UNITED NATIONS
ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT GROUP **EMG**

Issue–based Coalition on
Environment and Climate Change
for Europe and Central Asia

BIODIVERSITY IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

Guidance for integrating biodiversity into Common Country Analysis and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks

Table of Contents

Acronyms

BDTF WB – Biodiversity Task Force of the Western Balkans
CBD – Convention on Biological Diversity
CCA – Common Country Analysis
CF – Cooperation Framework
DPSIR – Driver Pressure Impact Response Framework
DRR – Disaster Risk Reduction
ESVD – Ecosystem Services Valuation Database
EU – European Union
FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GBF – Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
GEF – Global Environment Facility
GEO – Global Environment Outlook
HRBA – Human Rights-Based Approach
HLPF - High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
IBAT – Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool
IBC – Issue-Based Coalition
IMG – Issue Management Group
IPBES – Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPCC – Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IUCN – International Union for Conservation of Nature
JWP – Joint Work Plan
LPI – Living Planet Index
MEA – Multilateral Environmental Agreement
MEL – Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
NbS – Nature-Based Solutions
NBSAPs – National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans
NDC – Nationally Determined Contribution
OECMs – Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures
OHCHR – Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights
PA – Protected Area
RC – Resident Coordinator
RCO – Resident Coordinator Office
SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals
SLM – Sustainable Land Management
UN – United Nations
UNCT – United Nations Country Team
UNDP – United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO -United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UN EMG – United Nations Environment Management Group
UNEP – United Nations Environment Programme
UNEP-WCMC-United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre
UNSDCF – United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
WWF – World Wildlife Fund
ZSL – Zoological Society of London

Introduction

This document presents practical guidance to assist United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) and Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs) in Europe and Central Asia with integrating biodiversity considerations into the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs).

The guidance was developed by the Issue-Based Coalition on Environment and Climate Change (IBC) in Europe and Central Asia and the United Nations Environment Management Group (UN EMG). It builds on insights from the United Nations (UN) system to support biodiversity mainstreaming at the national level and provides practical entry points, tools, and recommendations to mainstream biodiversity into national planning processes. In addition, it provides a non-exhaustive reference list of information material that can be used at the different levels and stages of the UNSDCF process.

The guidance takes into consideration the whole UNSDCF development process described in the UNSDCF Internal Guidance,[i] the Cooperation Framework Companion Package,[ii] and the Consolidated Annexes for Cooperation Framework Guidance[iii] It also builds on existing analyses and regional guidance such as the Guidance on Integrating the Environment and Climate Change in processes for UNSDCFs[iv] and Gap Analysis,[v] and global-level resources including the Integrating Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation in the UNSDCF - Guidance Note on Using Climate and Disaster Risk Management to Help Build Resilient Societies[vi] and the UN Common Approach to Biodiversity: 50+ ways to integrate biodiversity and nature-based solutions – A UN system commitment to collective action for people and planet.[vii]

The guidance is aligned with the Cooperation Framework (CF) cycle, identifying key entry points for integrating and mainstreaming biodiversity, in particular in the Common Country Analysis (CCA) and in CF design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

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Guidance and Practical Actions
Biodiversity in the Common Country Analysis (CCA)

Key principles and entry points

As a key component of the analytical phase in the Cooperation Framework cycle, the CCA offers interesting entry points for the incorporation of biodiversity considerations.

Development of CCA methodology and workplan

- When developing the methodology for data collection and analysis, ensure that expertise is available to enable the consideration of biodiversity-specific and biodiversity-related factors. To this end, consider forming an interagency team that includes biodiversity specialists with knowledge and experience in biodiversity matters in national, transboundary, and regional contexts and from different sector. This is crucial, as biodiversity issues like species migration and the spread of invasive alien species extend across borders.
- Biodiversity may be incorporated as part of wider integrated environmental assessments. The Driver – Pressure – Impact – Response framework outlined below can serve as a guide for conducting this type of analysis (Box 5).
- Given potential data and knowledge gaps, consider conducting biodiversity-specific analytical studies covering animal and plant biodiversity, as well as their socio-ecological interactions. The need for additional data and knowledge may be reassessed during periodic reviews of the CCA throughout the implementation of the CF.
- The CCA should be undertaken using a participatory approach that acknowledges and considers the diverse circumstances and perspectives of various groups, including stakeholders from different sectors such as local communities, youth organizations, women's organizations, indigenous peoples, the private sector, and academic research institutions. It is essential to assess and ensure that these stakeholders represent the full breadth of ecosystems present in the country. Actors engaged in existing national and regional platforms, such as the Biodiversity Taskforce of the Western Balkans (BDTF WB), can be considered for the consultation and dialogue.
- To support this effort, the Earth Network[viii] of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) can connect UNESCO-designated sites facing ecological challenges, such as biodiversity decline, with leading scientific experts to develop customized solutions.

Progress towards the 2030 Agenda and SDGs in the country, including commitments towards International Norms and Standards[1]

Country situation and overall development context

- Gather and analyse biodiversity-related data (national, regional, sub-regional and transboundary dynamics) in the description of the country situation and focus on its linkages to the country's sustainable development trajectory and to the setting of UNCT priorities.
- Include background information on biodiversity at different spatial scales:
  - Alpha diversity - number of species and species richness in a particular area or ecosystem

- Beta diversity - species diversity between different ecosystems
- Gamma diversity - overall diversity for the different ecosystems within larger geographic areas [ix]
- Analyse the underlying causes of biodiversity loss and how this affects economic and social sustainable development. "Make the case" for the contribution of biodiversity and nature to national development by including evidence of ecosystem services provided and the socio-economic impact of biodiversity action. The Ecosystem Services Valuation Database (ESVD)[x] may assist the valuation of ecosystem services (Box 1). The Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool (IBAT)[xi] may provide helpful biodiversity data and datasets.

BOX 1. ECOSYSTEM SERVICES VALUATION: THE ESVD

The Ecosystem Services Valuation Database (ESVD) provides an organized collection of estimates of the economic value of ecosystem services in standardized values.

Valuations can be accessed by ecosystem type, ecosystem service, geographic location, valuation method, and other parameters.

