Linkages and Synergies between International Instruments on Biodiversity and Climate Change









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Thematic Paper 1

Linkages and Synergies Between International Instruments on Biodiversity and Climate Change

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List of Abbreviations

AHTEG	Ad Hoc Technical Expert Groups
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
EbA	Ecosystem-based adaptation
GBF	Global Biodiversity Framework
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GST	Global stocktake
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
JLG	Joint Liaison Group
LCIPP	Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform
LDC	Least developed countries
MEA	Multilateral environmental agreement
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NbS	Nature-based solutions
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plan
NDC	Nationally determined contribution
NWP	Nairobi Work Programme
REDD	Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries
SBI	Subsidiary Body on Implementation
SBSTTA	Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Information
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNEA	UN Environment Assembly



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, including in the 2022 Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). Although the UNFCCC process has traditionally been less willing to accommodate biodiversity concerns, recent COP meetings have 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.

- → As calls for enhanced synergies increase, establishing a joint work programme or a similar format for cooperation between the Rio Conventions could further strengthen coordinated and aligned policy development and implementation.
- → Parties to the CBD and UNFCCC currently have an opportunity for national-level synergetic action, as they are required to submit their national targets and revised national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) and third-generation nationally determined contributions (NDCs) in 2024 – 2025.
- → This triple Rio-COP year 2024 and cooperation initiatives among COP presidencies, parties, and partnerships provide a rare opportunity for international policy action to enhance synergies over the second half of this critical decade for effectively addressing the multiple and interlinked crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation.



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 calls for 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

- general international law supporting the principle of mutual supportiveness, as well as challenges regarding its application
- institutional settings and legal provisions enabling a synergetic 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 CBD deliberations regarding the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF); the follow-up to the first global stocktake under the Paris Agreement; several voluntary initiatives, including the COP 28 joint statement on climate, nature and people; and work in the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals and the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA). These processes could be used to create legal and policy space to strengthen linkages and synergies while minimizing 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 instruments under the CBD and the UNFCCC that may be used to promote a synergetic approach to implementation. It will illustrate this analysis with two brief case studies showcasing efforts in China and Colombia. Following its first publication in 2022, the paper has been updated in September 2024 to reflect recent developments.

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 stabilization 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 harmonization and complementarity. 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 good-faith 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 (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; prioritization 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

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). Several COP decisions¹ integrate climate change-related considerations as a cross-cutting item in the thematic work programs 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.

Increased understanding of the linkages between the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss and related policy responses has led to the integration of climate-related aspects in the GBF and to increased calls for synergetic implementation, on the basis that the GBF and the Paris Agreement "are highly complementary agreements where the effectiveness of each depends on each other's success" (Streck, 2023).

Highlights of CBD activities include the following.

¹ CBD COP decisions on biodiversity and climate change are available at: https://www.cbd.int/climate/decision.shtml



- → 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 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 Information (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 pro-

gress 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 UNFCCC² 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 CBD Secretariat 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).

^{2 &}quot;"REDD' stands for 'Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries. The '+' stands for additional forest-related activities that protect the climate, namely sustainable management of forests and the conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks" (UNFCCC, n.d.).



- → 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 and may provide valuable contributions to the planning and implementation of adaptation strategies.
- → Several of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011 – 2020 (Decision X/2) were explicitly or implicitly linked to climate change (CBD COP, 2010).

Adopted in 2022, the **GBF** (Decision 15/4) as a successor strategic plan for 2022–2030 provides a good basis for national-level synergetic policy action on the basis of national targets and revised national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs), due by CBD COP 16 in October 2024 (as addressed below). The GBF features climate-related objectives in Target 8 on minimizing the impacts of climate change on biodiversity and building resilience and Target 11 on nature's contributions to people. Several other GBF targets contribute directly to climate change mitigation and adaptation goals, including Target 1 on spatial planning, Target 2 on restoration, Target 3 on ecosystem conservation, and Target 10 on sustainable production systems. Yet other targets are indirectly relevant for climate action, such as Target 12 on biodiversity in urban areas, Target 14 on integrating biodiversity in decision making, Target 16 on sustainable consumption, Target 18 on subsidies, Target 19 on financial resources, and Target 22 on Indigenous Peoples and local communities (CBD COP, 2022).

Other climate-relevant content in CBD COP 15 decisions include the call for improved cooperation among conventions (Decision 15/13), the Action Plan 2020 – 2030 for the international initiative for the conservation and sustainable use of soil biodiversity, including through nature-based solutions and/or ecosystem-based approaches and integration of soil biodiversity into the climate agenda (Decision 15/28) or the calls for improved cooperation with UNFCCC and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on climate change and marine biodiversity (Decision 15/24).





