



Briefing note

The post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework: Proposal on Target 2 on Ecosystem Restoration

June 13th 2022

Proposed Text

[CBD/WG2020/3/L.2](#)

Bring under restoration at least 30% of degraded inland water, coastal, marine and terrestrial ecosystems to increase biodiversity and ecological integrity and enhance connectivity within and among ecosystems, prioritizing key areas for biodiversity, and supporting equitable, rights-based governance.

Rationale

Ambition level - bringing 30% of ecosystems under restoration globally is feasible

The core of Target 2 should be an ambitious target for the restoration of ecosystems (natural, seminatural and productive) to halt species extinction and safeguard the genetic diversity of wild and domesticated species. The currently proposed 20% objective for restoration is not ambitious enough compared to the global restoration potential and will not be enough to counteract the threats of existing degraded ecosystems to biodiversity, enhance climate change resilience and ensure optimal ecosystem functions. It is key to set the world into an ambitious trajectory of ecosystem restoration to ensure that global sustainable development and Rio Conventions goals, including the CBD's 2050 goal of living in harmony with nature, are achieved. One billion hectares restoration as a proposed numeric target but it is also insufficient as it only represents existing global ecosystem restoration commitments, but not the amount of restoration possible and needed.

The global restoration potential that would lead to a slowed biodiversity decline and loss of natural areas has been so far calculated only for land ecosystems by the PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency. These calculations are part of a 2050 scenario, where areas that can be brought into restoration are estimated at 1.6 billion ha of cropland, 2.2 billion ha of grazing land, and 1.4 billion ha of natural areas, accounting for almost 40% of the global land area (i.e. a total of 5.2 billion ha). This scenario does not include the restoration potential of marine areas nor the

extent of rivers that could be restored. At a minimum and based on restoration potential of land ecosystems, we argue that 30% of areas could be brought under restoration by 2030.

Moreover, it should be noted that restoration measures are only one side of the coin. Natural areas also need to be protected from land conversion, and this should be the highest priority.

A global ecosystem restoration target is not a leeway to continue degradation pathways

In order to ensure wider restoration of ecosystem integrity towards a nature-positive outcome by 2030, and full restoration by 2050, it is important to restore in conjunction with safeguarding/protecting standing/intact habitat, Key Biodiversity Areas and other important areas for biodiversity. Target 2 needs to be implemented hand in hand with Targets 1 and 3. Together they represent the full picture of ecosystem-focused actions. Target 1 aims to halt further loss of natural ecosystems caused by land and sea use change, while Target 3 focuses on expanding protected areas and OECMs. Actions under Target 2 aim to enhance biodiversity, using reference ecosystems as guidance to design restoration trajectories. It should be clear that Target 2 does not aim to address new degradation, as countries are committing to stop these trends now.

Under restoration vs areas restored

This target should focus on “areas under restoration” and not on “areas restored” as this would create additional difficulties to measure progress, as restoration might take a different amount of time for each ecosystem. It is preferable to refer to ecosystems being “under restoration” without entering into the discussion on the active/passive restoration distinction because even most interventions considered as “passive” are actually requiring active engagement of some sort. Moreover, ecosystem restoration action needs to be effective, that is, that clear goals for restoration outcomes are set up and these goals are monitored in cycles to allow adapting restoration strategies if needed.

Biodiversity, ecosystem integrity and connectivity as qualities to be achieved by restoration

‘Increasing biodiversity’ refers to the aim of generating a better state for biodiversity than it was before the intervention, and is a key need for this target in order to contribute to a nature-positive goal of reversing the loss of biodiversity by 2030.

Ecosystem integrity is an outcome of restoration activities and should be expressly referenced in the text of the target as it directly supports the achievement of Goal A. Integrity is the completeness (function, composition) and functionality of an ecosystem and its ecological processes, particularly in relation to its natural state¹.

