



July 14, 2023

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Minister of Environment and Climate Change
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Re: Canada's 2030 Biodiversity Strategy

Dear Minister:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the discussion paper regarding Canada's 2030 Biodiversity Strategy. As scientists specializing in conservation ecology, species at risk, land use planning, impact assessment, ecosystem science, and biodiversity at Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) Canada¹, we are pleased to submit this letter. As detailed in this submission, WCS Canada programs are well-aligned with the implementation of Canada's 2030 Biodiversity Strategy. Also, our perspectives are strengthened by our close relationship with sister WCS global programs in international policy² and field-based conservation work in more than 60 countries around the world³. Our memberships on the Canadian delegations to the OEWG and COP15 meetings (JCR) and on the federal Nature Advisory Committee (DTK) and Nature-Based Climate Solutions Advisory Committee (CRH) further contribute to our extensive familiarity with the subject matter.

Introductory Remarks

We are encouraged by Canada's leadership role on the world stage in negotiating the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) and its current commitment to developing an ambitious National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) by 2024. The KMGBF encompasses the essential elements required for a genuine transformation towards achieving the vision of harmonious coexistence with nature.

We are, of course, mindful of the challenges associated with translating plans into tangible actions, as evidenced by the current and outdated (1995) Biodiversity Strategy in Canada and the significant social

¹ <https://wcscanada.org/>

² <https://www.wcs.org/our-work/solutions/international-policy>

³ <https://www.wcs.org/our-work/places>

and political obstacles impeding the effective implementation of the KMGBF. We acknowledge that Canada has made progress in certain aspects of biodiversity conservation, particularly related to advances in land and sea protection and elevated support for Indigenous leadership as a key element of Reconciliation. Nevertheless, the continued loss of wildlife and natural spaces persists, and their safeguarding remains an afterthought to core government business.

Therefore, addressing the key challenges of implementation necessitates a socio-ecological transformation that includes all-of-society, accelerating ongoing conservation efforts, and adopting new approaches that recognize the fundamental role of nature in our economy, society, and well-being. “Transformation” is first and foremost an acknowledgment that the status quo is failing to ameliorate ecological degradation and that measures that have been put in place to prevent and manage impacts have had little discernible effect. In short, “transformative change means doing things differently – not just a little more or less of something we’re already doing”⁴.

Overarching Recommendation

We have one overarching recommendation regarding Canada’s approach to developing this NBSAP, which is to exhibit the same leadership strength that was evident at the Montreal COP15 to this task by bringing forward a strong blueprint that adopts the entire KMGBF as an integrated whole, tailored to Canada. This includes its Vision, Goals and Targets, along with key cross-cutting considerations articulated in the framework for effective implementation.

The goals and targets of the KMGBF are purposefully (and appropriately) designed to work as an integrated whole, reflecting the same principle of indivisibility embodied in the UN Sustainable Development Goals⁵. These require actions to be integrated across the whole of government and society. The KMGBF also includes a set of umbrella themes (“considerations”) in Section C that are relevant for understanding purpose, implementation, monitoring and reporting of all goals and targets. As described by IISD in their summary of the COP15 proceedings⁶, this addition “makes the GBF a more inclusive and holistic system than its predecessor” (the 2010-2020 Aichi Targets). All KMGBF targets relate to others and need to be implemented in concert.

This means that in designing the NBSAP, Canada must resist the temptation to 1) select and ignore various element of the KMGBF, and/or 2) emphasize actions that are already underway, while avoiding new and necessary actions. With respect to the former, the Canadian translation of the 2010–20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets (2015)⁷ represented a cherry-picked version of the global strategy; Canada’s document was focused primarily on sustainable use and paid little attention to reducing pressures on biodiversity. Equally concerning has been Canada’s translation of the Global UN Sustainable Development Goals into a domestic sustainable development strategy⁸, which has focused

⁴ <https://ipbes.net/news/what-transformative-change-how-do-we-achieve-it>

⁵ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>. See also Figure 1 in

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S2590332223000416> for a cross-walk between the goals and targets of the KMGBF and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

⁶ <https://enb.iisd.org/un-biodiversity-conference-oewg5-cbd-cop15-summary>

⁷ <https://www.biodivcanada.ca/national-biodiversity-strategy-and-action-plan/2020-biodiversity-goals-and-targets-for-canada>

⁸ <https://www.fsds-sfdd.ca/en>

on what Canada is already doing to contribute to the goals, rather than any articulation of what will be required -- including new actions -- to contribute meaningfully towards the achievement of the global goals.

In short, we need bold and creative new actions to inspire Canadians to in turn take needed actions to stop widespread degradation and disappearance of nature and biodiversity.

While the full KMGBF is undeniably complex and the task of implementing it effectively is overwhelming to contemplate, the requirement to develop the NBSAP presents an opportunity for the federal government to display the leadership that is so necessary for addressing the biodiversity crisis – together with climate. CBD envisions NBSAPs to be strong instruments of implementation, intended to be whole-of-government policies that facilitate “biodiversity mainstreaming at all relevant levels within political, economic, and social sectors.”⁹ We do recognize, of course, that the constitutional realities of this federation place real limits on the use of federal authority to address biodiversity conservation that cannot deny the right of provinces and territories to regulate their natural-resource industries. But there is vital place for skillful use of federal government authority to play an effective leadership role without abandoning cooperative federalism. For this reason, we encourage and expect Canada to develop an NBSAP that represents a blueprint for action. Quite simply, what will it take to implement the complete KMGBF in a Canadian context?

Seven thematic areas where Canada can be a global leader in implementing the KMGBF

In this submission, we have provided an analysis of each of the individual goals and targets and their relevance to Canada (Appendix). In addition, **we are emphasizing seven thematic areas where Canada can be a global leader and where we have knowledge. They are each illustrative of the integrated nature of the goals and targets within the framework at large. They are each crucial to success, but none should not be considered as priorities above other elements of Canada's NBSAP that we do not mention (including but not limited to financial aspects, Indigenous leadership, pollution, etc.), as we consider holistic adoption of the framework tailored to Canada to be essential.** Our participation in the development of collective feedback submissions has enabled us to focus our contributions on themes not covered extensively by others, leveraging WCS's specialized expertise and unique perspectives. The thematic areas around which we are framing our recommended actions are:

1. Adopting a whole-of-government approach (p. 4)
2. Maximizing biodiversity and climate change co-benefits (p. 5)
3. Maintaining and restoring ecological integrity (p. 7)
4. Embracing the One Health approach (p. 8)
5. Highlighting Key Biodiversity Areas (p. 10)
6. Improving quality and availability of biodiversity information (p. 11)
7. Integrating global and domestic responsibilities (p. 12)

⁹ cbd.int/doc/c/fcae/4aa8/dd3362074b26490c60880abd/sbi-02-02-add1-en.pdf

1. Adopting a whole-of-government approach

Just as Canada has made steps intended to enshrine a whole of government approach in other areas (Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, gender, and climate change are a few emerging examples), implementing the KMGBF will require intentional collaborative efforts on biodiversity issues across Crown government agencies. It is crucial to adopt an integrated approach that ensures the policies and actions of one department do not undermine those of another, promoting policy coherence rather than conflict. Within the federal government, this underscores the vital role of central agencies, including the Privy Council Office, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, and the Department of Finance Canada. These agencies should consider biodiversity, together with climate change, as key considerations when formulating budgets and determining the government's direction as early in decision-making processes as possible.

Currently, biodiversity is often an afterthought, considered only once major decisions have already been made, limiting opportunities for proactive measures to avoid negative impacts. While awareness of potential incompatibilities between biodiversity and climate action is growing, siloed approaches to policy development and decision-making persist, necessitating their resolution to ensure mutual support for these two agendas, as Canada stated recently in a submission to the CBD Secretariat in May 2023¹⁰.

A whole-of-government commitment to Canada's NBSAP also requires formal coordination mechanisms that can help ensure that all provincial and territorial Crown government departments and agencies are pulling in the same direction to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030. All levels of government must align their activities with the goal of being nature positive by 2030.

Recommended actions for adopting a whole-of-government approach

- Create a formal governance/coordinating mechanism that includes federal, provincial, territorial and Indigenous governments and organizations and civil society, building on the Pathway to Canada Target One model.
- Direct all federal ministers through their mandate letters to help deliver on the NBSAP goals and targets, similar to what has been done for goals related to climate change, reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, and gender equity.
- Maximize coordination across federal departments prior to the official release of the NBSAP to ensure that there is nature-positive policy coherence (and see Integrated Climate and Biodiversity Lens in #3 below).
- Develop an overarching policy that adopts the mitigation hierarchy as a framework to mainstream biodiversity considerations across federal government departments, and embed climate and biodiversity offset policies within this broader framework to ensure they are used as a last resort, and only to address impacts that cannot be avoided or mitigated.

¹⁰ CBD Notification 2023-043 "Submission of views and information on biodiversity and climate change"

- Incentivize provinces and territories to contribute to Canada's NBSAP commitments using all available tools (e.g., financial, legal etc.), including by linking federal funding for provincial, territorial, municipal, and Indigenous priorities to deliver NBSAP goals and targets.

