



COP15: 2022 United Nations Biodiversity Conference

International Outcomes

The Montreal COP15 Biodiversity Conference from December 7th to 19th, 2022, resulted in the ***Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)***, in which almost 200 countries agreed to a new set of goals and targets to “halt and reverse” biodiversity loss by 2030. The GBF can be found [here](#).

The agreement was negotiated as part of the **United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity**, which meets every 2 years to discuss the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and the equitable sharing of benefits arising from genetic resources.



[Biodiversity](#) refers to the variety of life on Earth, in all its forms, from genes and bacteria to entire ecosystems such as forests or coral reefs. Humans depend on biodiversity for so many things - food, water, medicine, a stable climate, among others. However, **the world faces a biodiversity crisis**. Up to one million species are threatened with extinction, irreplaceable ecosystems are being destroyed due to deforestation, and 85% of wetlands have disappeared.

It is important to note that the Montreal COP15 on Biodiversity is completely separate from the Sharm el-Sheikh COP27 on Climate Change held in November 2022, though their goals are intertwined. **COP15 was supposed to be held in Kunming, China in 2020, but due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it was postponed and relocated to Montreal - the secretariat of the Biodiversity Convention.** This year’s GBF replaces the *Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020* (also known as the Aichi Targets) set in Aichi, Japan in 2010, which were mostly missed.

Key Outcomes of COP15:

- The mission to “halt and reverse biodiversity loss” by 2030;
- Protect 30% of the world’s land and 30% of the world’s oceans;
- Increase biodiversity finance by \$200 billion USD per year from all sources, including \$30 billion USD per year from developed countries;
- A stronger monitoring and implementation framework.



International Outcomes (Continued)

Mission: Halting and Reversing Biodiversity Loss

- Biodiversity is [currently declining](#) at the fastest rate observed in human history, with around 1 million animal and plant species threatened with extinction, many within decades. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) has [reported](#) that globally, species populations have declined by average of 69% from 1970 to 2020.
- The shared vision of countries, in the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), is to “live in harmony with nature” by 2050. At COP15, countries **committed to a mission to “halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030.”**



Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau giving opening remarks for COP15. (Photo: Eco-Business.com)

30 x 30: Conserving 30% of the Earth's Land and Sea by 2030

Incorporating more of Earth's land and water ecosystems into protected areas or other effective area-based conservation measures is key to tackling biodiversity loss. Many species are sensitive to the presence of pollution, human infrastructure and other negative human influences.

Other species need large ranges and will not thrive in a landscape of many small and disconnected green spaces; they need well-connected, large protected areas.

At COP15, **countries committed to protect 30% of the world's land and inland-water ecosystems, and 30% of the world's coastal and marine areas, by 2030 (Target 3)**. Although some groups called for a target of 50%, this pledge - commonly known as “30 by 30” - was widely celebrated, with 115 countries having backed the target at the outset of COP15.

- Importantly, countries are encouraged to protect areas that are not just physically large, but that are also particularly significant for biodiversity and ecosystem function.
- The GBF was ambitious in committing to begin restoration efforts for at least 30% of degraded ecosystems by 2030 (Target 2), rather than only 20%.
- Canada is currently aiming to conserve 25% of our lands and oceans by 2025, and 30% of each by 2030.

Globally, as of [2020](#), about 16.6% of terrestrial areas (land and freshwater), and 8% of ocean areas are in protected areas. In Canada, as of [2021](#), 13.5% of its terrestrial area, and 13.9% of its marine territory is protected.



International Outcomes (Continued)

30 x 30: Conserving 30% of the Earth's Land and Sea by 2030 (cont'd)

60% of the Earth's oceans are outside of any nation's jurisdiction, which complicates negotiations. Important technical progress was made at COP15, but many references to the ocean did not make it through negotiations into the final text.

Protected Areas also help address climate change by sustaining and restoring healthy plants and soils which absorb and store carbon.

- Negotiations for a [treaty](#) to **govern the sustainable use of biodiversity on the high seas** will continue in late February of this year and discussions under the International Seabed Authority will continue in July.

Indigenous Issues around 30 x 30

Many non-profits and Indigenous advocacy organizations [expressed concern](#) that the **pledge to allocate 30% of the planet as conservation areas could be used as a reason to force Indigenous people from their lands**, as has happened often [in the past](#). Research has [shown](#) that not all human influence is bad for biodiversity. Indigenous people steward a disproportionately high amount of the natural world and the world's [healthiest and most resilient forests](#) are on Indigenous territory. These concerns about the rights of Indigenous people informed negotiations throughout COP15, and the final draft of the **GBF clearly recognizes the rights of Indigenous peoples over their traditional territories, and acknowledges their important role as custodians of biodiversity**.