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), and the latest decision (Decision 13/CP.8) affirming the need for enhanced cooperation and synergies between the Rio Conventions dates back to 2002 (Streck, 2023; UNFCCC COP, 2003).

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 **nature-based solutions (NbS)** and **ecosystem-based adaptation** (**EbA**) to climate change (for further information, see Thematic Paper 3: Nature–Based Solutions: An Approach for Joint Implementation of Climate and Biodiversity Commitments). Synergetic development and implementation of climate and biodiversity policies have been addressed under

- the Nairobi work programme (NWP) on impacts, vulnerability, and adaptation to climate change, which responds to knowledge needs arising from the implementation of the Cancun Adaptation Framework;
- the new framework for the Global Goal on Adaptation, namely the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience; and importantly,
- the global stocktake, the 5-year review and assessment mechanism of the Paris Agreement.



Under the Cancun Adaptation Framework, EbA is listed as one of several approaches in the National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) 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 Least Developed Countries (LDC) Expert Group (Decision 6/CP.16) (UNFCCC COP, 2011). 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. Several knowledge products have been produced under the NWP, including a 2017 synthesis report titled "Adaptation Planning, Implementation and Evaluation, Addressing **Ecosystems and Areas Such as Water Resources,**" a scoping paper on knowledge gaps in integrating forest and grassland biodiversity and ecosystems into adaptation strategies (UNFCCC, 2021), and a technical brief on "synergies between climate change adaptation and biodiversity through the National Adaptation Plan and National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan processes" (Terton et al., 2022).

Recently, efforts to highlight the linkages and need for synergies have increased. The COP 26 cover decision (Glasgow Climate Pact) recognizes 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, p. 3). The decision did not include references to NbS, which were removed from the draft at the last stage of negotiations due to ongoing controversies. References to NbS were included for the first time in the COP 27 cover decision, titled the Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan (UNFCCC COP, 2022). Importantly, in the meantime, the UNEA had adopted Resolution 5/5 on NbS for sustainable development, including a definition (UNEA, 2022). Thus, on top of underlining the urgent need to address the interlinked global crises of climate change and biodiversity loss in a synergetic manner, the Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan emphasizes the importance of conserving and restoring nature and ecosystems to achieve the Paris Agreement temperature goal (para. 15); and encourages parties to consider NbS or ecosystem-based approaches for their mitigation and adaptation actions while ensuring relevant social and environmental safeguards (para. 48).

As part of a range of thematic and dimensional targets to achieve the Global Goal on Adaptation under the Paris Agreement, the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience includes a thematic target on "reducing climate impacts on ecosystems and biodiversity, and accelerating the use of ecosystem-based adaptation and nature-based solutions, including through their management, enhancement, restoration and conservation and the protection of terrestrial, inland water, mountain, marine and coastal ecosystems" (Decision 2/ CMA.5, para. 9(d)). The decision further emphasizes that adaptation action should be continuous, iterative, and progressive and be based on the best available science, including through the use of EbA and NbS (para. 14) (UNFCCC, 2024).

The **first global stocktake (GST)** was concluded at COP 28 in 2023. Importantly, the Paris Agreement requires parties, using mandatory legal language ("shall"), to be informed by its outcome in updating their nationally determined contributions (NDCs) (Arts 4.9 and 14.3). The GST decision (Decision 1/ CMA.5) recognizes the interlinkages between the global crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, the need to address them in a comprehensive and synergetic manner, including through NbS and ecosystem-based approaches, and the importance of nature, biodiversity, and ecosystems for climate action. In particular, it emphasizes the importance of conserving and restoring nature and ecosystems toward achieving the Paris Agreement temperature goal, in line with the GBF (para. 33); encourages integrated, multi-sectoral solutions to adaptation, including NbS and ecosystem-based approaches, and nature and ecosystems conservation and restoration (paras. 55 - 56); stresses the importance of global solidarity in undertaking adaptation efforts, including the preservation and regeneration of nature for current and future generations (para. 61); and urges parties to enhance adaptation action aimed at reducing climate impacts on ecosystems and biodiversity and accelerating the use of EbA and NbS, including through ecosystem conservation and restoration (para. 63(d)) (UNFCCC, 2024).

These developments provide a basis for integrating ecosystems- and biodiversity-related considerations, including through NbS or EbA, in NAPs and NDCs (as addressed below).