2. Maximizing biodiversity and climate change co-benefits

The interlinkages between the biodiversity and climate crises are becoming increasingly evident on a global scale. The KMGBF recognizes climate change as a key direct threat to nature, with indirect harmful impacts of this driver also manifesting through certain actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Adding to this, CBD decisions have consistently acknowledged the “critical role of biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services for climate change adaptation, mitigation and disaster risk reduction.”¹¹ As for the UNFCCC, the *Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan*¹² arising from COP27 (the “cover decision”) in late 2023 noted “the importance of ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems, including in forests, the ocean and the cryosphere, and the protection of biodiversity, recognized by some cultures as Mother Earth....” for addressing climate change, and included nature-based solutions for the first time in UNFCCC history.

Despite the intertwined nature of climate and biodiversity, the two challenges are for the most part being addressed quite separately – not only in separate UN Conventions, but in domestic policy and government structures. As stated in a landmark 2021 IPBES-IPCC joint workshop report¹³, “This functional separation creates a risk of incompletely identifying, understanding, and dealing with the connection between the two. In the worst case it may lead to taking actions that inadvertently prevent the solution of one or the other, or both issues.” When there are synergies or co-benefits -- e.g., protection of carbon-rich areas intersecting with important areas for biodiversity – positive outcomes for addressing both challenges are more likely. Without coordinated attention, however, the opposite can occur, with persistent harms to biodiversity and sustained provisioning of nature's contributions to people: for example, through direct mortality (e.g., to bats and birds from wind turbines or fish through hydropower turbines), and the loss and degradation of habitats, ecosystems and carbon stocks (e.g., from renewable energy infrastructure and mining of critical minerals, particularly in carbon-rich ecosystems).

Even within ECCC, climate and biodiversity actions are largely pursued independently, and this is certainly the case across departments. While important strides have been undertaken in recent years, including the introduction of nature climate solutions as part of net zero targets, and the recognition of nature and biodiversity in climate adaptation, true integration remains lacking.

One key example in Canada of the essential service delivered by nature for climate change is provided by peatlands¹⁴. One-quarter of the world's peatlands are in Canada, representing an enormous store of irrecoverable carbon and this needs much broader recognition than is currently the case. Peatlands in Canada store approximately 150 Gt of carbon – equivalent to 11 years of current global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Protecting and managing peatlands is critical, as the continued loss and degradation of

¹¹ <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-15/cop-15-dec-30-en.pdf>

¹² <https://unfccc.int/documents/624444>

¹³ https://www.ipbes.net/sites/default/files/2021-06/20210609_workshop_report_embargo_3pm_CEST_10_june_0.pdf

¹⁴ <https://esajournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/fee.2437>

these carbon-rich and biodiverse ecosystems will not only undermine achievement of Canada's Net-Zero objectives, but also global climate targets, heightening the global responsibility Canada bears for the protection of these ecosystems. However, a recent WCS Canada review by Dr. Lorna Harris found that all current policies - federal and provincial - are either outdated, poorly implemented, and do not address the critical role of peatlands for climate change mitigation and adaptation. Moreover, emerging policies and strategies aimed at supporting the energy transition – such as those focused on mining for critical minerals – fail to recognise the potential for significant GHG emissions from exploration activities, the development of infrastructure, and the extraction process due to the loss and degradation of peatland carbon stores.

Although “climate change” is explicitly mentioned in only a few places in the KMGBF, multiple targets are relevant to the biodiversity-climate nexus. Accordingly, their implementation in a whole-of-government approach can facilitate intentional and coordinated consideration to maximizing co-benefits and developing a comprehensive understanding of trade-offs. Climate is primarily considered as a direct driver of biodiversity loss (Target 8), but works together with Target 11, which focuses on nature's contributions to people, including climate regulation. In addition, targets that focus on spatial planning (Target 1) and protection (Target 3) will be beneficial for addressing climate change, particularly if high-integrity carbon-rich ecosystems are a key focus, including those with irrecoverable carbon (e.g., peatlands, for which Canada has 25% global responsibility) that we cannot afford to lose if we want to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Restoration of ecosystems (Target 2) and creation of green infrastructure in urban environments (Target 12) can be intentionally carried out to ensure co-benefits for both biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation. Increasing the integration of biodiversity considerations in production systems, through management practices that reinforce biodiversity, can greatly improve the ability of these ecosystems and people to adapt to climate change (Target 10). The KMGBF also calls for “optimizing co-benefits and synergies of finance targeting the biodiversity and climate crises” (Target 19).

Recommended actions for maximizing biodiversity and climate change co-benefits

- Apply an Integrated Climate and Biodiversity Lens to federal policy, decision making and budgeting (domestically and internationally) to ensure implications to biodiversity goals and targets are considered early in the process. This Integrated Climate and Nature Lens should be part of the Impacts Reports in Federal Budgets.
- Develop and implement actions that deliberately consider synergies and trade-offs between biodiversity and climate actions, including integration of biodiversity into the climate change lens being led by the Privy Council Office.
- Ensure that nature climate solutions are planned for their long-term effectiveness, and not narrowly focused on rapid carbon sequestration. Along with this, link carbon offsets to an overarching mitigation hierarchy.
- Conduct a review of all federal policies for wetlands, water, climate, and industry (including critical minerals), to explicitly include peatlands in updated goals and actions and to coordinate across different strategies and plans.

- Prioritize large high-integrity peatlands for protection measures, focusing first on Indigenous-led stewardship, as part of Canada's commitment to protect 30% of lands by 2030.
- Develop a full suite of tools (including blended finance, impact funds, biodiversity bonds, payments for ecosystem services) and financing mechanisms that recognize the value of carbon stores and sinks in Canada and can spur investments to protect them as a complement to offsets.
- Develop an integrated framework and strategy (e.g., a Pan-Canadian Peatlands Strategy) that coordinates and creates policies and incentive schemes that recognize the need for the protection and restoration of peatlands across provinces and territories within the context of the NBSAP Goals and Targets.

3. Maintaining and restoring ecological integrity

Ecological integrity refers to the overall state or health of an ecosystem or place. More specifically, it refers to the extent to which an ecosystem's structure and function is close to its natural state or range of variation (or a reference state if a natural baseline is not available or desired). Declines in ecosystem integrity generally mean reduced suitability or availability of habitat for native biota, disrupted ecological processes and functions, and diminished ecosystem resilience and capacity to sustain species and to continue to provide many ecosystem services, especially those that represent 'public goods' such as regulatory services (e.g., for climate and water). Such ecosystem change brings about different outcomes for various species, with "winners" and "losers" that result in changes in both composition and relative abundance of constituent ecosystem elements. Because ecological integrity is fundamentally linked to the ecosystem services provided by a healthy biosphere, maintaining and restoring integrity is crucial for conserving biodiversity, and helping to ensure human well-being and security in the short and long terms.

The KMGBF has included ecological integrity as a central focus of its commitments, which was not mentioned in the Aichi Targets. This reflects not only a growing scientific understanding of the importance of high-integrity ecosystems¹⁵, but their growing scarcity at a global scale. With research repeatedly confirming that ecosystem degradation and loss are driving biodiversity loss and the decline of ecosystem services, it is of increasing interest to document and properly safeguard the integrity, and therefore the functionality, of natural ecosystems that remain. It is equally important to restore the integrity of degraded systems to improve and stabilise critical ecosystem functions for ecosystem services (e.g., carbon sequestration, water storage), improve connectivity for biodiversity, and to boost ecosystem resilience. The KMGBF reflects both priorities – to both safeguard and restore ecosystem integrity. As such, governments have committed to collectively and significantly reduce (e.g., close to zero) the loss of ecosystems with high ecological integrity by 2030 and to improve the ecological integrity of all ecosystems by 2050 at the latest (Goal 1, and Targets 1, 2 and 12).

Ecosystems with high or relatively high ecological integrity cover over two-thirds of Canada – these are some of the last remaining intact terrestrial ecosystems on Earth. . Many of these regions are also known to have potentially large reserves of critical minerals, and so are of enormous interest for future development, including associated infrastructure (e.g., roads). The boreal forest biome within Canada

¹⁵ <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-07183-6>

includes some of the planet's largest and most important peatlands¹⁶. Conserving Canada's peatlands and forest that have a high degree of ecological integrity and intactness is one of Canada's most critical global contributions to reducing emissions and slowing climate change and protecting biodiversity (see #2 above).

The key to maintaining and safeguarding high-integrity ecosystems in Canada will be through regional scale planning and effective management of cumulative effects. Spatial planning (target 1) led or co-led by Indigenous Peoples offers one pathway to halt the loss of remaining ecosystems with high ecological integrity and to identify and protect other ecologically and culturally important areas in partnership with Indigenous Peoples. Done well, regional land and marine spatial planning processes can bring Crown governments, rightsholders, and stakeholders to the table to design knowledge-based plans that identify areas of the land and seascape that will be conserved, restored and developed based on western science and Indigenous knowledge. While good spatial planning requires upfront investments of time and money, it will help avoid future conflicts over conservation and development proposals. It is an effective way to deliver well-designed, well-connected networks of protected areas, other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) and Indigenous protected and conserved areas (IPCAs) that will conserve natural and cultural values and deliver on the quantity and quality measures of Target 3.