Currently, the ESVD contains more than 9,400 records derived from more than 1,300 studies. While Europe represents the largest proportion of value estimates (32%), there is little information for Russian Federation, Central Asia and North Africa.

Please see Annex 1 for a summary of valuations and studies available in the ESVD in 17 Europe and Central Asia countries, representing the limited availability of studies on the platform compared to other European countries.

BOX 2. ECOSYSTEM SERVICES VALUATION: REGIONAL EXAMPLE

The Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) project in North Macedonia funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) aims at reducing the effects of land degradation and land use pressures on natural resources in mountain landscapes, and developing and strengthening national policies and institutional capacity for SLM.

Land utilisation and ecosystems services valuations for forests and grasslands were conducted in six pilot sites in the municipalities of Arachinovo, Gazi Baba, Jegunovce, Lipkovo, Saraj, and Zhelino. The total economic value of ecosystem services provided by forests and grasslands amounted to EUR 84 million in 2021.

BOX 3. CCA EXAMPLE FROM THE REGION: NORTH MACEDONIA

The CCA for North Macedonia (November 2020) states that "air pollution, pollution of water bodies, improper waste management, climate change impact, loss of biodiversity, and forest degradation are key environmental challenges that will need tackling to meet the EU's environmental standards and policies".

In addition, it states that "the country faces multiple environmental problems, further exacerbated by climate change", including the "lack of biodiversity protection and forest degradation due to large-scale illegal felling, particularly for fuel wood improper and unsafe waste disposal and lack of remediation of historical contamination sites".

Moreover, the CCA provides a thorough assessment of SDG progress, including progress towards achieving SDG 15 and North Macedonia's developments in terms of sustainable management of freshwater, mountain ecosystems and forests; combatting desertification; halting biodiversity loss; and combating poaching and trafficking.

The CCA also analyses the interlinkages between SDGs and human rights, such as the right to health including the right to safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment; the right to adequate food and right to safe drinking water; and the right of all peoples to freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources (SDG 15).

Overview of population groups (at risk of being) left behind and main drivers of exclusion
- Analyse how population and subgroups at risk of being left behind are being affected by biodiversity loss and environmental degradation, adopting human rights-based approaches (HRBAs).[2]

Social development and exclusion analysis
- Analyse how biodiversity and nature loss is affecting human development (e.g., health, resilience) particularly considering impacts on vulnerable groups, farmers, small-scale producers, women, youth, indigenous peoples, and other marginalized groups.
- Describe the role of such groups in biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, as well as their engagement in biodiversity action, projects, programmes and other initiatives.

Economic transformation analysis
- Analyze the impact of national economic development and transformation policies on ecosystems and biodiversity, considering potential trade-offs.
- If relevant, identify opportunities for transitioning towards more sustainable economic models that incorporate biodiversity conservation and sustainable use considerations, such as green economy and bioeconomy models.

Environment and climate change analysis

- Provide the status and latest trends on biodiversity issues at the national level. Aspects that may be incorporated in the analysis as a whole and/or for selected species include:
  - ✓ Animal and plant diversity identity
  - ✓ Biology and demography
  - ✓ Conservation status (based on national, regional policies and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species)
  - ✓ Distribution
  - ✓ Dynamics and functions
  - ✓ Ecology
  - ✓ Key biodiversity and protected areas
  - ✓ Taxonomy
- Include data on the value of ecosystem services, considering all types of benefits and services (e.g., provisioning, regulating, habitat and cultural services).
- UNESCO's Biodiversity Portal[xii] may serve as a useful source of information.

Governance and political analysis and progress on global commitments

- The situational analysis of the legal, institutional, policy and financial landscape in the CCA should integrate information on environmental and biodiversity-related policies, laws and regulations, including:
  - ✓ An overview of key national biodiversity policies and commitments[3] including:
    - Biodiversity-specific and dedicated policies, including NBSAPs
    - Environmental policies that cover and integrate biodiversity, such as climate change, water management, disaster risk reduction, and urban and spatial planning policies
    - Sectoral policies for different economic sectors that are relevant for biodiversity (e.g., agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries, forestry, livestock, mining, tourism, rural development)
    - Particular environmental laws which respond to national policies and/or advance the implementation of international commitments
  - ✓ Elements linked to the enabling of biodiversity mainstreaming, including capacity-building needs; and public and private financing in support of biodiversity action
- Information sources include:
  - ✓ National Reports submitted to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) or other multilateral environment agreements (MEAs)
  - ✓ Voluntary National Reviews within the context of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)
  - ✓ Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, IPBES

- ✓Regional/subregional Assessments on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), in particular the Regional Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services for Europe and Central . Asia
- ✓ Global Biodiversity Outlook (CBD)
- ✓Global Environment Outlook (UNEP)
- ✓ Ecosystem Services Valuation Database (ESVD)
- ✓ Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool (IBAT)

- Assess progress towards biodiversity-specific and related international commitments, in particular the GBF, referring to National Targets submitted to the CBD.[xiii]

BOX 4. THE EU'S BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY FOR 2030

The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 aims to ensure that "Europe's biodiversity will be on the path to recovery by 2030 for the benefit of people, the planet, the climate and the economy". The Strategy establishes specific actions and commitments to be delivered by 2030, including:

- Establishing an EU-wide network of land and sea protected areas
- Launching an EU Nature Restoration Plan
- Enabling transformative change
- Introducing measures to address the global biodiversity challenge

The Strategy also considers key commitments by 2030 for each set of actions.
Moreover, an Online Tracker on the state of implementation is available, alongside a Targets Dashboard showing progress towards the biodiversity targets set by the Strategy.

- Analyse how governance arrangements are facilitating effective biodiversity action and implementation of international commitments, including through promoting cooperation, collaboration and synergies and advancing policy coherence at institutional level. Identify bottlenecks, duplications, main challenges and gaps for inter-institutional coordination and governance (policy, laws, institutional arrangements). Annex 2 provides a cross-mapping of GBF targets and other MEAs offering entry points for mutually supportive actions.[xiv xv]
- Analyse policy coherence and alignment of national and sub-national biodiversity-specific and related policies with regional and subregional policies, as well as global frameworks and commitments (e.g., GBF, Paris Agreement, Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), etc.). The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 (Box 4) may be an interesting benchmark, also for non-EU countries in the region.