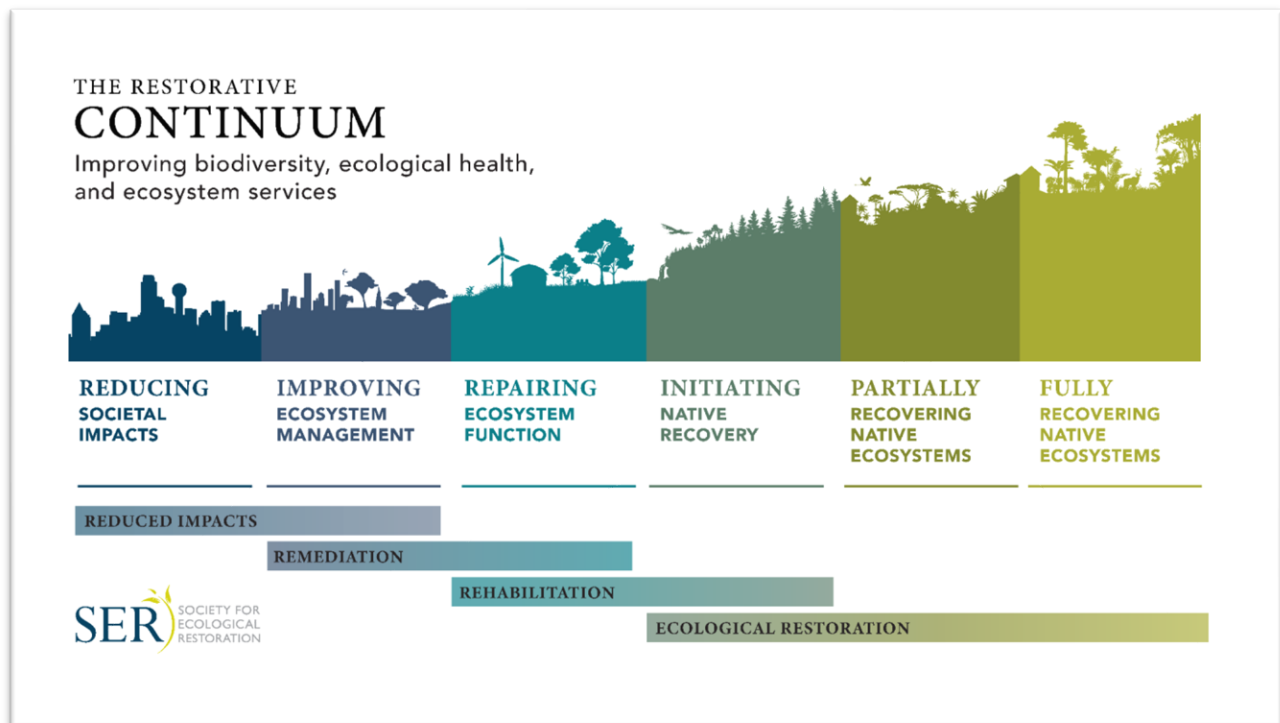
Fragmentation of habitats and ecosystems is one of the most serious threats to biodiversity worldwide and restoring connectivity is crucial to facilitate species movements between habitat patches and inter-linkages between terrestrial, freshwater, marine and coastal ecosystems. The

¹ <https://www.cbd.int/api/v2013/documents/EF052A4A-8751-AB04-8208-F2CBDA387E24/attachments/212351/WCS-2.pdf>

target should aim to enhance connectivity across ecosystems - by including “enhancing connectivity within and among them”.

Ecosystem restoration across the restorative continuum

Ecosystem restoration under Target 2 can be implemented across the restorative continuum, starting with restorative activities aimed at improving ecosystem functions to the highest level of recovery through ecological restoration based on the appropriate local native reference ecosystems (see figure 1). As CBD/SBSTTA/24/3/Add.2/Rev.1 explains, ecosystem restoration can include (a) restoring converted areas back to natural states; (b) improving the ecological integrity of degraded natural areas; and (c) rehabilitating converted and degraded areas (including degraded agricultural lands) to improve both productivity and integrity.



Ecosystems under this target should include natural, semi-natural and modified ecosystems noting that the restoration approach to be applied will differ depending on the types of ecosystems and the outcome sought. The restoration of seminatural and natural ecosystems is critical as these areas are important for biodiversity. In turn, restorative activities in productive ecosystems have a fundamental role in ensuring that existing biodiversity is enhanced (in soils and species) and that no further ecosystem loss occurs.