Recommended actions for maintaining and restoring ecological integrity

- Provide long-term financial support for Indigenous-led or co-led regional spatial planning initiatives, including capacity support for Indigenous nations and communities to prepare to engage in planning processes and scientific and technical support, where appropriate.
- Increase attention to effective management of cumulative impacts, including effective design and implementation of regional and strategic assessments across Canada to plan the pace and scale of development and land use change.
- Commit to deliver and report on the quantity (at least 30% of land, freshwater and ocean areas) as well as quality and equity elements of Target 3 including Key Biodiversity Areas identified for ecological integrity (criterion C).
- Ensure federal funding flowing to provinces and territories through Nature Agreements is conditional on their commitment to ambitious, measurable contributions to meeting Targets 1, 2 and 3, co-developed with Indigenous Peoples, with clear accountability mechanisms.
- Recognize land and ocean protection as a nature-based solution that can help deliver climate mitigation and adaptation goals (Target 8) and ensure climate funding programs support nature protection initiatives.

4. Embracing the One Health approach

The opening sentence of the KMGBF -- "Biodiversity is fundamental to human well-being" -- and the acknowledgement of "the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment"¹⁷ highlight the interconnectedness of nature and health. The significance of adopting a One Health approach is well-

¹⁶ <https://www.peatlands.earth/>

¹⁷ in line with United Nations General Assembly resolution 76/300.

reflected in KMGBF and should be integrated into Canada's 2030 Biodiversity Strategy accordingly. The framework not only features One Health among the overarching considerations for implementation but also highlights its importance in targets related to improving human health and well-being and promoting a connection to nature in urban environments (Target 12), spatial planning and restoration for protecting or enhancing ecological integrity (Targets 1 and 2) and reducing the risk of pathogen spillover associated with wildlife trade (Target 5).

As emphasized in the Biodiversity and Health draft decision¹⁸ adopted at COP16, the important linkages between biodiversity and human health and wellbeing are becoming increasingly clear and well-recognized, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic. While the social determinants of health, such as poverty, education, and access to healthcare, have been well understood for decades, the influence of the natural world on human health and health outcomes has received comparatively less attention in Canada. Pertinent considerations include the relationship between ecosystem degradation resulting from agricultural intensification and the epidemiological interactions between wildlife and livestock that heighten the risk of emerging infectious diseases. Additionally, the protective role of tree cover in urban centers against extreme heat, the direct impact of watershed health on the provision of safe drinking water, and the importance of treed green spaces for mental health and well-being are all essential factors.

Although One Health is not a new concept, there has been an increased interest in applying and translating this approach into action, supported by recent global consensus around a working definition. In essence, One Health proposes a paradigm that addresses issues at the intersection of society, health, and the environment, requiring governments to commit to comprehensive and integrated actions across multiple ministries, agencies, and departments to tackle shared health threats. Currently, different government departments oversee human health, domestic animal health, wildlife health, and the management of ecosystem degradation, resulting in a distributed responsibility across numerous institutions. The ongoing highly pathogenic avian influenza outbreak is highlighting the necessity for such an intersectoral approach spanning the mandates of multiple institutions.

Recommended actions for embracing the One Health approach

- Adopt an overarching One Health approach, alongside other holistic approaches, for the 2030 Biodiversity Strategy.
- Embrace the strategic recommendations of the Royal Society of Canada's One Health Working Group¹⁹. These recommendations include establishing a One Health Council to develop, coordinate, and implement a One Health Action Plan for Canada, and developing and implementing an Indigenous Engagement and Knowledge Policy Framework for One Health.
- Strengthen Canada's position and leadership, led by Public Health Canada, in the development of the international Pandemic Instrument, involving other departments such as CWS.
- Enhance investment in wildlife health (Canada lags behind other nations) as a crucial component of One Health implementation. This entails fully implementing the Pan-Canadian Wildlife Health

¹⁸ <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/fe34/9909/1f397d23e855c04d214ba3e8/cop-15-l-17-en.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://rsc-src.ca/en/covid-19-policy-briefing/strengthening-one-health-approach-to-emerging-zoonoses>

framework to foster strong, shared leadership in protecting and promoting wildlife health, preventing and controlling wildlife diseases, and ensuring food safety for Canadians who rely on wildlife as part of their diet.

- Include health-related indicators in the monitoring framework for Canada's 2030 Biodiversity Strategy. Ensure health metrics are included in monitoring and implementation of the National Biodiversity Strategy, and that the health benefits of biodiversity protection are explicitly recognized and identified.
- Fully fund and implement the Pan-Canadian Approach to Wildlife Health²⁰ as a key element of the National Biodiversity Strategy.

5. Highlighting Key Biodiversity Areas

Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) are sites contributing significantly to the persistence of biodiversity in terrestrial, inland water and marine environments. Canada has been a global leader in identifying KBAs²¹ and has a leadership opportunity to integrate KBAs into Canada's 2030 Biodiversity Strategy. KBAs can be designated under one of five criteria: threatened biodiversity; geographically restricted biodiversity; ecological integrity; biological processes; and irreplaceability. KBA designation provides a means of highlighting the importance of an area but does not provide any protections in and of itself. But highlighting these areas should inspire federal, provincial and Indigenous governments, as well as companies and local communities, to take steps to protect the values that have led to their identification as KBAs. The incorporation of KBAs into the recently-released Ontario Biodiversity Strategy 2023-2030²² provides an encouraging example of provincial interest. This is in line with federal support for this initiative since the launch of KBA Canada, which must be reflected in the NBSAP. KBAs can help to ensure that targets for protected and conserved areas include both quality and quantity aspects of conserving biodiversity and are a building block for achieving the KMGBF.

Recommended actions for highlighting Key Biodiversity Areas

- Include KBAs in targets for spatial planning and protected and conserved areas (Target 1), and in measuring the progress of Canada's 2030 Biodiversity Strategy (Target 3). Monitor KBAs to quantify changes to areas of high biodiversity importance as well as proportion of areas of high biodiversity importance that are effectively protected or managed.
- Support the completion of KBA identification for all criteria, and the development of stewardship and monitoring systems. Monitor KBAs to prioritize restoration efforts in those being degraded (Target 2).

²⁰ http://www.cwhc-rcsf.ca/docs/technical_reports/EN_PanCanadian%20Approach%20to%20Wildlife%20Health%20Final.pdf

²¹ <https://kbacanada.org/>

²² https://ontariobiodiversitycouncil.ca/wp-content/uploads/MNRF_23-077_Biodiversity_Strategy_Summary_Concept_EN.pdf

- Continue to fund and support the KBA registry²³ in providing information to governments, communities, scientists, and land use planners to support conservation and sustainable development.
- Integrate KBAs into impact assessment processes, and work with the private sector to avoid or minimise impacts on KBAs, adapting international guidelines on Business and KBAs²⁴ to Canada.

6. Improving quality and availability of biodiversity information

The lack of progress in achieving the targets of Canada's previous national biodiversity strategy underscores the imperative of setting clear objectives and regular reporting on the state of biodiversity. To effectively achieve targets in Canada's 2030 Biodiversity Strategy, it is crucial to have a comprehensive understanding of the current state of nature and track our progress accordingly (Target 21). This necessitates the collection, analysis, and dissemination of biodiversity information, which serves as a vital component of adaptive management. Additionally, it enables Canadians to stay informed about the state of biodiversity and evaluate whether the actions implemented under Canada's 2030 Biodiversity Strategy are yielding positive outcomes for both nature and people throughout the country.

It is important to note that monitoring the biodiversity crisis differs significantly from tracking the climate crisis. While we can assess our progress in combating climate change by monitoring atmospheric carbon dioxide levels, there is no single metric to gauge the health of plants, animals, and ecosystems. There exists no singular diagnostic test for the natural world. To address these challenges, Canada can expand and strengthen the existing Canadian Environmental Sustainability Indicators (CESI) program to align with Canada's national biodiversity strategy and ensure regular updates and reporting on all 23 targets. This challenge is amplified because there is no central repository of foundational scientific information and expertise on biodiversity, and critical data are often not accessible nor understood by the public.

Indigenous knowledge holders are, of course, central to this enterprise. Complex social issues like conservation benefit from multiple ways of knowing and different perspectives on the challenges and opportunities. This relates to concerns for the health and functioning of animals and their ecosystems, where Indigenous Peoples and communities often have knowledge systems held communally and individually about the environment, impacts of land use and climate change, among others. Being integral to improving the quality of biodiversity information, therefore, also means that it will be necessary to ensure that the value generated from Indigenous knowledge be subject to access and benefit sharing ("ABS"). Accordingly, it will be important to establish mechanisms to ensure appropriate attribution and recognition of Indigenous provenance, among many other things.