Multidimensional SDG risk analysis

Building on the main data, evidence-base and trends analysis previously described, consider the following elements to incorporate biodiversity considerations into the SDG risk analysis:

- As part of the multi-dimensional SDG-based risk framework, include existing, emerging and future risks that threaten biodiversity, ecosystems and their capacity to provide ecosystem services.
- Following a systemic multi-hazard approach, consider all types of risks that can exacerbate biodiversity loss, including climate change and other environmental risks.
- Consider potential and actual impact of each risk on ecosystems and people, in particular on vulnerable groups; and, when possible, include early warning indicators to enable early response.
- While most countries report results of the multidimensional risk analysis at the national level, subnational analyses are recommended to inform local disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies. If possible, consider the inclusion of figures, maps and appropriate cartography to present results, including local information on biodiversity and ecosystems as part of the analysis.

BOX 5. THE DPSIR FRAMEWORK

The Driver – Pressure – Impact – Response Framework (DPSIR) represents a useful tool to develop diagnosis and analysis on the needs to advance environmental issues, following an integrated approach.

It considers a causal chain of Driving forces (e.g., human activities), Pressures (e.g., use of resources), States (e.g., ecosystems, animal and plant biodiversity), Impacts (e.g. on ecosystems, animal and plant biodiversity), and Responses (e.g., prioritization, policies, regulations).

DPSIR provides the indicators needed to enable feedback to policy makers on environmental quality and impact of the political choices made, or to be made in the future.

The DPSIR Framework has been used in many assessments and flagship environmental publications, including the Global Environment Outlook (GEO).

North Macedonia

North Macedonia's CCA (2020) introduces an analysis of the multidimensional risks that could impact the country's development trajectory, based on the UN 12-factor multidimensional risk analysis. It lists the main risk factors, a specific assessment, affected SDGs, indicators to be tracked, impact, livelihood, and early warning indicators.

- Twelve risk factors were listed and assessed as part of the analysis, including:
    - *Food security, food safety, agriculture and land:* considering that agricultural holdings are reportedly small and vulnerable to degrading natural resources (land, water, biodiversity, forestry) and climate change (likelihood: low/medium, impact: low/medium)
    - *Environment and climate change:* stating that climate change has led to significant increase in frequency of extreme weather events with increased risks of river floods (Northwest), droughts (South), landslides, fires, forest degradation and increased risks to human health and damage of economic sectors (likelihood: medium, impact: high)

Serbia

Serbia's CCA (2021) incorporates a multidimensional analysis of the risks that could impact on the country's development trajectory and national efforts to achieve the SDGs, reduce inequalities and exclusion, and comply with international human rights obligations. The analysis is also based on the UN 12-factor multidimensional risk analysis and include COVID19-related risks.

For each risk, the analysis lists the main risk areas, related SDGs, a brief description, scope, likelihood and impact (low, medium, high). In total, 32 different risks have been listed, including the following under the environment and climate change risk area described as "risks to the ecology of the territory, its ecosystem and its people resulting from issues associated with the environment, climate and natural resources":

- Lack of commitment to implement the structural reforms needed to boost low carbon growth
- Unsustainable patterns of production and consumption (with high negative environmental externalities) including in agriculture and forestry
- Increased frequency of extreme weather events and resulting natural hazards

All these risks were considered as highly probable and with high impact.

National vision and development plan vis-à-vis the 2030 Agenda with links to regional and global frameworks/goals

- Determine if the country's national development plan and vision incorporates biodiversity considerations, in line with related SDGs, the GBF, and relevant MEAs.
- Assess national capacities to advance such frameworks and commitments and identify gaps and challenges to implement these in an integrated manner.

Financial landscape analysis

- Analyse international, domestic, private and public financial flows to support biodiversity action (biodiversity finance), considering both biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, as well as biodiversity-related SDGs.
- In addition, examine trends in national budget allocation to biodiversity action and identify the main barriers, challenges and opportunities for its increase over time.

- If possible, differentiate and disaggregate funding supporting plant conservation vs animal conservation, as plant conservation initiatives receive considerably less funding than animal conservation projects overall.[4] [xvi]
- Consider analysing financial resources allocated to related key areas and sectors, such as climate finance, agriculture, forestry, and fisheries.
- Moreover, consider and reflect on the contribution of such funding to advance GBF target 19: mobilize $200 billion per year for biodiversity from all sources, including $30 billion through international finance

Tools and programmes like the Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN) can assist in carrying out this type of analysis (Box 7).

BOX 7. THE BIODIVERSITY FINANCE INITIATIVE (BIOFIN)

The Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN) has been developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and aims to catalyse investments in nature by supporting the development of biodiversity finance plans. It considers three assessments and an implementation stage:

- · Biodiversity Finance Policy and Institutional Review (PIR)
- · Biodiversity Expenditure Review (BER)
- · Financial Needs Assessment (FNA)
- · Biodiversity Finance Plan (BFP) and implementation stage

The BIOFIN methodology has been implemented in 40 countries across three regions, including in: Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

BOX 8. EXAMPLE FROM THE REGION: THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

The CCA for the Kyrgyz Republic (updated 2023) includes an "environmental context" section with information on key environmental aspects, such as climate change, biodiversity and ecosystems, air pollution, water, and waste management.

The biodiversity and ecosystems chapter provides general information on species, ecosystems and existing landscapes, highlighting the importance of mountain ecosystems for the region. It refers to gaps and challenges related to the percentage of protected areas and biodiversity threats, including impacts on ecosystem functions because of climate change and human activities.

In addition to providing information on the country's different land uses, the CCA highlights the importance and contribution of forests to water regulation, soil conservation, slope reinforcement, air quality improvement, and other regulating services. Moreover, it emphasises the contribution of forests for recreational, aesthetic, cognitive, and educational purposes, as well as a source of non-timber forest products, and examples of other cultural services.

The CCA points out that reductions in forest areas are concerning as these contain at least half of the country's species diversity and are integral for maintaining environmental balance.