Mechanisms and Opportunities for Synergies

BOX 2 SYNERGIES

Synergies can be understood as the result of joint action that goes beyond the sum of individual activities, making efforts more effective and efficient (UNEP, 2010). Creating synergies leads to multiple co-benefits, seeks more effective outcomes, and ensures efforts in one area do not undermine progress in another. At the biodiversity-climate interface, developing synergies involves the intentional coordination of planning and implementation of international policy instruments and national commitments and strategies (long-term strategies, NDCs, NAPs, and NBSAPs). 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 organizations 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 synergetic 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 synergetic 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 synergetic 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 under the CBD, the national action programmes 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 work programmes and 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 organization of activities. Importantly, limitations may also be related to certain parties' or executive secretaries' prioritization 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. 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).

As calls for enhanced synergies between the biodiversity and climate agendas increase, the establishment of a joint work program between the Rio Conventions has recently been proposed as a mechanism to further coordinate policy development and implementation. The possible development of such a mechanism was proposed at the 25th meeting of the CBD SBSTTA in October 2023, and the fourth meeting of the CBD Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI) in May 2024. It is expected to be further addressed at the upcoming CBD COP 16 on the basis of SBSTTA Recommendation 25/8 on biodiversity and climate



change (para 14) and SBI Recommendation 4/9 on cooperation with other conventions (para 18b). On the basis of new opportunities for alignment presented by the GBF and indications of increased awareness of the need for synergies under the UNFCCC, including through the COP 28 Joint Statement on Climate, Nature and People (presented below), a joint work program can provide a structured approach to coordinated policy development and implementation of both the GBF and the Paris Agreement, and foster synergies while addressing trade-offs (Boran & Pettorelli, 2024).

The development of **synergies between the conventions' scientific bodies**, including through potential organization of joint meetings to address items of common concern and guide synergetic national implementation, and **cooperation between the IPCC and IPBES** can promote scientific linkages, common understanding, and cognitive consistency. The scientific outcome of the IPBES–IPCC workshop on biodiversity and climate change (Pörtner et al., 2021) for instance, is critical in building awareness of the interlinkages between the challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change, and related policy responses (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 and Thematic Paper 4: Good Governance for Integrated Climate and Biodiversity Policy-Making). Cooperation between the IPCC and IPBES can be expected to be strengthened following Decision 10/1 of the IPBES Plenary to foster further collaboration. Consistent implementation can finally be achieved through an integrated approach to financial support, including through the Global **Environment Facility** 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).



Opportunities

As understanding of the interlinkages between global challenges is increasing, momentum for synergetic action is building. The last three months of 2024 provide a rare opportunity for international policy action to enhance synergies, with all three Rio Conventions holding meetings of their conference of the parties: CBD COP 16 meets in October 2024 in Cali, Colombia, followed by UNFCCC COP 29 in November in Baku, Azerbaijan, and UNCCD COP 16 in December in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Under the **CBD**, with several **GBF targets** directly or indirectly addressing climate change, deliberations on their implementation provide a valuable opportunity to enhance synergies between biodiversity- and climate-related processes. In particular, CBD parties will specifically consider the item on the basis of **SBSTTA Recommendation 25/8**, which includes draft text encouraging parties

- "To identify and maximize potential synergies between biodiversity and climate actions, promote the positive, and avoid and, if not possible, minimize the negative impacts of climate actions on biodiversity, [...];
- "To integrate and promote, where appropriate, nature-based solutions and/or ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and mitigation and disaster risk reduction into their revised NBSAPs and national targets; and to promote synergies with other national planning processes established under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and other biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements, in coordination with the focal points of other multilateral environ-

mental agreements, as appropriate, including through national coordination, planning, review and reporting processes, in a complementary and synergistic manner."

In addition, the planning, monitoring, reporting, and review process established by COP Decision 15/6 and the monitoring framework for the GBF developed under COP Decision 15/5 may be used to promote synergetic implementation on the basis of appropriate indicators (Bakhtary et al., 2023).

Similarly, opportunities for enhanced collaboration in the **UNFCCC** realm can be explored under the GST follow-up processes, including the **Roadmap to Mission 1.5°C**, on how to leverage synergies in updating NDCs and in future global stocktakes (Bakhtary et al., 2023). With regard to implementation of the targets of the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience, the 2-year UAE-Belém work programme on indicators for measuring progress offers the opportunity to develop indicators aligned with CBD processes.

Opportunities can be explored under the following:

- → 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, and
- → 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.