Sharing biodiversity information with the public and decision makers is critical for mainstreaming biodiversity (Targets 14-21) and achieving the vision of the KMGBF of living in harmony with nature. The transformation necessitates a fundamental change in our relationship with biodiversity. The messages concerning biodiversity and Canada's 2030 Biodiversity Strategy must transcend mere facts. They should cultivate a culture and national identity that centers societal values around the love and conservation of

²³ <https://kbacanada.org/explore/map-viewer/>

²⁴ <https://www.ibat-alliance.org/pdf/guidelines-on-business-and-kbas.pdf>

nature. In addition to a central biodiversity data/information repository (or Atlas), Canada also needs effective communication of trends in nature, biodiversity and climate change to the general public.²⁵

Recommended actions for improving quality and availability of biodiversity information

- Establish mechanisms for regular monitoring and reporting of performance against baseline conditions for the 23 targets of the KMGBF.
- Prioritize funding and training for Indigenous-led monitoring and management of KMGBF metrics and targets.
- Commit to establishing a National Biodiversity Information Inventory, and/or Atlas, the goal of which would be to dramatically expand public and governmental knowledge of trends in biodiversity, to drive science-based decision making and to support ongoing biodiversity research across the country.
- In addition to traditional biodiversity reporting, social scientists and behavior change experts should be engaged to develop new approaches to messaging the importance of biodiversity conservation to Canadians.
- Join and implement the Nagoya Protocol of the CBD, in support of UNDRIP and Reconciliation.

7. Integrating global and domestic responsibilities

Traditionally, Canada has treated domestic and global responsibilities as separate entities, with different departments setting direction and implementing actions accordingly. However, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) presents an opportunity to integrate both aspects, ensuring that domestic actions for biodiversity contribute significantly to the achievement of global biodiversity targets. Simultaneously, Canada must uphold its responsibility as a global north nation, acknowledging its disproportionate share of both the responsibility for global biodiversity impacts and the realization of associated benefits.

It is worth noting that the KMGBF's Section C language ("Considerations for the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework") on whole-of-government approaches, goals and targets are global in nature, and also that the targets generally do not make a distinction between domestic and international policy levers. When referring to global responsibilities, Canada's global responsibilities are particularly relevant with respect to increasing financial resources for KMGBF implementation through overseas development assistance (Target 19), but also ensuring that such contributions are not undermined by harmful subsidies (Target 18). Furthermore, Canada's global responsibility extends to targets such as fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from genetic resource utilization (Target 13), addressing Canada's role in wildlife trade (Target 5), and reducing the

²⁵ The recently launched Wildlife Conservation Society Canada SHAPE (Species, Habitats, Actions, Policies, and Evaluations) of Nature portal (<https://shapeofnature.ca/>) provides an example of communicating important information about nature to the public. SHAPE serves as an easily accessible and all-encompassing hub of information on nature and nature conservation in Canada. It is gaining recognition among the media, public, and scientific community as a valuable resource for biodiversity and conservation-related information. We have just completed our pilot phase and are eager to collaborate with the federal government to enhance the portal's content (including a national biodiversity atlas) and extend its outreach.

global environmental impact of consumption through equitable global trade (Target 16), among others. By incorporating these elements into the strategy, Canada can effectively fulfill its global responsibilities while working towards domestic biodiversity goals.

Recommended actions for integrating global and domestic responsibilities

- Incorporate both domestic and globally-oriented actions into Canada's NBSAP
- Progressively and substantially increase Canada's financial investments for global implementation of the GBF through overseas development assistance (Target 19).
- Consider and address impacts on global biodiversity In reviewing harmful subsidies (Target 18).
- Address the fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the use of genetic resources (Target 13), Canada's role in wildlife trade (Target 5) and reducing the footprint of consumption on global biodiversity (Target 16).
- Undertake robust management of wild species, including those subject to exploitation (targets 4, and 5) and domestic or wild species found in agricultural and other productive landscapes (targets 9, 10)²⁶. A precautionary approach and the call to reduce pathogen spillover (as called for in Target 5) should guide Canada's positions in CITES, Regional Fisheries Management Organizations, and other such fora, as well as through cooperative efforts, reflecting the reality that health is a global public good.

In closing, we thank you for the opportunity to provide input to this ambitious undertaking. We are immensely encouraged by the federal government's leadership, dedication towards implementing the Global Biodiversity Framework, and we have hopes that this will lead to the development of a strong NBSAP, including a clear set of actions. We look forward to the opportunity to collaborate with you and your team in the release and implementation of Canada's 2030 Biodiversity Strategy.

Yours sincerely,

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²⁶ <https://animal.law.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/Animal-Markets-and-Zoonotic-Disease-in-the-United-States.pdf>

Appendix: The KMGBF Targets and their significance in the Canadian context

The table below presents a brief analysis of The Mission and each of the four Goals and 23 Target and its relevance and significance for Canada. These goals and targets are purposively (and appropriately) designed to work as an integrated whole, reflecting the same principle of indivisibility embodied in the UN Sustainable Development Goals. As discussed in the body of our submission, they require actions to be integrated across the whole of government and society.

The full table developed by WCS Canada can be found at: <https://shapeofnature.ca/the-goals-and-targets-of-the-kunming-montreal-biodiversity-framework-kmgbf/>

The CBD Secretariat has a [dedicated website](#) on the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, including explanations of each of the goals and targets and interlinkages between them.

*The **Mission** of the framework for the period up to 2030, towards **the 2050 vision** is: To take urgent action to halt and reverse biodiversity loss to put nature on a path to recovery for the benefit of people and planet by conserving and sustainably using biodiversity and ensuring the fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the use of genetic resources, while providing the necessary means of implementation.*

The mission statement sets the goal of “halting and reversing” biodiversity loss in the next 10 years, setting the stage for a broader effort toward the 2050 vision of putting nature on a path to recovery. This is for all CBD parties (member countries) to achieve by 2030, as a key “stepping stone” to the 2050 Vision, where “biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and wisely used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people.”

Significance for Canada

“Halt and reverse biodiversity loss” has been a central element of [Environment and Climate Change Canada’s mandate](#) since a year before the Montreal agreement. But this mission is not currently reflected in Canadian federal, provincial and territorial policies and laws. The mission reflects the need for actions taken in the next eight years to not only halt but also reverse biodiversity loss so that recovery can occur after 2030.

GOALS A-D

Goal A: *The integrity, connectivity and resilience of all ecosystems are maintained, enhanced, or restored, substantially increasing the area of natural ecosystems by 2050; Human induced extinction of known threatened species is halted, and, by 2050, the extinction rate and risk of all species are reduced tenfold and the abundance of native wild species is increased to healthy and resilient levels; The genetic diversity within populations of wild and domesticated species, is maintained, safeguarding their adaptive potential.*

Goal A embraces all three elements of biodiversity: ecosystems, species, and genetic diversity. Ecosystems and genetic diversity receive considerably stronger emphasis in the GBF than they did in the Aichi targets.

For ecosystems, an emphasis on connectivity, integrity and resilience of ecosystems was an important outcome and represented a shift from simpler focus in the previous agreement (Aichi targets). Integrity and connectivity are foundations for resilience. The wording of this goal implies that significant net increases in both area, connectivity, and integrity of natural ecosystems is needed to reach the 2050 vision. Furthermore, this goal recognizes the critical roles of existing natural ecosystems. While ecosystem restoration will be essential due to the loss that has occurred, priority should be given to retaining existing natural ecosystems because prevention will reduce significant costs from loss.

Species: By emphasizing both “extinction” and “extinction risk” the agreement creates an incentive to avoid species loss by taking action while species recovery is still possible. A critical concept is to set a goal of ensuring species populations are maintained at healthy and resilient levels rather than simply being satisfied with avoiding extinction.

Genetic diversity: The previous agreement focused narrowly on the value of maintaining genetic diversity to serve human needs, such as diversity in food crops or livestock. The KMGBF is much broader and recognizes the importance of maintaining genetic diversity for wild species to enhance reproduction and survival rates of individual organisms, reduce vulnerability to climate change, and lower risk of species’ extinctions.

Significance for Canada

Canada’s efforts to halt and reverse biodiversity loss similarly need to focus on all three elements of biodiversity and will require different approaches for different areas of Canada.

Ecosystems: There is high ecosystem diversity in Canada, including many that are unique and/or highly threatened. The condition of ecosystems across Canada ranges from highly fragmented to some of the most intact in the world. Framing a Canadian ecosystem goal in terms of connectivity, integrity and resilience is highly appropriate. Achieving this goal will require better information on the classification and conservation status of ecosystems in all parts of Canada, although this need should not hold up any action.

Species: Canada needs to apply this lens to its own efforts to sustain species to ensure we stop the growth in the number of species at risk of extinction while ensuring other species do not fall into the “at risk” category (e.g., Special Concern).

Genetic diversity: Genetic diversity was not even mentioned in the 2020 Biodiversity Goals and Targets for Canada and should certainly receive attention this time.

Goal B: *Biodiversity is sustainably used and managed and nature’s contributions to people, including ecosystem functions and services, are valued, maintained and enhanced, with those currently in decline being restored, supporting the achievement of sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations by 2050.*

Goal B addresses sustainable use and management of nature’s contributions to people. Our ability to achieve this goal will depend a great deal on achieving Goal A and ensuring healthy wild species and ecosystems. And it will require a significant effort to use resources sustainably and to distribute them equitably, including between generations.

Significance for Canada

As a natural resource driven economy and agricultural powerhouse, pursuing Goal B actions must be central to any Canadian biodiversity strategy. Reconciling this goal with goal A will require a whole of government approach.