Incorporating these elements demonstrates a **high reliance on natural resources, highlighting the need to take urgent action for sustainable management practices.**

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Guiding questions for integrating biodiversity in the CCA

The following guiding questions serve as a practical checklist for integrating biodiversity considerations into the CCA at different stages:

General strategic questions
- Is biodiversity loss and ecosystem deterioration recognized as critical environmental issues with implications on social and economic development? How is this understood by the UNCT, government counterparts and key stakeholders?
- What are the main challenges and opportunities for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in the context of the country's development priorities and UN engagement?

CCA methodology and workplan
- What are the main available sources of biodiversity data for informing the development of the CCA? Are these reliable and sufficient to identify and analyse the main challenges facing biodiversity conservation and sustainable use?
- Do such information sources cover animal and plant biodiversity in a balanced way, including their socio-ecological interactions? Moreover, are transboundary issues sufficiently addressed? Is there a need to conduct additional biodiversity-specific studies, in particular plant biodiversity and transboundary studies?
- To what extent are relevant stakeholders involved in elements contributing to the development of the CCA and workplan? Does this engagement ensure adequate representation of all key actors, diverse interests, and perspectives on biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, as well as consideration of the variety of ecosystems present in the country?
- Does the UN interagency team or result group cover knowledge and expertise on key biodiversity issues at the national, transboundary and regional level?

Country situation and overall development context
- Has biodiversity data been included in the description of the country situation and development context at different scales?
- What are the linkages between biodiversity conservation, sustainable use and national development? What are the key contributions of biodiversity and nature to national economic and social sustainable development?
- What are the underlying causes of biodiversity loss and how is it affecting economic and social sustainable development?

Overview of population groups left behind, social development and exclusion analysis
- Which population groups are most affected by biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation?
- How is biodiversity and nature loss affecting human development (e.g., health, resilience), particularly vulnerable groups?
- What is the role and contribution of such groups to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use? Are they actively engaged? If not, what are the obstacles?

Economic transformation analysis
- What are the main opportunities and challenges for transitioning towards more sustainable economic models that incorporate biodiversity considerations at the core (e.g., green economy, bioeconomy models).

Environment, climate change and global commitments
- What are the latest national trends in animal and plant biodiversity?
- What is the "value" of biodiversity and nature in economic, environmental and social terms?
- What international biodiversity-specific and biodiversity-related commitments have been endorsed by the country, including commitments under relevant MEAs?
- What are quantitative and qualitative targets have been submitted by the country under biodiversity-specific and biodiversity-related commitments and MEAs? What is the progress towards their achievement?
- Have such commitments and targets been included in national priorities and policies?

Governance and political analysis
- What are the key national biodiversity policies, including dedicated policies, related environmental policies, and sectoral policies that are relevant for biodiversity action?
- Are these policies being designed and implemented in a coherent manner at the national and sub-national level? Are they consistent with regional, subregional and global frameworks?
- Are these policies being designed and implemented in an inclusive and participatory manner that involves all relevant stakeholders and advances a whole of government and whole of society approach that is rights-based?
- Are governance arrangements facilitating effective biodiversity action and inter-institutional coordination, cooperation or synergies that advance policy coherence? What are the main bottlenecks and challenges that need to be addressed to improve these?

Multidimensional risk analysis
- What are the main existing, emerging, and possible future risks for biodiversity conservation and ecosystems?
- What is the likelihood and impact of such risks on the environment, biodiversity, ecosystems and people, including repercussions to achieving SDG priorities at the country level?
- What data and early warning indicators can inform early action to reduce impacts, and what are data and information gaps to formulate such indicators?
- Are biodiversity issues being included in national and local DRR strategies?

National vision and development plan
- Does the country's national development plan and vision incorporate biodiversity considerations, in line with relevant SDGs, the 2030 Agenda, international commitment and pertinent MEAs?
- What are the main national capacities gaps and needs to advance such vision and advance towards the implementation and achievement of relevant SDGs and international commitments and MEAs?

Financial landscape
- What are the main domestic, international, private and public financial sources that support biodiversity action at the national level?
- What are the historical trends in national budget allocation for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use?
- What are the financial gaps to fully implement national biodiversity policies, advance national and international commitments, and deploy actions on the ground?
- Are plant conservation initiatives equitably funded compared to animal conservation initiatives?

Biodiversity in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

Key principles and entry points

Cooperation Framework preparation and design

Prioritization of biodiversity issues:

- When identifying priorities, make sure to engage different stakeholders involved in biodiversity action in dialogues and consultations, recognising the knowledge, contribution and vision of vulnerable groups in particular.
- While biodiversity-specific solutions may be recommended in certain contexts, focus on catalytic solutions that synergistically address multiple socio-environmental issues such as biodiversity loss, ecosystem degradation, desertification and other climate change impacts.
- Building on their comparative advantage, ensure that different UN entities engage in the process to include different aspects of biodiversity action, from a purely conservationist angle to a more productive approach.

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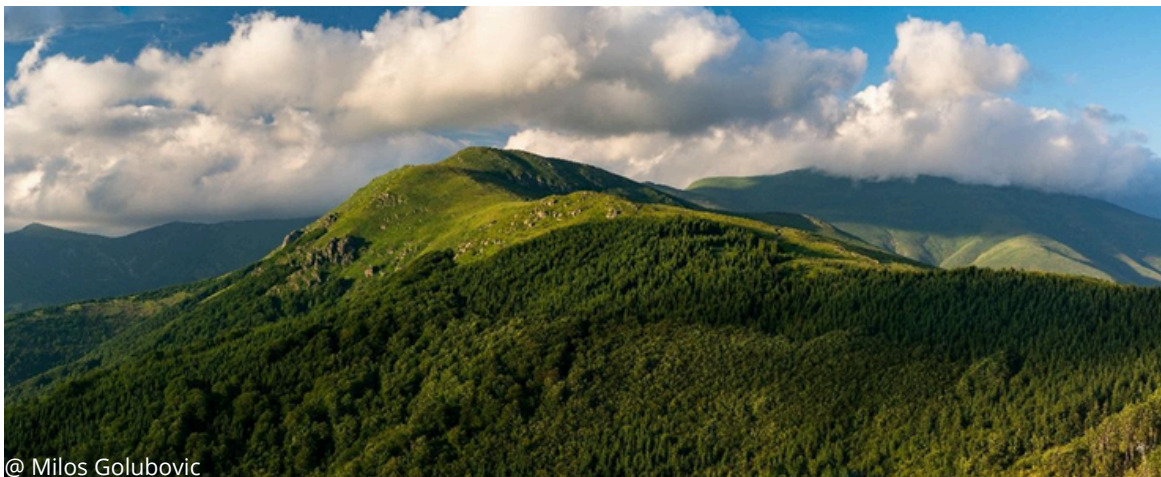
The Living Planet Index (LPI) aims at measuring the state of the world's biological diversity based on population trends of amphibians, birds, fish, mammals and reptiles from terrestrial, freshwater and marine habitats. It serves as main input to the Living Planet Report prepared by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Zoological Society of London (ZSL). This type of index uses population abundance change over time and can be useful to assess the impact and effectiveness of protected areas to conserve biodiversity and present a continuous measure that can be tracked over time (Heywood, 2017).

