

# Position Statement on Achieving a ‘Paris Moment’ for Nature at COP15

5 September 2022

## Introduction

The 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (otherwise known as CBD COP15) is set to conclude this December. Following several delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the event was split into two with Phase One taking place virtually in October 2021 and Phase Two due to take place in-person in Montreal, Canada, from 7 to 19 December 2022.

As the name suggests, this marks the 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of signatories to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)<sup>1</sup>, agreed in Rio in 1992. Since the agreement, countries have met roughly every two years to discuss biodiversity targets and finances, share knowledge and monitor progress.

COP15 is particularly important in this series of meetings as it marks the first conference since the passing of the Aichi Targets<sup>2</sup> which ran from 2011-2020. The Aichi Targets consisted of a 10-year strategic plan and 20 global targets which aimed to halt the loss of biodiversity and promote sustainable use. Despite progress in some areas, **none of the targets have been achieved at a global level**<sup>3</sup>. Six areas have been recognised as ‘partially achieved’ including those on protected areas, financial resources for biodiversity, and invasive species.

COP15 will see countries gather to agree a new Global Framework for Biodiversity with new targets, and hopefully armed with some lessons learned on why the previous targets weren’t successful.

## What has happened so far?

At the Phase One event, parties agreed the Kunming Declaration<sup>4</sup> which commits them to ensuring *“the development, adoption and implementation of an effective post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, that includes provision of the necessary means of implementation ... and appropriate mechanisms for monitoring, reporting and review, to reverse the current loss of biodiversity and ensure that biodiversity is put on a path to recovery by 2030 at the latest ...”*

Parties then met this year – in Geneva in March and Nairobi in June – to continue negotiations on the draft post-2020 Global Framework<sup>5</sup>. These talks have been criticised by Observer organisations as moving at *“glacial pace”* with agreement of only a few target areas and heavy debate on

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/intro/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/sp/elements/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/gbo/gbo5/publication/gbo-5-spm-en.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/c2db/972a/fb32e0a277bf1cffff742be5/cop-15-05-add1-en.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/abb5/591f/2e46096d3f0330b08ce87a45/wg2020-03-03-en.pdf>

sustainable consumption, financing the global framework, and delivering a “nature-positive” economy. Positively, over 100 countries have since signed up to the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People<sup>6</sup> which calls on countries to ensure that at least 30% of the world’s lands and marine areas are protected for nature by 2030. Carbon Brief has produced useful summaries of both the Geneva<sup>7</sup> and Nairobi<sup>8</sup> talks.

In the run up to the Phase Two event, environmental organisations and politicians in the UK are calling for COP15 to deliver a ‘Paris moment’ for nature – referring to the legally-binding Paris Agreement<sup>9</sup>, through which 196 parties agreed to “*limit global warming to well below 2, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels.*” For nature, this would mean agreeing a robust framework and implementation measures that seeks to **halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity by 2030.**

## What is at stake?

Despite some progress being made, the ongoing global declines of biodiversity have been well documented in reports such as the *State of Nature*<sup>10</sup>, the *European Environment: State and Outlook 2020*<sup>11</sup>, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) *Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*<sup>12</sup>, WWF’s *Global Futures*<sup>13</sup>, and the Environmental Audit Committee’s *Biodiversity in the UK: Bloom or Bust?*<sup>14</sup>

In the UK and Ireland, where the majority of CIEEM members work, the state of biodiversity is poor. The Natural History Museum’s Biodiversity Intactness Index<sup>15</sup> puts the UK at the 12<sup>th</sup> lowest in the world and Ireland sits slightly higher as the 13<sup>th</sup> lowest<sup>16</sup>.

There is already evidence that biodiversity has been affected by the 1.1°C rise in global average temperature. Poleward and upwards shifts in species’ distribution have been recorded in Britain and Ireland, and on a global scale. In some cases, changes in migration, breeding and flowering dates have resulted in a mismatch between predator and prey species. The Sixth IPCC Assessment Report, the first part of which was published in 2021, states that “*climate zones have shifted poleward in both hemispheres, and the growing season has lengthened by up to two days per decade since the 1950s*”. We must recognise these changes in climate and support nature and society to adapt.

The urgency of the above reports is clear: **we need a “Paris agreement” moment for nature if we are going to halt and reverse these declines.**

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.hacfornatureandpeople.org/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.carbonbrief.org/cop15-key-outcomes-for-nature-loss-and-climate-change-from-un-talks-in-geneva/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.carbonbrief.org/cop15-key-outcomes-for-nature-loss-and-climate-change-from-un-talks-in-nairobi/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/state-of-nature-report/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.eea.europa.eu/soer>

<sup>12</sup> <https://ipbes.net/global-assessment>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.wwf.org.uk/globalfutures>

<sup>14</sup> <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/6498/documents/70656/default/>

<sup>15</sup> The Biodiversity Intactness Index is “*an estimated percentage of the original number of species that remain and their abundance in any given area, despite human impacts.*” <https://www.nhm.ac.uk/our-science/our-work/biodiversity/predicts.html>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.nhm.ac.uk/our-science/data/biodiversity-indicators/about-the-biodiversity-intactness-index.html>

# How can COP15 lead to a nature-positive future?

## ***Political leadership***

In the lead up to COP15, there has been a notable absence of media attention and public commitment to supporting the event at the highest levels. Heads of State have been warned by environmental organisations and scientists that the talks are at risk of failure due to a lack of political leadership and some parties delaying the negotiations.