Goal C: *The monetary and non-monetary benefits from the utilization of genetic resources, and digital sequence information on genetic resources, and of traditional knowledge associated with genetic*

resources, as applicable, are shared fairly and equitably, including, as appropriate with indigenous peoples and local communities, and substantially increased by 2050, while ensuring traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources is appropriately protected, thereby contributing to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, in accordance with internationally agreed access and benefit-sharing instruments

Goal C addresses the idea of how wealth created from genetic information is shared and provides a framework for improving fair and equitable sharing of this wealth and information. Genetic sequencing has revolutionized the biological sciences, enabling major breakthroughs in health, food and agriculture and environmental sustainability, but benefits have been unequally shared -- particularly with Indigenous peoples.

Significance for Canada

Canada should develop an [Aboriginal Sensitive Access and Benefit Sharing](#) (ABS) policy that would protect both biodiversity and Indigenous knowledge. As a first step, it should join the Nagoya Protocol of the CBD, which addresses these issues.

Goal D: *Adequate means of implementation, including financial resources, capacity-building, technical and scientific cooperation, and access to and transfer of technology to fully implement the Kunming-Montreal global biodiversity framework are secured and equitably accessible to all Parties, especially developing countries, in particular the least developed countries and small island developing States, as well as countries with economies in transition, progressively closing the biodiversity finance gap of 700 billion dollars per year, and aligning financial flows with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity.*

Goal D acknowledges that to successfully implement this global agreement, we need to close the gap between the capacity of wealthy nations and those with many fewer resources. We all benefit from protecting and restoring global biodiversity, but “resource mobilization” was one of the most contentious elements of the KMGBF negotiations. It is therefore important that countries agree on the need to supply support for implementation.

Significance for Canada

Canada needs to recognize and address both the resources needed for implementation within Canada and the need to provide Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) to Global-South countries.

TARGETS 1-8: REDUCING THREATS TO BIODIVERSITY

Target 1: *Ensure that all areas are under participatory integrated biodiversity inclusive spatial planning and/or effective management processes addressing land and sea use change, to bring the loss of areas of high biodiversity importance, including ecosystems of high ecological integrity, close to zero by 2030, while respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities*

Target 1 recognizes how land-use and sea-use change (including deforestation and the loss and/or fragmentation of wetlands, savannahs, grasslands, and other ecosystems) are major drivers of biodiversity loss.

The target calls for integrated spatial planning to understand and manage competing demands for land and sea areas and potential trade-offs. Making progress on this target will require a focus on both developed/degraded ecosystems and the conservation of intact (i.e., with high ecological integrity)

ecosystems. This target also recognizes that successful management of biodiversity cannot be adequately addressed in piecemeal fashion and requires proactive planning at appropriate scales, while respecting rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities.

To illustrate the inter-relationship between targets, actions related to this target would need to be complemented by restoration (T2), protection of specific areas with high biodiversity value (T3), and by measures to reduce the other direct (T 4-8) and indirect drivers (T 13-20) of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation.

Significance for Canada

Many areas in Canada are not subject to spatial planning currently. Even where formal land-use planning is taking place, many such processes may not qualify as “biodiversity-inclusive addressing land use and sea use change” or adequately respect the rights of Indigenous peoples. The best examples of spatial planning are in northern Canada, where they are co-led with Indigenous peoples, as mandated by modern land claims. These can serve as a model for participatory, integrated spatial planning focused on Indigenous-led or co-led processes.

For Canada this target is particularly relevant to where cumulative effects are becoming increasingly evident, e.g., through human settlement in southern areas or resource extraction in the north (where piecemeal project-level decision-making is prevalent). Proper and proactive assessments of how to enhance protection, connectivity and development opportunities require a regional-scale focus.

Given the disproportionate share within Canada of high-integrity ecosystems remaining in a world, much more will have to be done to achieve the target of reducing loss of ecosystems with high ecological integrity to near zero by 2030.

Implementation of Target 1 in Canada must emphasize Indigenous-led conservation and land-use planning. Equitable planning processes go beyond respecting the rights of Indigenous peoples to ensuring the meaningful, sustained, and visible inclusion of Indigenous peoples as beneficiaries of planning processes.

Target 2: *Ensure that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of areas of degraded terrestrial, inland water, and coastal and marine ecosystems are under effective restoration, in order to enhance biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, ecological integrity and connectivity.*

Target 2, which focuses on restoration, represents increased ambition compared to the earlier agreement. It is positive to see the focus on ensuring that restoration efforts should contribute to enhancing ecological integrity and connectivity within and among ecosystems, both of which are important for sustaining healthy and diverse ecosystems.

Significance for Canada

Canada should identify an explicit baseline in order to devise a tailored target for restoration that fits the Canadian context. The target should be geographically based as a percentage of areas of degraded terrestrial, inland water, and coastal and marine ecosystems (instead of number of trees, for example).

It will be important to define “effective restoration,” given the wide use of terminology in Canada (e.g., reclamation, rehabilitation, etc.) that has much lower bars for success than the type of ecological restoration embraced by the wording of this target. Equally important will be to come up with

appropriate measures of progress and success.

Target 3: *Ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, recognizing indigenous and traditional territories, where applicable, and integrated into wider landscapes, seascapes and the ocean, while ensuring that any sustainable use, where appropriate in such areas, is fully consistent with conservation outcomes, recognizing and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, including over their traditional territories.*

Target 3 represents increased ambition compared to the earlier agreement targets (increasing from 17% to 30%) and is the most well recognized of the 23 targets (often referred to as “30x30”). The target affirms protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECM), [which are already well-defined internationally and in Canada](#), as the tools for achieving the 30% target.

In addition, the new agreement provides a much stronger recognition of the critical role that Indigenous Peoples play in conserving biodiversity, both through safeguards and by recognizing Indigenous and traditional territories as a pathway that contributes to biodiversity conservation.

And finally, the language on sustainable use – a concession during negotiations of the KMGBF -- strikes a careful balance, ensuring that any sustainable use must be consistent with biodiversity conservation outcomes and what is appropriate within protected areas and OECMs.

Significance for Canada

The federal government already committed to the 30x30 objective, but it needs to ensure that the focus is on the quality of areas protected. This means attention to high integrity or rare ecosystems, [Key Biodiversity Areas](#), culturally important ecosystems, and factors like ecosystem functions and services (e.g., carbon and water), along with connectivity. Meeting agreed-to standard and effective management of protected areas and OECMs will also be important and must include the full and effective participation of Indigenous peoples.

This could provide an opportunity for Canada to commit to a reinvigorated Pathway 2 table with full-as-possible participation of province and territories (P/T) to guide delivery of the 30x30 commitment with adherence to quality measures (as above) and agreed-upon protection standards. Completing publicly available nature funding agreements with P/Ts that include commitments to Target 3 and P/T support for specific Indigenous Conservation Protected Areas that make measurable contributions to the target should also be part of Canada’s response.

Protected area selection and planning should ideally occur within the context of regional-scale spatial planning (Target 1).

There is no need to include reference to “sustainable use” in a Canadian target, and we should maintain focus on the objective of Target 3 to conserve biodiversity. Other targets (e.g., T 9-13) already address sustainable use.

Target 4: *Ensure urgent management actions to halt human induced extinction of known threatened*

species and for the recovery and conservation of species, in particular threatened species, to significantly reduce extinction risk, as well as to maintain and restore the genetic diversity within and between populations of native, wild and domesticated species to maintain their adaptive potential, including through in situ and ex situ conservation and sustainable management practices, and effectively manage human-wildlife interactions to minimize human-wildlife conflict for coexistence.

Target 4 builds on the ambition of Goal A by setting the stage for action to halt human-induced extinction (especially for threatened species) restore genetic diversity, maintain species' adaptive potential, and minimize human-wildlife conflict, all essential for halting and reversing biodiversity loss by 2030 and putting nature on a path to recovery.

This target recognizes the importance of reducing threats to wildlife, both intentional (e.g., reprisals against large land mammals that may damage crops or threaten human life or livestock) and unintentional (e.g., competing demands for the use of ecosystems and other resources, roadkill and marine by-catch).

Genetic diversity is the foundation of species' ability to adapt and a key component of ecosystem function and resilience. Expected genetic diversity loss due to decreased population sizes and lost habitat are also severe threats to biodiversity.

Significance for Canada

Although species will benefit from actions associated with many other targets (e.g., that focus on area-based protection and restoration), Target 4 addresses those that require targeted species-specific actions to recover, including genetic management or genetic rescue, population supplementation, breeding programs, etc. It is highly relevant for Canada's efforts to recover species at risk.

Action on this target will need to include species beyond those listed under the federal *Species at Risk Act* to be effective, including those assessed (and not yet listed) as at risk by COSEWIC and species on COSEWIC candidate lists for assessment for each of the major taxon groups.

Human-wildlife conflict is a serious issue in many parts of Canada, including within and around protected areas and urban areas.

Target 5: *Ensure that the use, harvesting and trade of wild species is sustainable, safe and legal, preventing overexploitation, minimizing impacts on non-target species and ecosystems, and reducing the risk of pathogen spill-over, applying the ecosystem approach, while respecting and protecting customary sustainable use by indigenous peoples and local communities.*

Target 5 addresses direct exploitation of wild populations of species. This is the largest direct driver of biodiversity loss in marine ecosystems and the second largest in terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems globally. Overexploitation is commonly defined as deliberate and/or unintentional harvesting of biological resources (flora and fauna) at unsustainable levels through activities such as logging, fishing and hunting.