According to the 2024 Living Planet Report, between 1970 – 2020 the average size of monitored wildlife populations has shrunk by 73%, based on almost 35,000 population trends and 5,495 species, with freshwater populations representing the heaviest declines (85%), followed by terrestrial (69%) and marine populations (56%).

While declines in Europe and Central Asia (35%) have been less dramatic compared to other regions during this period - based on 4,615 populations and 619 species - the report states that large-scale impacts on nature were already apparent before 1970, particularly in Western Europe.

In addition, it states that some populations have stabilized or increased due to conservation efforts, legal protection and reintroduction of species, such as the European bison and Dalmatian pelican. However, it also states that average trends in freshwater fish, reptiles and amphibians are mostly negative, species groups that are at a greater risk of extinction in Europe.

Habitat loss and degradation, driven primarily by food systems, represents the most important threat in each region, followed by overexploitation, invasive species and disease, as well as climate change and pollution.
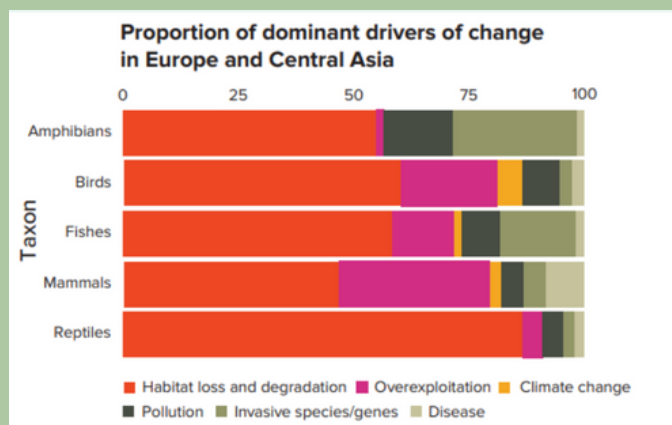
Regional studies such as the Biodiversity and Protected Areas Assessment (2021) that analyse developments and challenges in biodiversity management and PAs in 14 countries, can provide insightful inputs and be considered as a starting point for this type of analysis (UNECE, 2021).

Theory of change development

- Biodiversity action should address the different drivers of biodiversity loss. Holistic approaches to biodiversity action may be incorporated in the theory of change and included in the Strategic priorities and Outcomes in the context of addressing national priorities and identified gaps.
- In addition to numeric species loss, also consider threats to key ecosystem functions and ecosystems' capacity to provide key ecosystem services representing economic and societal benefits. If biodiversity matters are not specifically addressed, make sure to include them as part of wider socio-environmental considerations.
- The following considerations can be taken when designing the theory of change, based on the four key elements indicated in the Cooperation Framework Companion Package:
  - ✓ *Determining desired changes by 2030:* reflect on desired changes and Biodiversity National Targets submitted to the CBD, in support of GBF Global targets for 2030 and how development pathways of environmental and non-environmental development areas can contribute to achieving these
  - ✓ *Communicating the collective view of the pathway for change:* recognize the reality and vision of the different stakeholders involved in biodiversity action at the national level
  - ✓ *Identify the potential change and main UN contribution:* building on mandates and comparative advantages of the different UN entities, ensure that both biodiversity conservation and sustainable use action are being considered
  - ✓ *Periodic review:* Look for and build on references to biodiversity in the theory of change process in previous cycles

Strategic priorities

- Based on the theory of change, the definition of a long-term vision for biodiversity issues should be in line with National Targets and NBSAPs.
- Decide whether:
  - ✓ Biodiversity will be included as a specific priority at the results level, and/or
  - ✓ Biodiversity issues will be addressed as part of strategic priorities addressing wider environmental issues, such as climate change and pollution, and/or
  - ✓ Biodiversity issues will be incorporated into other non-environmental strategic priorities

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Cooperation Framework outcomes
- Decide whether:
  - ✓ Biodiversity-specific outcomes will be established, and/or
  - ✓ Biodiversity issues will be addressed as part of outcomes addressing wider environmental issues, and/or
  - ✓ Biodiversity issues will be included in non-environmental outcomes.
- UNCTs may explore developing cross-cutting outcomes that consider the interlinkages between plant and animal biodiversity and areas such as nutrition, health, climate change and human rights as 'collective outcomes'.
- Include the specific beneficiaries of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use actions, applying a HRBA perspective. Pay particular attention to local communities, smallholders, farmers, women groups, indigenous peoples and other vulnerable groups.

Cooperation Framework outputs
- As UNCTs have direct control over outputs, these are well suited to consider and address biodiversity action. Consider the definition of integrated, synergistic outputs that support both biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, building on UN entities' mandates and comparative advantage and the consideration of relevant international commitments.