A crucial step in building momentum for synergetic action has been the voluntary but landmark Joint Statement on Climate, Nature and People launched at UNFCCC COP 28 in 2023. Led by the Presidencies of CBD COP 15 and 16, UNFCCC COP 28 and 30, and UNCCD COP 15, and endorsed by 18 countries from across the globe to date, the joint statement "marks a significant reinvigoration of collaboration between the CBD and UNFCCC, aiming to align efforts towards shared objectives and integrated action across climate, nature and sustainable development" (Boran & Pettorelli, 2024). The statement affirms the need to address climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation in a coherent, synergetic, and holistic manner. In practice, it has the potential to expand diplomatic space for synergetic action in the upcoming 2 years, including through the traditional ties between Colombia and Brazil as Presidencies of CBD COP 16 and UNFCCC COP 30 respectively. The statement highlights signatories' commitment to work collaboratively to pursue common objectives, including

- fostering stronger synergies, integration, and alignment in the planning and implementation of national climate, biodiversity and land restoration plans and strategies;
- scaling of finance and investments for climate and nature from all sources;
- ensuring the full, equitable, inclusive, and effective representation and participation of Indigenous Peoples and other vulnerable communities in the planning and implementation of climate and biodiversity plans and strategies at all levels;
- promoting a whole-of-society approach in planning and implementation;

• encouraging coherence and interoperability across data sources and data collection, metrics and methodologies, and voluntary reporting frameworks [...].

The COP 28 joint statement follows a series of informal declarations and commitments aiming to build synergies between climate and biodiversity action. These included the COP 26 nature campaign led by the British Presidency, featuring Nature Day, an event focused on synergies between the Rio Conventions, NbS, nature-positive investments, and strengthening the role of local communities and Indigenous Peoples; and a series of pledges and commitments with a focus on nature, including the Glasgow Declaration on Forests and Land Use.

The COP 28 joint statement brings together several pre-existing partnerships, coalitions and initiatives aiming to integrate the biodiversity and climate agendas, showcasing wide membership and support from UN organizations and both the developed and developing world. Membership includes, among many: the **ENACT** Partnership, launched by Egypt as the COP 27 Presidency; the G20 Global Land Initiative; the Global Ocean Alliance, consisting of over 70 state members; the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, an intergovernmental group of 117 countries; the Mangrove Alliance for Climate; the NBSAP Accelerator Partnership; the NDC Partnership; and the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Coalition for Nature. It was accompanied by a "statement of intent" of the secretariats of the initiatives involved, which suggests areas for synergetic action, with a focus on the design and implementation of NBSAPs and NDCs for the next 2 years.

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

- The Summit of the Future, expected to adopt a Pact for the Future, which addresses, among other topics, sustainable development and financing for development, peace and security, and transforming global governance.
- UNEA, the world's highest decision-making body on environmental matters, which has recently adopted a resolution encouraging member states to enhance synergies when implementing their commitments under environmental instruments (UNEA, 2024).
- 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, recognizing 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. The current 2-year period (2024/2025) is a particularly good opportunity for synergetic action, with both the GBF and the GST decisions offering the basis for integration of biodiversity and climate considerations within national plans and strategies:





- Following adoption of the GBF including a range of climate-related targets, CBD parties need to submit their national targets and revised NBSAPs by COP 16 in October 2024 (Decision 15/6) (CBD COP, 2022a). Many NBSAPs have already included climate-related aspects on the basis of Aichi Targets 10 and 15 and previous CBD COP guidance on biodiversity mainstreaming (CBD COP, 2008), and integration trends are expected to be strengthened.
- Under the UNFCCC, parties need to submit their third-generation NDCs by 2025, responding to the outcomes of the first GST, which includes references to the contribution of ecosystems to climate action and NbS. This is expected to incentivize the uptake of NbS or EbA in NDCs, some of which had already included a range of conservation, restoration, and agroforestry approaches (UNFCCC, 2016). In addition, while existing NAPs already included a range of ecosystem-oriented approaches (LDC Expert Group, 2023), integration of EbA and NbS in the thematic targets of the UAE Framework for **Global Climate Resilience** can further align country adaptation planning.

Challenges in synergetic policy 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. Careful law and policy design, however, can assist with minimizing trade-offs and avoiding negative impacts on communities and livelihoods (for further information, see Thematic Paper 4: Good Governance for Integrated Climate and Biodiversity Policy-Making and Thematic Paper 5: From National to Local Implementation: A collaborative, multi-level effort to achieve joint climate and biodiversity goals). On top of guidance developed under both the CBD and the UNFCCC (mentioned above), a range of tools and initiatives exist to assist with synergetic policy design and thus serve as catalysts of integrated implementation. These include, among others