- The GBF also recognizes Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) as an effective measure that counts towards a country's 30x30 goal. IPCAs - such as the 6.5-million-acre Thaidene Nënë in North-West Territories - are long-term commitments to conservation led by Indigenous Nations, sometimes in partnership with Crown governments.

Indigenous representatives at COP15 had [advocated](#) for IPCAs as a distinct category of conservation, separate from government protected areas. Ultimately, the final draft of the GBF fell short of explicitly recognizing this distinction, though Indigenous groups cautiously [celebrated](#) the strong language respecting Indigenous rights used throughout the document.



Members of the Indigenous community take part in a protest at COP15 (Alexis Aubin/AFP/Getty Images)



International Outcomes (Continued)

Biodiversity Finance

At COP15, countries set a target of “at least \$200bn in biodiversity finance per year” by 2030 from “all sources” – domestic, international, public and private - to help developing countries meet their biodiversity goals (Target 19). Of this \$200bn, developed countries are expected to provide at least \$20bn per year by 2025, and at least \$30bn per year by 2030.

- Developing countries had hoped for \$100bn per year from developed countries.
- The biodiversity finance gap is currently estimated at roughly \$700bn per year. The GBF plans to fill this gap with this \$200bn per year in biodiversity finance from all sources plus a \$500bn reduction in harmful subsidies (discussed below)

The Democratic Republic of Congo, among others, [criticized](#) the GBF as it increases the obligations on developing countries, without increasing the resources to support them.

- Unlike in UN climate change negotiations, under the UN Biodiversity Convention there are no explicit distinctions between the financial responsibilities of developed and developing countries.

Countries agreed to establish a special trust fund, “The Global Biodiversity Framework Fund” within the existing Global Environment Facility that already provides multilateral funding for environmental projects in developing countries.

- This is a compromise between developing countries, who wanted a new fund for biodiversity that was completely separate from other funds, and developed countries, who preferred to simply expand existing funds.
- The finance decision was adopted as a package without a pause for interventions or enough time to re-read the final documents, a move by the Chinese presidency that was not [received](#) well by some countries.

Indigenous representatives had advocated for direct access to biodiversity financing for Indigenous Nations, without government intermediaries. This demand was not explicitly met, however, the **GBF recognizes Indigenous conservation initiatives as a valuable use for biodiversity financing** provided to member countries (Target 19).

The GBF includes a strong commitment to **reduce harmful subsidies** by at least \$500 billion per year by 2030 in a fair and equitable way, and to scale up positive incentives for biodiversity (Target 18). Currently, the world’s governments spend about \$1.8 trillion USD per year on incentives that harm biodiversity and the climate, such as certain subsidies for agriculture or fossil fuels.



International Outcomes (Continued)

Implementation

Learning from the largely unmet 2010 Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the GBF adopted a [monitoring and implementation framework](#) that mirrors the Paris Climate Agreement. The GBF is not, and cannot be, legally binding, but the plan will have three key steps - sometimes referred to as “**present, review, and ratchet up**”:

1. Each country will present a National Biodiversity Action Plan by 2024.
2. In 2026 and 2029, countries will submit national reports for a review of global progress. Countries will use standardized indicators to review progress, an important improvement over the Aichi Targets.
3. Similar to the process under the Paris Climate Agreement, countries can voluntarily have their national progress be peer reviewed, to then improve their Action Plan. As this is voluntary, civil society groups will need to hold countries to account so that countries ratchet up their National Biodiversity Action Plans as necessary.

Sustainable Use of Biodiversity

[Research](#) from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) has shown that that **one-in-five people across the world rely on wild species for food** and their livelihoods, and that **70% of the world's poor are directly dependent on wild species**.



Wild rice is a culturally important species for Indigenous people in the Great Lakes region of North America (IPBES)

All humans rely in some way on wild species, whether it be for food, fuel, cosmetics, or the creation of pharmaceuticals. Under the GBF, countries agreed to ensure that the harvesting and trade of wild species be sustainable and safe for that species and its wider ecosystem (Target 5), while also ensuring that the use of wild species provide benefits for the people who are most vulnerable and dependent on biodiversity (Target 9).

- In line with the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity, both of these targets explicitly **include the importance of respecting customary sustainable use by Indigenous peoples, who are often criminalized for traditional practices**.



International Outcomes (Continued)

Digital Sequence Information

Digital Sequence Information (DSI) refers to data derived from genetic resources, with **most of the world's genetic diversity in the Global South**. Major questions leading up to COP15 were who can access DSI, for what uses, and especially how the benefits from DSI should be shared equitably between developing countries, Indigenous communities, conservation efforts, researchers and industry.