- Examples of integrated and holistic approaches include:
  - ✓ One Health approaches, recognizing the interconnections among people, animals and ecosystems, and links between biodiversity, zoonotic diseases, plant pests, and public health.
  - ✓ The biodiversity and climate change nexus in spatial planning
  - ✓ Urban-rural linkages
  - ✓ The human rights, environment, climate change and biodiversity nexus
  - ✓ Consideration of climate change, disaster risk reduction and biodiversity aspects in policies on decent jobs; gender; social resilience; food security and nutrition; sustainable economic development and trade; peace; and conflict prevention
  - ✓ Consideration of integrated approaches and tools for enhanced coordination, cooperation, and synergies for the coherent implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and other international commitments

- Sustainable use of biodiversity may be promoted in areas such as agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries and forestry. Following such an approach may lead to:
  - ✓ An increase in the application of practices that are already taking place in the region, such as sustainable intensification, innovative agroecological practices, and other nature-positive actions that contribute to the efficiency and productivity of production systems, while conserving and restoring biodiversity and maintaining its contribution to people and livelihoods
  - ✓ Recognizing the intrinsic interlinkages between biodiversity, food and agriculture. Biodiversity loss poses a significant threat to the availability and access to healthy, nutritious and diverse diets

- The following examples of concrete actions may guide the development of outputs:
  - ✓ Ecosystem and landscape restoration actions, including ecological restoration strategies and restoration activities in productive landscapes
  - ✓ Sustainable and community-based forest management practices, including forest conservation and sustainable use practices aimed at reducing forest degradation
  - ✓ Sustainable and integrated productive schemes, such as agroforestry and silvopasture
  - ✓ Increase protected areas (PAs), community-based sustainable land management practices, and the implementation of Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs)
  - ✓ Incorporate nature-based solutions (NbS) and ecosystem-based approaches for biodiversity conservation
  - ✓ Consider the development of specific communications, education, and advocacy activities on biodiversity
  - ✓ UNESCO's actions for biodiversity: making peace with nature[i] provides examples of actions and projects around biodiversity and ecosystem protection, community-based actions, and advancing knowledge sharing and science

Outcome 5 of Armenia's CF 2021–2025 states that: "Ecosystems are managed sustainably and people benefit from participatory and resilient development and climate-smart solutions", in support of the strategic Priority 2: "Green, sustainable, and inclusive economic development" and entailing the following outputs:

- Output 5.1: Low emission and resource efficiency objectives are mainstreamed into development plans/policies and business practices
- Output 5.2: Enabling environment is created for environmentally sound management of ecosystems, and mitigated pollutants from waste, chemicals, and other resources
- Output 5.3: Ecosystems and population vulnerability is reduced through increased resilience to climate change and disasters

Biodiversity-related indicators include:

- SDG indicator 15.1.2 (adapted): Area of important sites for terrestrial and freshwater biodiversity under improved management, with a target of 380,000 ha by 2025 (outcome level)
- Contributing to indicator SDG 15.1.1: Area of forest cover under sustainable and climate adaptive management practices, with a target of 135,800 ha by 2025 (outcome level)
- Contributing to indicator SDG 15.3.1: Area of ecosystems/lands rehabilitated or sustainably managed, including through innovative spatial/urban plans and rural community-based solutions, with a target of 186,000 ha by 2025 (output 5.2)
- Number of improved policies, mechanisms, and legal, regulatory frameworks to address conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, with a target of 10 by 2025 (output 5.2)

BOX 12. EXAMPLE FROM THE REGION (BIODIVERSITY OUTCOMES): ALBANIA

Albania's Cooperation Framework (2022–2026) presents a well-developed overall and outcome-specific theory of change, including the following biodiversity and environmental outcomes.

- Outcome B: By 2026, innovative and integrated policy solutions accelerate sustainable, productive and inclusive economic development, enhancing climate change adaptation and mitigation and transition to a green and blue economy. <u>Some</u> biodiversity and ecosystem-related targets include:
  - Reach nine new or amended laws, policies, regulations approved for environmental protection and sustainable green and blue growth incorporating gender equity considerations and sex disaggregated data by 2026
  - Achieve a target of 52 degree of integrated water resources management by 2026 (SDG target 6.5.1)
  - Reach 23% of the country covered by protected areas and under improved management for conservation and sustainable use by 2026 (SDG target 15.1.2, proxy)
  - 30 cities implementing green and smart action plans providing access to safe, healthy, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, particularly for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities (SDG target 11.7)

This outcome covers a wide range of environmental issues alongside economic growth with sustainability and resilience considerations.

BOX 13. EXAMPLE FROM THE REGION (BIODIVERSITY OUTCOMES): TÜRKIYE

Türkiye's Cooperation Framework (2021–2025) contemplates the following environmental and biodiversity-related outcomes:

- Outcome 2.1: By 2025, public institutions and private sector contribute to a more inclusive, sustainable and innovative industrial and agricultural development, and equal and decent work opportunities for all, in cooperation with the social partners.
  - It entails a target of reaching 1.4 million hectares of land allocated to organic and good agricultural practices by 2025 (SDG target 2.4)
- Outcome 3.1: By 2025, all relevant actors take measures to accelerate climate action, to promote responsible production and consumption, to improve the management of risks and threats to people, to ensure sustainable management of the environment and natural resources in urban and ecosystem hinterlands. Considers the following biodiversity and ecosystems-related targets for 2025:
  - Reach 18% of normal forest area as a proportion of total land area (SDG indicator 15.1.1)
  - Achieve 198,991 plants and animal genetic resources secured in conservation facilities, considering seed and animal materials at gene banks (SDG indicator 2.5.1)

The CF also analyses and reports the synergies between the different Outcomes, noting for example that interventions under outcome 3.1 will also contribute to the economic transformation and creation of decent work opportunities foreseen under outcome 2.1.

Cooperation Framework performance indicators

- Building on the national and regional SDG indicator framework, consider quantitative and qualitative indicators that inform the implementation of biodiversity-specific and related outcomes and outputs.
- Consider national targets and indicators submitted to the CBD at the country level, linked to the implementation of GBF targets and other commitments, adjusting target values with the duration of the CF.
- Use nationally available data on biodiversity compiled throughout the CCA and UNSDCF design process.
- While available data may not be sufficient to establish baseline and targets values in terms of number and status of animal and plant species, explore indicators that provide information on ecosystem functions, ecosystem services, and other type of related economic and social indicators.

BOX 14. MONITORING FRAMEWORK FOR THE GBF

The GBF is accompanied by a monitoring framework with a set of agreed indicators for tracking progress towards goals and targets.

The monitoring framework includes headline indicators for each target, which can be recommended for national, regional and global monitoring. In addition, it considers detailed component and complementary indicators.