In addition to the threat of overexploitation, this target now addresses the risk of impacts on non-target species and ecosystems and the risk of pathogen spillover associated with wildlife trade.

Minimizing impacts on non-target species helps to address the issue of bycatch, the predominant driver of the decline of a significant number of marine and freshwater fauna. The inclusion of wildlife trade, which can be unsustainable in many respects, has been growing as a threat on a global scale and has been implicated in pathogen spillover risk.

Significance for Canada

In Canada, overexploitation through both direct and indirect (bycatch) means is very important as a threat. For marine species, overexploitation is the most significant threat.

Canada does play a role in global wildlife trade through the import and export of animals. Unsustainable trade can and does lead to wildlife declines, and while Canada is a small player relative to other countries at a global scale, its participation does need to be addressed in the broader sustainability context. This includes, for example, the elephant ivory trade.

Pathogen spillover associated with wildlife trade is not likely to occur within Canada, but as we have seen with COVID-19, Canada will bear the consequences of outbreaks in other places and should therefore support efforts (e.g., [the development of an international pandemic instrument](#)) that focus on prevention of pandemics at source.

Target 6: *Eliminate, minimize, reduce and or mitigate the impacts of invasive alien species on biodiversity and ecosystem services by identifying and managing pathways of the introduction of alien species, preventing the introduction and establishment of priority invasive alien species, reducing the rates of introduction and establishment of other known or potential invasive alien species by at least 50 per cent by 2030, and eradicating or controlling invasive alien species especially in priority sites, such as islands.*

Target 6 addresses Invasive alien species, which are one of the main direct drivers of biodiversity loss at the global level.

This target focuses on identifying and managing pathways for the introduction of alien species and taking steps to avoid their establishment in new areas. It sets a target of reducing the introduction of “known or potential” invasive species by 50% by 2030.

Some invasive alien species are also agents of infectious disease for wildlife, e.g., *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*, the causal agent of chytrid fungal disease and spread mainly through trade in amphibians, and *Pseudogymnoascus destructans*, the fungus causing white-nose syndrome in North American bats. A changing climate will exacerbate this threat in many circumstances.

Significance for Canada

Invasive species are certainly a major threat in Canada for terrestrial and aquatic species and ecosystems and coordinated attention is required across all areas of Canada. Most provinces have initiatives (e.g., Invasive Species Councils or inter-ministerial working groups) devoted to invasive species management, but only Ontario and BC have legislation or regulation focused on invasive species with the primary objective of biodiversity conservation (as opposed to protecting agriculture or forestry, e.g., weed control acts).

Implementation of Target 6 in Canada would provide an opportunity to re-examine and coordinate the approach taken across Canada and improve accountability for managing and addressing this pervasive

threat. There are many effective local programs occurring across Canada—the challenge is to scale these up. This will involve strengthening how we identify invasive species and prioritize action to address environmentally harmful invasive species by, for example, [developing a national priority list](#). Preventing the introduction of invasive alien species in the first place is more cost-effective than attempting to eradicate alien species once they become established.

Target 7: *Reduce pollution risks and the negative impact of pollution from all sources, by 2030, to levels that are not harmful to biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, considering cumulative effects, including: reducing excess nutrients lost to the environment by at least half including through more efficient nutrient cycling and use; reducing the overall risk from pesticides and highly hazardous chemicals by at least half including through integrated pest management, based on science, taking into account food security and livelihoods; and also preventing, reducing, and working towards eliminating plastic pollution.*

Target 7 is intended to focus on all sources of pollution, which is a win for biodiversity action. However, the reality is that each pollution source will likely require its own indicator for action to be effective.

It is notable that in a last-minute change, the target focuses on risk reduction rather than usage reduction (which appeared in most previous drafts). The agreement’s language focuses on reducing risks from things like pesticides and chemicals rather than reducing their use.

This target has wide-ranging implications for food security, links with climate mitigation and fertilizer use, and ongoing discussions towards a developing [Global Plastics Treaty](#).

Significance for Canada

Pollution is a large umbrella for a variety of impacts, including many “emerging” pollutants, such as noise, light and plastics.

Most efforts in Canada, including the revised *Canadian Environmental Protection Act*, are focused on the human impacts of pollutants, whereas impacts on biodiversity are dealt with through more piecemeal efforts. The partial plastics ban will be helpful to biodiversity and should be integrated into an emerging Canadian NBSAP.

A focus on language emphasizing usage reduction, as was included in previous drafts of the GBF, rather than risk reduction would serve as a more effective foundation for Canada’s biodiversity plan.

Attention is growing on noise pollution control, mostly focused in marine areas, and on light pollution, and these efforts need to be accelerated in Canada.

The issue of excess nutrients entering waterbodies is well known in places like Lake Erie, Lake Winnipeg and Lake Simcoe and points to the need to expand and scale-up nutrient management programs.

Target 8: *Minimize the impact of climate change and ocean acidification on biodiversity and increase its resilience through mitigation, adaptation, and disaster risk reduction actions, including through nature-based solution and/or ecosystem-based approaches, while minimizing negative and fostering positive impacts of climate action on biodiversity.*

Target 8 focuses on climate change as a driver of biodiversity loss, which is increasing in importance. This target works together with Target 11 (nature’s contributions to people, which includes climate regulation).

The inclusion of “Nature-based solutions” should allow for better coordination of international efforts to address climate change and biodiversity loss together. However, developing countries were not successful in embedding the concept of “common but differentiated responsibility” that reflects different levels of contribution to a global problem and has been integral to implementing the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The call to minimize negative, and foster positive, impacts for biodiversity when pursuing climate action acknowledges that we must consider impacts to nature from climate action, (e.g., [understanding both the synergies and the trade-offs](#)).

One shortcoming of the GBF is the lack of explicit recognition of the outsized impacts of climate change on particular ecosystems, such as coral reefs, mountains and ice-related habitats.

Significance for Canada

This target can be made stronger and tailored to Canada by prioritizing conservation action in high-carbon ecosystems, particularly those with irrecoverable carbon (e.g., [peatlands, for which Canada has 25% global responsibility](#)) that we cannot afford to lose if we want to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

We also need to ensure that all climate mitigation and adaptation efforts avoid negative impacts on biodiversity and instead, wherever possible, optimize biodiversity co-benefits.

As well, we need to embrace nature-based climate solutions in climate plans and policies in a consistent and well-defined way and be intentional about safeguarding species and ecosystems that are particularly vulnerable to climate change in Canada.

TARGETS 9-13: MEETING HUMAN REQUIREMENTS THROUGH SUSTAINABLE USE

Target 9: *Ensure that the management and use of wild species are sustainable, thereby providing social, economic, and environmental benefits for people, especially those in vulnerable situations and those most dependent on biodiversity, including through sustainable biodiversity-based activities, products and services that enhance biodiversity, and protecting and encouraging customary sustainable use by indigenous peoples and local communities.*

This is the first of the targets that focus on benefits to people from biodiversity, namely the direct human use of species and ecosystems. The main actions related to this target will centre around the sustainable management of wild species. This will require management that accounts for various uses of biodiversity (both consumptive and non-consumptive), while at the same time managing the demand for these. The target also addresses conservation of biodiversity in domesticated species and improving agricultural and aquaculture productivity and sustainability.

Significance for Canada

The use of wild species in Canada is much more prevalent than most people realize. Many Canadians rely on wild species for food, livelihoods and products like medicines, cosmetics and recreation. Forestry, aquaculture and fisheries industries in Canada all use and consume wild species. Only through effectively conserving wild species and keeping ecosystems healthy can we continue to meet these demands.

One area not well addressed in the agreement that can be enhanced in Canada's NBSAP is the importance of cultural keystone species, such as salmon and sturgeon.

Target 10: *Ensure that areas under agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries and forestry are managed sustainably, in particular through the sustainable use of biodiversity, including through a substantial increase of the application of biodiversity friendly practices, such as sustainable intensification, agroecological and other innovative approaches contributing to the resilience and long-term efficiency and productivity of these production systems and to food security, conserving and restoring biodiversity and maintaining nature's contributions to people, including ecosystem functions and services.*

Target 10 reflects the fact that globally, land-use change driven by the expansion of agriculture is the largest driver of terrestrial biodiversity loss. Therefore, sustainable management and use of terrestrial and aquatic food production systems is key to reducing pressures on biodiversity and for ensuring food security.

The inclusion of "sustainable intensification" was a concession made during negotiations.

Significance for Canada

Previous Canada biodiversity strategies have not included targets that address production systems as a threat to biodiversity.

Generally, it is assumed in Canada that current laws and regulations are successfully minimizing damage to biodiversity from agriculture, forestry, aquaculture and fisheries, but cumulative threats in particular are increasing and are poorly addressed. A stronger focus on directly addressing the biodiversity threats posed by production systems in Canada is needed, along with strategies for better supporting biodiversity within agriculture and managed ecosystems, within the context of efforts to sustain food production in a changing climate and amid shifting land pressures.

Target 11: *Restore, maintain and enhance nature's contributions to people, including ecosystem functions and services, such as regulation of air, water, and climate, soil health, pollination and reduction of disease risk, as well as protection from natural hazards and disasters, through nature-based solutions and/or ecosystem-based approaches for the benefit of all people and nature.*

Target 11 focuses on nature's contributions to people, including services provided by ecosystems, such as regulating water flow, preventing erosion or filtering pollutants, and climate regulation. It recognizes the importance of nature-based solutions.

