mutually supportive consideration of climate change and biodiversity loss in sustainable development forums, such as the High-level Political Forum, which aims to implement an integrated approach to the Sustainable Development Goals due to their interdependent nature.
- National governments may consider processes to support mutually supportive implementation of biodiversity and climate commitments at the domestic level in coordination with sub-national authorities. These could include coordination processes such as inter-ministerial committees and multistakeholder platforms or joint international missions to support implementation.



## Conclusion

While scientific evidence highlights the linkages between the global challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss, coordinated policy responses to ensure synergies between related policies at the international and national / local levels are limited. The CBD COP has been quite active in integrating climate change-related considerations in the CBD work, advancing technical work to enhance understanding of the linkages, and promoting coordination between secretariats. In the UNFCCC process, until recently, parties had shown less willingness to integrate biodiversity considerations in their deliberations, with limited exceptions related to forests and land use management with regard to climate change mitigation and adaptation objectives. UNFCCC

COP 26, however, witnessed a wave of increased recognition of nature's role within the climate regime, which can be seen as a promising step toward bridging the climate and biodiversity agendas.

A number of mechanisms and tools can support synergies between the two processes and coordinated implementation of climate and biodiversity commitments. In addition, following the impetus to integrate policy solutions offered by initiatives launched at the UNFCCC COP 26, the ongoing GBF negotiations under the CBD provide the legal and policy space to advance such synergies in the overall context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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