- the NBSAP Accelerator Partnership, a country-led initiative to support the development and implementation of ambitious NBSAPs for the collective achievement of the GBF targets
- the NDC Partnership, including more than 120 developed and developing countries, and more than 80 institutions: the NDC Partnership's Global Call facilitates access to expertise and dedicated resources for countries to align, update, and enhance their NDCs and Long-Term Low Emissions Development Strategies. Its NDC 3.0 Navigator supports the development of third-generation NDCs, including to enhance the uptake of NbS.
- The Data Reporting Tool for MEAs (DaRT) "is a tool that supports countries to use synergies in the area of knowledge and information management for national reporting to bio-diversity-related conventions." It can be used "to explore the interoperability of climate and biodiversity monitoring and reporting tools and identify opportunities for countries to use synergetic indicators by linking NDCs and NBSAPs targets and measures".

BOX 3 NATIONAL APPROACHES TO SYNERGISTIC IMPLEMENTATION: THE CASES OF CHINA AND COLOMBIA

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 utilization, 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 protecting 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 utilization.

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 climatechange 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 outlines of China's National 14th Five-Year Plan reiterate the strategy to tackle climate change and ecological protection in a coordinated manner. Building a protected area system based on national parks is considered an important foundation for fulfilling CBD commitments and climate pledges.

The country's recently submitted NBSAP 2023– 2030 aligns with the goals and targets of the GBF through 27 priority actions and 75 priority projects in four priority areas, including biodiversity mainstreaming, addressing threats of biodiversity loss, sustainable use and benefit-sharing, and biodiversity governance. In its 2022 report on NDC achievements, China acknowledges the need for coordination and integration of climate change mitigation and adaptation, environmental pollution prevention and control, and biodiversity conservation measures, in terms of planning goals, policy actions, and institutional systems; it also integrates NbS in climate action.



Further information

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Colombia is an advocate of integrative approaches at the international level, including though initiatives such as the NDC Partnership and the NBSAP Accelerator Partnership. Both its NDC and NBSAP have integrated biodiversity and climate change actions, with actions that prioritize EbA, NbS, and ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction. In the updating process of those instruments, the government has undertaken the task of increasing its ambition in these two areas.

The country's national legislative and policy framework includes several instruments of relevance, including the National System of Protected Areas, the National Policy for the Integrated Management of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, and the National Programme for the Conservation and Restoration of Tropical Dry Forest and its Action Plan 2020–2030. Its National Climate Change Policy, the Long-Term Climate Strategy 2050, and the Climate Change Plans (sectoral and territorial) include both emission reduction and adaptation measures that integrate actions for forest economy, increase of protected areas, conservation of ecosystems, and measures for good agricultural practices such as forestry, agroforestry, regenerative livestock farming, and agroecology, among others.

Further information:

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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 still limited. The CBD COP has been quite active in integrating climate change-related considerations in CBD work, advancing technical work to enhance understanding of the linkages, addressing synergies as part of its agenda, 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 landuse management with regard to climate change mitigation and adaptation objectives. Recent COP meetings however have 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.

Parties to both processes have currently an opportunity for national-level synergetic action, as they are required to submit their national targets and revised NBSAPs and third-generation NDCs within the current 2-year period. A number of mechanisms and tools can support synergies between the two processes and coordinated implementation of climate and biodiversity commitments. In addition, the last 3 months of 2024 provide a rare opportunity for international policy action to enhance synergies, with all three Rio Conventions holding COP meetings: CBD COP 16 meets in October 2024 in Cali, Colombia, followed by UNFCCC COP 29 in November in Baku, Azerbaijan, and COP 16 of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in December in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

BOX 4

PRACTICAL STEPS TO ENHANCE MUTUAL SUPPORTIVENESS AND THUS SYNERGIES AMONG THE CONVENTIONS SEEK MORE EFFECTIVE OUT-COMES AND ENSURE EFFORTS IN ONE AREA DO NOT UNDERMINE PROGRESS IN ANOTHER.

- → 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, parties could establish a joint work programme between the Rio Conventions to enable coordinated policy development and implementation.
- → 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, building on further cooperation between IPCC and IPBES.

- UNFCCC parties may build on recent outcomes to promote the role of nature in general – and biodiversity, in particular—for climateaction and enhance coordination with the CBD, including through a process to agree upon and scale up nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based approaches.
- → CBD parties may aim for synergetic implementation of GBF targets, including in the monitoring and review process.
- Parties of each convention may suggest joint and mutually supportive consideration of climate change and biodiversity loss in sustainable development forums, such as the Highlevel 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, processes to ensure cooperation among national focal points, multistakeholder platforms or joint international missions to support implementation. Submission of mutually supportive NBSAPs and third-generation NDCs can enable synergetic action.



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