For example, for target 11: restore, Maintain, and Enhance Nature's contributions to People:

Headline indicators:
- B.1 Services provided by ecosystems

Component indicators:
- Number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000 population
- Mortality rate attributed to unsafe water, unsafe sanitation and lack of hygiene (exposure to unsafe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) for all services
- Annual mean levels of fine particulate matter (e.g., PM2.5 and PM10) in cities
- Proportion of bodies of water with good ambient water quality
- Level of water stress

Complementary indicators:
- Air emission accounts.
- Proportion of local administrative units with established and operational policies and procedures for participation of local communities in water and sanitation management.
- Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services.
- Mortality rate attributed to household and ambient air pollution (SDG indicator 3.9.1)

UNCT configuration
- Analyse the expertise and services needed from the UNCT (the demand) and its capabilities to deliver (the supply) biodiversity-specific and related outcomes. In this regard, consider expertise on plant and animal conservation, as well as on biodiversity action in productive landscapes.
- Analyse the national and local landscape and map possible partners, taking into account that implementation partners at the national and local level may be more suitable to deliver actions on the ground (e.g., ecological restoration actions with positive impacts on biodiversity).
- Consider the UN's development system's capacities at the regional and global level, particularly if biodiversity expertise and/or capacities at the national level are limited.
- Consider building on the experience and lessons learned in other UNCTs in Europe and Central Asia.

Cooperation Framework implementation
- When preparing the Joint Work Plan (JWP), analyse the contribution of each entity to biodiversity-specific and related outcomes, considering both conservation and sustainable use action, and synergies among these.
- Consult implementing partners and consider their capacity to support and implement biodiversity conservation measures.
- Activities should support the implementation and progress towards mid and long-term national and international biodiversity targets and commitments (e.g., GBF targets by 2030).

> ### BOX 16 EXAMPLE OF JOINT BIODIVERSITY ACTIONS
>
> For example, in a specific territory with fragmented ecosystems, a particular UN entity can focus on implementing plant conservation actions inside PAs.
>
> In the same area, a different UN entity may focus on unprotected and productive lands (e.g., agriculture, livestock) located at the surroundings of such PAs, and support the adoption of more sustainable production practices with positive impact on biodiversity.
>
> Both initiatives can be translated into a joint plan comprising conservation and sustainable use actions for such area and represent possible synergies by following a territorial approach.

- Bring biodiversity to the attention and discussion of the Results Groups; Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Group; and Communication groups.
- Consider establishing a cross-cutting Thematic Group on biodiversity issues or ensure that to make sure that biodiversity matters are considered in the context of wider environmental issues in other groups.
- Encourage UN entities to develop biodiversity-specific and biodiversity-related programmes and projects, following integrated and holistic approaches.

Cooperation Framework monitoring and evaluation
- Incorporate biodiversity aspects into the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan. This can be particularly important taking into account that monitoring of conservation measures is often neglected.
- Re-assess the suitability of biodiversity-specific and related indicators when conducting the Annual Performance Review, in light of the latest biodiversity trends, challenges and risks. Moreover, analyse if the UNCT configuration needs to be adjusted to properly address such issues.
- Make sure to engage with relevant stakeholders and partners engaged in biodiversity action (and throughout the UNSDCF process) to refine the MEL Plan following a collaborative approach.
- When conducting evaluation assessments, analyse the effectiveness of biodiversity measures, as well as the incorporation of biodiversity considerations in the overall Results Framework.
- Learning needs assessments for UN staff with regard to biodiversity expertise can be conducted.
- Highlight implementation and progress of biodiversity actions in the UN Country Results Reports.

Guiding questions for integrating biodiversity in the UNSDCF

The following questions may serve as a checklist and guide for the integration of biodiversity considerations into the UNSCDF:

Prioritization of biodiversity issues

- Could biodiversity issues be addressed as its own priority area in the Cooperation Framework? And/or will biodiversity be addressed as part of environmental issues more broadly?
- Are the key actors and stakeholders involved in biodiversity action at the national level engaged in the prioritization exercise?
- Is the UNCT capable of considering biodiversity issues? Are UN capacities enough to integrate biodiversity conservation and sustainable use considerations, including in the context of non-environmental priorities?

Theory of change

- Does the theory of change address the different drivers of biodiversity loss?
- Does the theory of change reflect the main findings of the CCA, and challenges linked to biodiversity loss and ecosystem deterioration?
- What are the desired changes by 2030 for biodiversity and ecosystems? How are these contributing to global targets under the GBF and other relevant MEAs? What is the main overall UN contribution to this change?
- Is the theory of change considering the roles of the different stakeholders involved in biodiversity action at the national level? Is the theory of change well-understood by such actors and stakeholders?
- Has the theory of change been reviewed and updated based on the latest biodiversity and ecosystem data? Are the latest trends properly reflected in the theory of change?

Strategic priorities

Based on identified challenges, causal relationships, envisioned results and assumptions:

- Should biodiversity issues represent a particular strategic priority at the results level? And/or
- Are biodiversity issues included as part of wider environmental and non-environmental strategic priorities?

Results framework, outcomes and outputs

- Are biodiversity issues represented in at least one outcome?
- Are non-environmental outcomes considering and cross-referencing biodiversity issues?
- If applicable, are 'collective outcomes' integrating the linkages between animal and plant biodiversity and other key areas (e.g., nutrition, health, climate change, human rights)?
- Do outcomes specify the direct beneficiaries of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, such as local communities, smallholders, farmers, and indigenous peoples? Do these correspond with the population groups affected by biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation identified in the CCA?
- Do outputs describe actions contributing to biodiversity-specific and related outcomes, involving different UN entities? Do they promote holistic approaches (e.g., One Health approach, biodiversity and climate change nexus, human rights, DRR, biodiversity and food and agriculture, etc.)

- Do outputs consider integrated approaches and tools for enhanced coordination, cooperation, and synergies for the coherent implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and other international commitments, with support from relevant UN entities?

Performance indicators
- Do performance indicators appropriately represent and inform progress towards the implementation of biodiversity-specific and related outcomes and outputs?
- If applicable, are performance indicators aligned with the latest National Targets and indicators submitted to the CBD?
- Is available data sufficient to measure progress against these indicators? What are the main data gaps?