Significance for Canada

Implementation of this target in Canada should prioritize action in places that provide high level of ecosystem services, allowing for the most efficient use of resources and capacity to ensure that these important services are maintained and/or restored.

Actions to reach this target include reducing the direct pressures on the ecosystems that provide services related to the regulation of air quality, hazards and extreme events and quality and quantity of water (T 1, 4-6), proactive measures to conserve and restore key ecosystems (T2-3), and to create or re-create green and blue spaces in urban areas (T11). Further actions towards this target could also help to address proposed targets related to climate change mitigation adaption and disaster risk reduction (T8), ensuring benefits for people (T9) and the productivity, sustainability and resilience of biodiversity in agricultural and other managed ecosystems (T10).

Target 12: *Significantly increase the area and quality and connectivity of, access to, and benefits from green and blue spaces in urban and densely populated areas sustainably, by mainstreaming the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and ensure biodiversity-inclusive urban planning, enhancing native biodiversity, ecological connectivity and integrity, and improving human health and well-being and connection to nature and contributing to inclusive and sustainable urbanization and the provision of ecosystem functions and services.*

Target 12 recognizes that green and blue spaces (i.e., areas of vegetation, inland and coastal waters generally in or near urban areas) have a range of positive effects on human physical and mental wellbeing and deserve particular attention in the face of growing land scarcity and competing land usages.

The focus on urban areas is a new element in the agreement and was not a component of the Aichi Targets.

Significance for Canada

Canada is a highly urbanized country. Many municipalities in Canada are increasingly concerned about the state of nature and creating urban protected areas is in the federal mandate for ECCC.

The critical importance of urban nature has been demonstrated by the COVID-19 pandemic, during which access to green spaces in cities and the countryside has been an important factor in supporting health and wellbeing.

Some cities (e.g., Toronto, Edmonton, Vancouver) have already prepared biodiversity strategies. Particular attention to this target as part of Canada's NBSAP could promote the need for urban planning and design to intentionally consider the value of nature.

Target 13: *Take effective legal, policy, administrative and capacity-building measures at all levels, as appropriate, to ensure the fair and equitable sharing of benefits that arise from the utilization of genetic resources and from digital sequence information on genetic resources, as well as traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources, and facilitating appropriate access to genetic resources, and by 2030 facilitating a significant increase of the benefits shared, in accordance with applicable international access and benefit-sharing instruments.*

Target 13 is closely tied with Goal C on increasing the benefits shared from the utilization of genetic resources. The target focuses on developing effective legal, policy, administrative and capacity-building measures to support that goal.

Significance for Canada

Currently, Canada is not a Party to the Nagoya Protocol, the main instrument for addressing this issue globally.

As well, there is currently no single, comprehensive access and benefit-sharing (ABS) system in place in Canada to govern access to genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge or to facilitate the sharing of benefits arising from their use.

TARGETS 14-23: TOOLS AND SOLUTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND MAINSTREAMING

Target 14: *Ensure the full integration of biodiversity and its multiple values into policies, regulations, planning and development processes, poverty eradication strategies, strategic environmental assessments, environmental impact assessments and, as appropriate, national accounting, within and across all levels of government and across all sectors, in particular those with significant impacts on biodiversity, progressively aligning all relevant public and private activities, fiscal and financial flows with the goals and targets of this framework.*

Target 14 envisions full integration of biodiversity and its values into policies, regulations, planning and development processes, as well as environmental assessments across all levels of government and across all sectors.

Importantly, the final text includes no mention of the mitigation hierarchy or infrastructure impacts, which both appeared in previous drafts. For example, Infrastructure development (e.g., roads) acts as a catalyst for ecosystem degradation in many areas and the mitigation hierarchy is the most widely used tool for managing impacts to biodiversity at the project level.

There are two key components to this target: on-the-ground development and supply chains that drive on-the ground development.

The actions in Target 1 (spatial planning) will be important to support the implementation of this target.

Significance for Canada

This target should increase the consideration and coverage of biodiversity in various policies, laws and regulations, planning processes, etc. But it also needs to spur an effort to make these policies stronger -- in order to better reflect the needed transformative change -- by including budgets, frameworks, and metrics, as well as effective enforcement measures.

Implementation of Target 14 in Canada could provide an opportunity for development of a whole-of-government policy for mainstreaming biodiversity and addressing project-level biodiversity impacts that centre on a strong application of the mitigation hierarchy, in keeping with the federal government's commitment to develop and implement a "climate lens."

A broader focus on achieving biodiversity targets at geographic or sectoral levels would also improve on the current focus on mitigating individual project impacts. Tools like Regional and Strategic Assessments and spatial planning should be more fully embraced.

Finally, for countries like Canada that have large global supply chain footprints or global trade volume, there will be a need to pay attention to both domestic trade/development and trade impact/value chain

impact along its global supply chain.

Target 15: *Take legal, administrative or policy measures to encourage and enable business, and in particular to ensure that large and transnational companies and financial institutions:*

- (a) Regularly monitor, assess, and transparently disclose their risks, dependencies and impacts on biodiversity, including with requirements for all large as well as transnational companies and financial institutions along their operations, supply and value chains and portfolios;*
- (b) Provide information needed to consumers to promote sustainable consumption patterns;*
- (c) Report on compliance with access and benefit-sharing regulations and measures, as applicable; in order to progressively reduce negative impacts on biodiversity, increase positive impacts, reduce biodiversity-related risks to business and financial institutions, and promote actions to ensure sustainable patterns of production.*

Target 15 is particularly aimed at the development sector and the entry point is "biodiversity disclosure". It increases the onus on large and transnational companies and financial institutions to track and manage their global biodiversity impact footprint.

Similar to how companies are being asked to disclose climate risk, Target 15 envisions governments requiring companies to disclose biodiversity risks, such as the impact of their activities on species or their vulnerability to biodiversity decline or impairment. Unfortunately, a requirement to make this disclosure mandatory was dropped from the final agreement text, as was a requirement for mandatory monitoring of impacts.

A big challenge for disclosure is the lack of clear and simple indicator system available to businesses, which leads to each company developing disclosure protocols to fit their own needs and business type. The actions in Target 1, 2, 3 addressing baseline development and measurement development can support this target a lot.

We expect that government action in pursuit of this target will increase pressure on business to act on biodiversity protection and better monitor and report on progress.

Significance for Canada

A [recent analysis](#) discovered that only one-third of Canadian companies report on biodiversity loss. Implementation of this target in Canada could not only hasten the trend of large multinational companies and financial institutions improving their own disclosure performance, but it could also give Indigenous peoples and communities, and civil society, better insight into corporate activities and impacts.

Transparency is fundamental for understanding the footprint and dependencies of development. Disclosure, no matter how preliminary it can be at the beginning, is an excellent start to improving transparency. The global [Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures](#) has Canadian member companies and organizations and is increasingly being used as a framework to shift financial flows to nature-positive outcomes. Formalizing this at a national level and tailoring to a Canadian context would strengthen implementation, as Canada has committed as a signatory to the [G7 2030 Nature Compact](#).

Target 16: *Ensure that people are encouraged and enabled to make sustainable consumption choices*

including by establishing supportive policy, legislative or regulatory frameworks, improving education and access to relevant and accurate information and alternatives, and by 2030, reduce the global footprint of consumption in an equitable manner, including through halving global food waste, significantly reducing overconsumption, and substantially reducing waste generation, in order for all people to live well in harmony with Mother Earth.

Target 16 addresses the fact that overconsumption at the root of the biodiversity and climate crises. Current food systems are major drivers of biodiversity loss, land degradation and climate change.

This Target recognizes the importance of going beyond direct conservation and restoration of nature to include an effort to transition to more sustainable consumption and production paradigms. However, the term “circular economy” was lost from this target in the final version of the text.

This GBF target corresponds with Goal 12 of the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) – Responsible Consumption and Production.

Significance for Canada

Currently just about all laws in Canada that have safeguards for biodiversity are focused on mitigation of impacts rather than avoidance and have nothing to say about setting limits on consumption.

Efforts to develop more circular economic practices are highly siloed and not far advanced in Canada compared to Europe and countries like Japan and China.

Canada’s “[ambition](#)” for [SDG Goal 12](#) (sustainable consumption and production) is currently limited to “the purchase of zero-emission vehicles” and “extending the lifespan of products through repair and refurbishment.”

Target 17: *Establish, strengthen capacity for, and implement in all countries in biosafety measures as set out in Article 8(g) of the Convention on Biological Diversity and measures for the handling of biotechnology and distribution of its benefits as set out in Article 19 of the Convention.*

Target 17 addresses the use of synthetic biology --technologies that allow humans to make precise alterations to the genes of organisms.

Synthetic biology applications have important positive and negative implications for biodiversity conservation depending on how they are used. Potential benefits range from protecting threatened species to providing synthetic alternatives to wildlife products. Potential detrimental effects include changes to ecological roles played by target organisms, and negative impacts on the livelihoods of indigenous and local communities that depend on biodiversity.