Current UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has voiced support for the event but it will be a matter for the incoming Prime Minister<sup>17</sup> to commit to attending in person and showing the same support as for the COP26 climate change conference.

In Ireland, Minister of State for Heritage at the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Malcom Noonan TD has also committed to supporting the COP saying *“Ireland is committed to working together with its international partners to realise an ambitious post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework that achieves real transformative change... This is a huge social and economic challenge that will require a profound transformation of value chains, business models and patterns of human behaviour and consumption.”* However, it is uncertain if the President of Ireland (Uachtarán na hÉireann) will attend.

Financing has been a sticking point in the Geneva and Nairobi talks with lower income countries indicating they will not support the target for 30% of land and sea areas to be protected for nature without increased financial support to deliver it. Many of the drivers of biodiversity decline have been primarily driven by developed countries and these countries should support others to develop sustainably.

There is a clear need for leadership from countries that are keen to secure an ambitious agreement and encourage compromise to move negotiations forward. More media attention is also needed to ensure members of the public are aware of the importance of COP15 and know how to support action from their leaders.

This must also continue beyond the event in December, to show leadership and support in implementation.

## ***Draft Global Framework for Biodiversity***

A nature-positive future is one where the loss of biodiversity is halted and biodiversity is being regenerated<sup>18</sup>. The new Global Biodiversity Framework can deliver this if the targets are realistic, measurable and fully financed, and if countries are held accountable by a requirement to report regularly on progress towards achieving the targets (not just on developing plans for what they will do). The absence of these measures were the main reasons put forward for the failure of the Aichi targets<sup>19,20</sup>. As such, reaching an agreement on these aspects should be a priority for all parties.

Despite global biodiversity declines, there are many local examples of successful nature recovery that provide useful lessons learned for delivering on the targets.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://cieem.net/the-disappointing-environmental-credentials-of-the-next-uk-prime-minister-by-jason-reeves-cenv-mcieem/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.nature.org/en-us/newsroom/cbd-oewg-geneva-ngos-urge-negotiators-nature-positive-goal/>

<sup>19</sup> E. J. Green et al. (2019) *Conserv. Biol.* 33, 1360–1369; available at: <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-00450-5>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-00450-5>

Our recommendations are:

### **All CBD Parties**

- Parties must agree a legally binding plan and targets to halt and reverse biodiversity decline by 2030. A clear framework for how these targets should be translated into national legislation and progress measured is also needed. Reversing biodiversity decline should also be integrated into the 2030 Mission.
- Parties should agree to protecting and managing 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030, recognising and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples.
- A robust reporting framework, focusing on progress towards targets, is essential. Indicators used to assess the recovery of nature should include taxa across freshwater, marine and terrestrial ecosystems, and measure abundance, distribution and habitat condition. As far as possible indicators should be comparative to allow consistent progress measures, while recognising the need for flexibility to ensure indicators are locally appropriate.
- Parties must commit to ongoing reviews of their ambition and commitment. National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and indicators should be meaningful and accommodate adaptive management.
- Governments must commit to new financing for biodiversity recovery and removing harmful incentives ahead of the COP15 event to encourage action from others and to ensure full implementation of agreed actions.
- The private sector must be given mandatory requirements, in line with the Task Force on Nature-Related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) and aligned to climate disclosures, to publicly report on biodiversity impacts and dependencies by 2025 and align activities (including supply chains) to achieving a nature positive world by 2030. Ensuring that the private sector is given an unequivocal responsibility to help halt and reverse biodiversity loss will be crucial to achieving targets.

### **Governments of the UK, devolved nations and Ireland**

- All UK and Irish governments should adopt a leadership position on COP15. UK and Irish government leaders and Heads of State or their most senior representatives must commit to attending COP15 in December to demonstrate the importance of biodiversity to our economies and societies.
- The UK and Irish governments must fully resource and monitor the implementation of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework in their nations, taking an adaptive management approach to capitalise on lessons learned in implementing earlier targets.
- Having declared a Biodiversity Emergency, the UK and Irish governments should recognise this as a national priority and assess the impact of **all** policy, economic and social decisions in terms of their effects on nature, considering direct, indirect, and cumulative effects.
- In demonstrating commitment to the 30x30 target through the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People<sup>21</sup>, all UK and Irish Governments must recognise that many of our protected sites are not currently in favourable condition. Favourable management must be brought in so that protected areas are in good or recovering condition before they can be counted towards the target. To be included in the target, designations must explicitly give long-term protection for nature.

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.hacfornatureandpeople.org/>

- The UK and Irish governments should recognise that obligations towards biodiversity do not end at their geographic borders but extend to the entire national value chain. Proposals to reduce the impacts on biodiversity of imported commodities should be strengthened, particularly for those affecting tropical forests, peatlands, and marine and coastal habitats.
- The UK nations and Ireland should fully integrate human rights conventions, including the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment recognised by the UN General Assembly.<sup>22</sup> This can also be strengthened by introducing a duty for developers and public bodies to provide equal access to nature-rich spaces in both existing and new communities<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> <https://sdg.iisd.org/news/unga-recognizes-human-right-to-clean-healthy-and-sustainable-environment/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.wcl.org.uk/nature-for-everyone.asp>