UNCT configuration
- Does the UNCT possess sufficient capacity and expertise to advance (animal and plant) biodiversity conservation and sustainable use actions?
- Who are potential implementation partners to execute actions on the ground?
- Are there good examples and lessons learned in other UNCTs in the region in terms of achieving biodiversity results?

Cooperation Framework implementation
- Do JWPs incorporate outputs that contribute to biodiversity-specific and related outcomes of the CF?
- Is the contribution of individual UN entities to biodiversity-specific and related outputs and outcomes clear?
- Is the UNCT promoting the development of biodiversity-specific and biodiversity-related programmes and projects by the different UN entities, following holistic and integrated approaches?
- Is there a clear link between JWPs and the implementation of mid and long-term national and international commitments, including the 2030 Agenda and GBF targets?
- Has the establishment of a cross-cutting thematic group on biodiversity, ecosystems, and related issues been considered?

Cooperation Framework monitoring and evaluation
- Have the indicators been reviewed against present and prospected trends and risks for biodiversity loss and ecosystem deterioration?
- What are the main learning needs for UN staff regarding biodiversity conservation and sustainable use?
- Are biodiversity-specific and related indicators addressed when conducting Annual Performance Reviews?
- Are biodiversity-specific sections incorporated in UN Country Results Reports, as well as clear statements on the status of the implementation of biodiversity actions?

Annexes

Annex 1. Summary of valuations and studies included in the ESVD in Europe and Central Asia Countries

Countries	Number of valuations	Number of studies
North Macedonia	36	4
Georgia	15	1
Serbia	8	1
Kyrgyzstan	6	1
Türkiye	6	4
Uzbekistan	6	1
Belarus	5	2
Kazakhstan	5	2
Tajikistan	5	1
Montenegro	4	2
Albania	2	1
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2	1
Turkmenistan	2	1
Ukraine	1	1
Armenia	-	-
Azerbaijan	-	-
Republic of Moldova	-	-

Source: Analysis based on ESVD as of December 2024

Annex 2. International environmental commitments, treaties and MEAs

	CITES	CMS	(globe)	International Treaty		Ramsar		UN	UNFCCC	Basel Convention	Rotterdam Convention	Stockholm Convention	Minamata	Montreal Protocol
Target 1 (spatial planning)		✓✓		✓✓		✓✓✓		✓✓						
Target 2 (restoration)						✓✓✓		✓✓						
Target 3 (protected areas)		✓✓				✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓						
Target 4 (species conservation)	✓✓	✓✓✓		✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓							
Target 5 (sustainable use of species)	✓✓✓	✓✓✓		✓✓										
Target 6 (invasive alien species)			✓✓✓			✓✓								
Target 7 (pollution)										✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Target 8 (climate change)						✓✓			✓✓✓					
Target 9 (species management)	✓✓	✓✓✓		✓✓	✓✓									
Target 10 (other key sectors)				✓✓✓		✓✓								
Target 11 (nature's contributions to people)						✓✓	✓✓		✓✓✓					
Target 12 (urban nature)														
Target 13 (access and benefit sharing)				✓✓✓										
Target 14 (mainstreaming)		✓✓												
Target 15 (business and biodiversity)				✓✓✓										
Target 16 (sustainable consumption)										✓✓				
Target 17 (biosafety)														
Target 18 (incentives and subsidies)														
Target 19 (financial resources)				✓✓✓										
Target 20 (capacity-building)				✓✓						✓✓	✓✓			
Target 21 (data, information, knowledge)				✓✓										
Target 22 (IPLCs)								✓✓					✓✓	
Target 23 (gender equality)								✓✓					✓✓	

✓✓✓	Potential 'champion' or partner	✓✓	Contributing 'champion' or partner		Also relevant to the MEA

Source: CBD/SBI/4/INF13: Key entry points for cooperation and collaboration among multilateral environmental agreements
https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/92fd/85b4/55c585b9c83b935244aedca4/sbi-04-inf-13-en.pdf

[1] As a reference. the following Technical Note offers a summary of linkages between SDGs and Aichi Biodiversity Targets: biodiversity-2030-agenda-technical-note-en.pdf

[2] Human Rights-Based Approaches to Conserving Biodiversity: Equitable, Effective and Imperative (UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment) Implementing a human rights-based approach (Human Rights and Biodiversity Working Group)

[3] Considers policies, strategies, plans, laws and other type of public policy instruments and regulations

[4] Balding and Williams (2016) introduced the term 'plant blindness' to express the tendency among humans to neither notice nor value plants in the environment. Heywood (2017) states that one of the main consequences of plant blindness is that it has contributed to underinvestment in plant conservation, with plant conservation initiatives receiving considerably less funding that animal conservation projects.

[i]https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/202206/UN%20Cooperation%20Framework%20Internal%20Guidance%20--%201%20June%202022.pdf

[ii]https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ESEAsia/Docs/Misc/UNSC2/21%20Cooperation%20Framework%20Companion%20Package%20%282020%29.pdf

[iii]https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/202206/Consolidated%20Annexes%20to%20the%20Cooperation%20Framework%20Guidance.pdf

[iv] https://uneuropecentralasia.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/Mainstreaming%20guidance.pdf

[v] https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/Gap%20analysis%2028.6.21.pdf

[vi]https://unsdg.un.org/resources/integrating-disaster-risk-reduction-and-climate-change-adaptation-un-sustainable

[vii]https://unsceb.org/sites/default/files/202201/Biodiversity_Common_Approach_50%2B_ways_to_integrate_biodiversity_and_nature-based_solutions.pdf

[viii] https://www.unesco.org/en/earth-network?hub=88737

[ix]https://bio.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Ecology/Biodiversity_(Bynum)/7%3A_Alpha_Beta_and_Gamma_Diversity

[x] https://www.esvd.net/

[xi] https://www.ibat-alliance.org/

[xii] https://biodiversity.unesco.org/

[xiii] https://ort.cbd.int/dashboard#0.4/0/0

[xiv] https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/92fd/85b4/55c585b9c83b935244aedca4/sbi-04-inf-13-en.pdf

[xv]https://www.unep.org/events/workshop/implementation-biodiversity-chemicals-and-waste-meas-and-montevideo-programme-v

[xvi] https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.1229803

[xvii] https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000383600