Beyond the type of ecosystem and the type of activity to be implemented, the common denominator of ecosystem restoration efforts is that the activities “must result in net gain for

biodiversity, ecosystem health and integrity, and human well-being, including sustainable production of goods and services”².

Rights-based governance

The science is clear that the most successful ecosystem restoration projects – those able to deliver lasting benefit at scale – mostly happen at the instigation and with the support of Indigenous People and local communities (IPLC).³

Rights based approaches to restoration mean that policies, governance and management do not violate human rights and that those implementing such policies actively seek ways to support and promote human rights in their design and implementation.

Given previous commitments within CBD processes and elsewhere, a direct reference to relevant international human rights instruments should be incorporated. There are options for how this is done, for example in the elaboration of ‘guiding principles’ for the Framework as a whole.

Baselines - restore to what?

Defining global area-based targets requires further work at national level to establish national-level targets objectives in hectares. Countries will need to assess the extent of degradation in their territories and come up with plans to restore these ecosystems - many are leading the way with adopted national restoration plans⁴ and restoration activities on the ground⁵. It is key to clarify that a globally agreed baseline year will help to identify reference ecosystems based on which countries can assess the degree of degradation and guide the design of restoration actions’ however reaching the reference ecosystem would not be the target that countries will aim at in all cases. In these ecosystems restoration will aim to recover ecosystem functionality and integrity and counteract negative impacts of existing degradation. As ecosystems are dynamic, restoration should aim to an appropriate reference point. The goals of restoration (ecosystem functionality, ecosystem services) will be determined by each country.

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² UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration Principles <https://www.fao.org/3/cb6591en/cb6591en.pdf>

³ Reyes-García, V., Fernández-Llamazares, Á., McElwee, P., Molnár, Z., Öllerer, K., Wilson, S.J. and Brondizio, E.S. (2019), The contributions of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to ecological restoration. *Restor Ecol*, 27: 3-8. <https://doi.org/10.1111/rec.12894>

⁴ <https://www.iucn.org/news/forests/202008/clear-roadmaps-land-restoration-25-countries-1>

⁵ <https://infoflr.org/bonn-challenge-barometer>

ANNEX - Table 1: The post-2020 GBF: Proposal for Target 2

OEWG3 CBD/WG2020/3/L.2	Text proposed
<p>Ensure that [at least [20][30] per cent [globally] of]/[at least 1 billion hectares of] [degraded] [[and]/[with a focus on] threatened] [freshwater, [coastal], marine and] terrestrial [and marine] ecosystems[, including agricultural soils] [and X billion hectares of degraded marine and coastal ecosystems] are under [active][effective][ecological] restoration [measures] [at the national level][at the landscape- and seascapescale], [including a focus on restoration [including land and landscape restoration,] into natural and [seminatural] ecosystems, and to support [climate change adaptation and mitigation]/[nature’s contributions][, achieving land-degradation neutrality] and ecosystem connectivity [and integrity] / [enhancing biodiversity and ecosystem [functions and] services], [improving]/[ensuring]/[enhancing] [ecosystem integrity and] connectivity] [[among them and focusing]/[[with a focus] on priority ecosystems [through providing an atmosphere for fair mobilization of international resources and transfer of necessary technologies, among others]/[enhancing the ecological integrity of priority ecosystems] [and [bio-cultural] ecosystems managed by IPLCs], [[improving]/[ensuring]/[enhancing] [ecosystem integrity and] connectivity] [, taking into account their natural state as a baseline][, with the full and effective participation of IPLCs].</p> <p>Alt 1 [Increase the ecological integrity of at least [20]% of degraded terrestrial, freshwater and marine areas globally from [2020/2022] through effective ecological restoration, focusing on areas of particular importance for biodiversity]</p> <p>Alt 2 [Bring under restoration at least 20% each of degraded freshwater, marine, and terrestrial ecosystems, improving ecosystem integrity and focusing on priority ecosystems]</p>	<p>Bring under restoration at least 30 percent of degraded inland water, coastal, marine and terrestrial ecosystems to increase biodiversity and ecological integrity and enhance connectivity within and among ecosystems, prioritizing key areas for biodiversity, and supporting equitable, rights-based governance.</p>