For example, **what benefits are owed to the country of origin of a rare plant whose genetic sequence is used to make medication without harvesting any more plant material** - especially when that medication may not be available in the country of origin?

COP15 Negotiations on DSI went quickly, as many developing countries were clear that equitable benefit-sharing from the use of DSI was an indispensable part of any GBF. Countries agreed to encourage publishing DSI with geographical origin info and to develop a **multilateral DSI benefit-sharing mechanism, including a global fund**. However, many important details still remain unresolved, such as who will contribute to the fund, how and when the benefits will be distributed, and the role of other stakeholders.

Sustainable Production and Consumption

Countries committed to ensure that **large transnational companies transparently disclose their impacts on biodiversity** (Target 15). Environmental groups and Indigenous representatives wanted stronger, mandatory measures.

The GBF committed to **halve food waste**, which accounts for 17% of global food production, but dropped language on diets (Target 16).

Gender

Women and girls are important actors in biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource management due to their roles, knowledge about natural resources and dependence on nature for their livelihoods, yet are often not involved in decision-making.

- At COP15, **countries adopted the [Gender Plan of Action](#), a pivotal document committed to “gender-responsive implementation”** as opposed to the weaker “gender-sensitive implementation” adopted in earlier agreements (Targets 22 and 23).
- “Gender responsive implementation” is expected to result in more measurable policies and increased access to financial resources.



International Outcomes (Continued)

Other Commitments

The GBF also commits to:

- **Halting human-induced extinction** (Target 4). With no specific timeline, this target is considered [weaker](#) than it could have been, according to environmental groups.
- Minimizing the **impacts of invasive species** on biodiversity, by reducing the rates of introduction by at least 50% and controlling invasive species in priority areas, like islands (Target 6). Invasive species (species that harm an ecosystem that they are newly introduced to) drive 11-15% of species loss [globally](#), so this is considered a relatively strong goal.
- Minimizing the impact of climate change on biodiversity, using **nature-based solutions** (such as wetland conservation or forest restoration). Some argue that nature-based solutions [commodify nature](#) and that the term is so vague it can be misused, but they are useful in addressing climate change, biodiversity loss and human well-being, all at once.
- Increasing **access to green spaces** to improve human health (Target 12) and reducing the risk of **pathogen spill-over of infectious diseases** from animals to humans (Target 5).
- **Reducing pollution** by decreasing excess nutrient loss by half, and reducing the overall risk from pesticides by half (Target 7). There was significant disagreement on this, and the final text excluded many types of pollution - such as mercury, heavy metals or sound pollution. It also uses the less specific goal of “reducing overall risk,” with no agreed-upon methodology to define risk, opening the door to non-implementation. However, some experts argue against a numerical reduction goal, as certain pesticides are high-risk even in the tiniest amounts.



“It is significant that the world has recognized how destructive pollution can be for biodiversity in Target 7 of [GBF]. For the first time, parties have agreed to an explicit objective on pesticides, committing to reduce overall risk from pesticides and highly hazardous chemicals by at least half by 2030.” **Cassie Barker, Environmental Defence**



Focus on Canada

“I believe, as we do for climate change, an accountability act to enshrine our 2030 nature targets in law is required. We are committed to doing even more to raise the bar in the coming years.” Steven Guilbeault at [Nature Canada panel](#) (1:31:05)



Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, Steven Guilbeault with his Chinese counterpart, Huang Runqiu (Graham Hughes, La Presse Canadienne)

In Canada, more than [5000 wild species](#) are at some risk of extinction. Minister Guilbeault and Prime Minister Trudeau signalled a renewed commitment to biodiversity conservation at COP15, and pushed hard for the 30x30 implementation mechanism (discussed above). Among the other [promises and announcements](#) made, Canada also:

- Committed [\\$800 million](#) over seven years to fund up to four **Indigenous-led conservation initiatives**, protecting up to 1 million square kilometres;
- Announced support for the [First Nations Guardians Network](#) to support Indigenous Land guardians who monitor and restore ecosystems, and maintain cultural sites.
- Committed [\\$227.5 million](#) for **ocean restoration and research projects**;
- Announced over [\\$600 million](#) in **biodiversity finance** for developing countries;
- [Announced](#) a **bilateral nature agreement** between the federal government and the Yukon, to protect an additional 6% of the Yukon, achieving 25% protection by 2025. The next in this series of bilateral nature agreement, between Canada and BC is expected in 2023.
- Committed to a domestic strategy and action plan to halt and reverse nature loss in Canada that should include **new legislation for accountability** to biodiversity commitments.
- In [Budget 2021](#), the government committed \$2.3 billion over 5 years for nature conservation

What's Next: COP16 will be held in Turkey in 2024.