Significance for Canada

There is already a rich community of practice of synthetic biology in place in Canada, but strategic integration of such efforts into biodiversity conservation actions is largely absent today. Inclusion of target 17 into Canada’s NBSAP would better ensure that synthetic biology applications can be harnessed for their benefits while limiting the negative impacts on species and ecosystems in Canada, with an eye toward net benefits.

Target 18: *Identify by 2025, and eliminate, phase out or reform incentives, including subsidies, harmful*

for biodiversity, in a proportionate, just, fair, effective and equitable way, while substantially and progressively reducing them by at least 500 billion United States dollars per year by 2030, starting with the most harmful incentives, and scale up positive incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

Target 18 recognizes that inadequate finance was undoubtedly a key reason for the failure to achieve the Aichi Targets by 2020. A [substantial gap for funding biodiversity persists](#). The KMGBF seeks to address this not only by emphasizing larger financial commitments by countries (T19), but by ending subsidies harmful to biodiversity by 2030. Repurposing, or eliminating subsidies across the economy (including agriculture, construction, forestry, fossil fuels, marine capture fisheries, transport and water sectors) could help unlock the financing needed to promote positive actions to safeguard biodiversity.

Addressing this target will require attention to resolve policy incoherence within domestic laws and policies to prevent harmful net biodiversity outcomes.

The text includes mention of positive incentives “for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity” that should be increased.

Significance for Canada

More attention in Canada has been paid to fossil fuel subsidies than harmful incentives that affect biodiversity (although there is a great deal of overlap between the two). Subsidies that can be harmful to biodiversity include those for roads and transmission lines, mineral exploration, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, etc. Subsidies meant to drive the transition away from fossil fuels will need to intentionally consider impacts on biodiversity (e.g., building roads to access natural resources, thereby inducing growth in ecologically intact areas).

Canada has already committed in the [G7 2030 Nature Compact](#) to review and better align federal financial flows and policies to meaningfully consider biodiversity outcomes, which should certainly be reflected in its NBSAP.

Target 19: *Substantially and progressively increase the level of financial resources from all sources, in an effective, timely and easily accessible manner, including domestic, international, public and private resources, in accordance with Article 20 of the Convention, to implement national biodiversity strategies and action plans, by 2030 mobilizing at least 200 billion United States dollars per year*

Target 19 reflects the reality that significant financial resources for implementation and capacity-building from both government and the private sector are going to be required to reach the KMGBF targets. Financial commitments from Global North countries comprise both funding needed for domestic implementation and overseas development assistance (ODA). This target works together with T18 (eliminating harmful subsidies).

These efforts need to be better coordinated internationally to ensure a more equitable and fairer sharing of the costs of addressing biodiversity loss.

Significance for Canada

Canada’s NBSAP should include both financial mobilization for domestic implementation of nature conservation and funding for international assistance.

With respect to domestic funding, continued and increased funding levels aligned with the agreement's ambition along with implementing a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach will be necessary (see [Green Budget Coalition](#)). The commitment to complete publicly available funding agreements with provinces and territories that include commitments to the GBF targets and P/T support for specific Indigenous-led conservation initiatives (IPCA's and Guardians) that make measurable contributions to GBF targets and commit to agreed-to protection standards should also be included.

With respect to the international assistance, Canada [has pledged increasing levels of funding](#). An NBSAP can solidify this commitment for future years and provide details for how funds will be distributed.

Target 20: *Strengthen capacity-building and development, access to and transfer of technology, and promote development of and access to innovation and technical and scientific cooperation, including through South-South, North-South and triangular cooperation, to meet the needs for effective implementation, particularly in developing countries, fostering joint technology development and joint scientific research programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and strengthening scientific research and monitoring capacities, commensurate with the ambition of the goals and targets of the framework.*

Target 20 is devoted to capacity building, which will be necessary to bolster, particularly in Global South countries, implementation of the targets. This includes not only enhanced expertise, but institutional capacity, as well as tools and technology. The key elements are (1) improving the knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes of individuals (2) strengthening the organizational capacity of Parties, including enhancing biodiversity governance, and (3) strengthening the enabling environment (e.g., policy and regulatory frameworks, resource mobilization, and even political support).

Significance for Canada

While the orientation of the GBF is mostly on Global South countries, the relatively small population of Canada distributed over an enormous landbase with distributed governance means there are clear capacity limitations in this country that must be addressed in order to achieve the biodiversity targets.

For example, there are differing capacity levels among P/T governments, local communities, civil society and Indigenous communities – entities that will carry significant responsibilities for implementation. It is evident that the scaled-up ambition of the targets will require corresponding scaled up capacity for implementation across governments and society that will require deliberate attention in Canada's NBSAP.

Target 21: *Ensure that the best available data, information and knowledge, are accessible to decision makers, practitioners and the public to guide effective and equitable governance, integrated and participatory management of biodiversity, and to strengthen communication, awareness-raising, education, monitoring, research and knowledge management and, also in this context, traditional knowledge, innovations, practices and technologies of indigenous peoples and local communities should only be accessed with their free, prior and informed consent, in accordance with national legislation.*

Target 21 recognizes that data, information and knowledge need to be collected and made accessible for managers to create policy and track the effectiveness of actions.

This target has several components:

1) Improved accessibility to relevant biodiversity data, information and knowledge,

- 2) communication, awareness-raising, education,
- 3) knowledge management,
- 4) monitoring,
- 5) research, and
- 6) knowledge, innovations, practices and technologies of Indigenous peoples and local communities.

Significance for Canada

The large geographic extent of this federation and separation of responsibilities for natural resources and other relevant elements of biodiversity in the hands of the provinces and territories mean that biodiversity-related information is scattered in Canada.

Implementation of this target in a Canadian context could include a commitment to establish a national inventory for biodiversity information. This could be loosely modelled on the [National Pollutant Release Inventory](#) established under the *Canadian Environment Protection Act*. The goal of the Inventory would be to dramatically expand public and governmental evaluation and monitoring of trends in biodiversity, to drive science-based decision making and to support ongoing biodiversity research across the country.

Attention to this target will encourage better integration of biodiversity priorities into decision-making, particularly in planning and in investment, as well as for monitoring effectiveness of other actions, including (but not limited to) deployment of offsets.

Target 22: *Ensure the full, equitable, inclusive, effective and gender-responsive representation and participation in decision-making, and access to justice and information related to biodiversity by indigenous peoples and local communities, respecting their cultures and their rights over lands, territories, resources, and traditional knowledge, as well as by women and girls, children and youth, and persons with disabilities and ensure the full protection of environmental human rights defenders.*

Target 22 follows on the preamble to the Convention text, which recognizes the “close and traditional dependence of many indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles on biological resources, and the desirability of sharing equitably benefits arising from the use of traditional knowledge, innovations and practices relevant to the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of its components”.

In the KMGBF, the rights of Indigenous peoples are included among umbrella considerations and in one-third of the targets (goal C and targets 1, 3, 5, 9, 13, 19, and 20). Target 22 has a more singular focus on Indigenous peoples and local communities, driven by the important reality that a significant proportion of the global land area is traditionally owned, managed, used or occupied by Indigenous peoples, who depend on nature for subsistence, livelihoods and health, and whose traditional lands are facing escalating development pressures.

The target also recognizes the importance of meaningful participation of women and girls, the inclusion of children, youth and persons with disabilities, and the need to protect environmental human rights defenders.

Significance for Canada

The development and implementation of Canada’s NBSAP provides an opportunity to display global leadership in recognizing and strengthening the essential role and equitable participation of Indigenous

peoples. This will be essential for enabling the transformative change that will be necessary to halt and reverse biodiversity decline in this country. Implementation of this target in Canada can build on the critical foundation laid by the Indigenous Circle of Experts and their [landmark 2018 report](#) on Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas “in the spirit and practice of reconciliation” and ongoing Indigenous-led conservation, Guardian, and stewardship efforts across the country.

At the same time, as noted in a [2022 report by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) it is equally important that ambitious conservation targets not come at the expense of Indigenous peoples.

Target 23: *Ensure gender equality in the implementation of the framework through a gender-responsive approach where all women and girls have equal opportunity and capacity to contribute to the three objectives of the Convention, including by recognizing their equal rights and access to land and natural resources and their full, equitable, meaningful, and informed participation and leadership at all levels of action, engagement, policy and decision-making related to biodiversity.*

Target 23 recognizes that there is increasing evidence about not only the important role of women and girls in biodiversity conservation and resource development, but their relative lack of participation in decision making despite the disproportionate negative impacts they often suffer from biodiversity loss and climate change.

This target builds on Target 22, which mentions women and girls as a group that have equal rights to participate effectively in biodiversity action and policy. Target 23 is a gender-specific target that not only further affirms women and girls’ equal rights, including access to land and natural resources, but commits Parties to monitoring and reporting on progress made towards gender equality under all aspects of the CBD, including uses and benefits.

This marks the first time an international environmental agreement recognizes gender-specific access to natural resources, addressing important issues such as the protection of women defenders and gender violence in an environmental context.

In December, Parties also adopted the [Gender Plan of Action](#), the purpose of which is to “support and promote the gender-responsive implementation of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework” and its associated mechanisms.

Significance for Canada

The development and implementation of Canada’s NBSAP represents an opportunity to build on Canada’s efforts related to [Women and Climate Change](#) and [Gender-based analysis Plus](#) and extend this to biodiversity conservation.