



A Global Goal for Nature and People

Environment Links UK | July 2021

Context

Restoring nature and avoiding the climate and ecological crises is essential for human prosperity and equity. Maintaining a healthy planet for future generations is a crucial challenge for the next decade.

We are calling for a deal for nature and people in 2021, under the Convention on Biological Diversity. The global community should agree that, by 2030, we will halt and start to reverse the loss of biodiversity and put nature on a path to recovery for the benefit of all people and the planet. The agreement must prompt action to prevent human caused extinctions, recover the abundance and diversity of life, and retain and restore ecosystem integrity, so that all people and nature can thrive.

A new international deal for nature must be matched by domestic ambition to deliver commitments made under the Convention on Biological Diversity. All four countries of the UK should put in place robust targets in domestic legislation to achieve nature's recovery and create monitoring systems to track progress.

Targeted action to recover species and habitats can have significant benefits for tackling the climate crisis. These actions are often called "nature-based solutions" to climate change and if applied well, should provide benefits to both our climate and nature. The world's remaining intact ecosystems and key habitats such as forests, peatlands, permanent grasslands and savannas, as well as freshwater, coastal and marine habitats are hotspots for biodiversity, crucial for carbon storage, and essential for increasing people's resilience to climate change. Biodiversity and species play a crucial role in the healthy functioning and resilience of these ecosystems.

However, climate change is also one of the largest contributors to biodiversity loss and its impacts are likely to continue to increase in the near future. In taking action to curb climate change and reverse biodiversity loss, we must ensure that ecosystems remain resilient in our changing climate.

To guide global action, we believe we can define a measurable goal for nature that works for both the global and the UK levels, balancing the trade-off between securing the benefits of target simplicity, and avoiding the risk that over-simplification risks failing to register and account for critical elements of biodiversity.

Headline goal for nature

Our ambition is to bend the curve of biodiversity loss into biodiversity recovery. We propose a headline goal for nature to:

Halt and begin to reverse the decline of species and habitats by 2030

Stemming the systemic loss of nature by 2030 and putting it on a path to recovery will be a crucial part of achieving a recovery of populations, in line with the CBD's 2050 Vision of 'Living in harmony with nature'. That means that, by 2050, the state of nature will have improved significantly – so that species abundance and distribution is on average rising, global extinctions have ceased, and habitat quality and extent are increasing to the benefit of biodiversity.

Another key milestone along the way is to see species populations and habitats improving by 2040 – so that nature decline is halted, site protection is enhanced, and recovery is well underway.

We propose a single Global Goal that comprises a set of Components – with securing progress or stability against all those components the key to Goal attainment.

We will judge success by measuring four significant components of nature, nationally and globally, across marine, terrestrial and freshwater environments:

1. **Species Abundance** – success will mean keeping common species common and recovering depleted species populations.
2. **Species Distribution** – success will mean recovering and/or maintaining species range, avoiding contraction and fragmentation.
3. **Species Extinction Risk** – success will mean ensuring that extinctions and the threat of extinctions as a result of human activity have ceased.
4. **Habitat Quality and Extent** – success will mean recovery and/or maintenance of the size and good ecological status of natural and semi-natural habitats (which are both particularly wildlife rich and carbon rich).

Each of these measures will be assessed across terrestrial, freshwater and marine biomes, giving a suite of 12 indicators.

Measures will vary between countries/ sub-national governments, depending on data availability and quality, the availability of current reliable indicators (eg Living Planet index; Red List index; protected area condition reports; Pollinator, butterfly and bird indices, etc) and varying jurisdiction over the three biomes (some countries/sub-nationals will not include marine areas).

The Principal Goal will be to have *all* of these 12 measures stable or improving by 2050, i.e. if in any country or sub-national jurisdiction marine species, for example, are on average declining, then that country/sub-national will not have met the overall 2050 Goal.

Where a National government reports on biodiversity progress centrally, but where responsibility for biodiversity policy and action is devolved to sub-national authorities, then the above scenario applies to each sub-national and failure of one sub-national to meet the targets means the national authority also fails accordingly.

Governments can achieve this by taking direct, measurable actions to halt the pressures and drivers of nature loss such as:

- Implementing species action plans for all threatened species
- Effective protection and management of at least 30% of land and seas for nature and people
- Restoring and reconnecting defined areas of lost and fragmented habitats to specific standards
- Phasing out harmful subsidies and introducing systems for payments for environmental public benefits by a fixed date, ensuring that agriculture and fisheries work with and not against nature
- Taking action to control harmful invasive, non-native species, implementing international best-practice to reduce their spread
- Taking action to tackle pollution, such as reduction and phase out goals for harmful pesticides
- Ensuring that nature-based solutions for climate also deliver for nature by agreeing core standards for the certification and measurement of nature-based solutions.

We recommend providing technical, practical and financial assistance to other countries to develop similar measures quickly.

We will monitor progress at fixed intervals:

Our goals will be assessed every 5 years against a set of well-established 'SMART' biodiversity indicators, broadly reflecting the Goal Components, at sub-national, national and international levels. These outcomes need to be underpinned by a clear set of actions or measures that tackle the key drivers of biodiversity loss and provide the essential tools to deliver species recovery.

