



Global Policy
Forward View



COP15: Convention on Biological Diversity

Implications for policy, nature and biodiversity



February 2023

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Implications for policy, nature and biodiversity, February 2023

This is a briefing paper on [COP15](#), the UN Convention on Biological Diversity's summit on biodiversity, which took place from 7th December to 19th December 2023 in Montreal, Canada. The summit was originally scheduled to take place in 2020, but was significantly delayed, principally due to COVID-19. The summit produced the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#) for the global governance of biodiversity loss, as well as four goals and 23 targets under that framework.

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Specialism-specific relevance

Specialisms which may be affected by the subject-matter of the briefing include:

- Built environment
- Climatology
- Conservation & ecology
- Environmental management
- Forestry & Landscaping
- Impact Assessment
- Sustainability

Ultimately, this subject is likely to affect any professional whose work concerns conservation, natural systems where biodiversity is present, or consenting and planning.

Recommendations for decision makers: Fulfilling the promise of COP15

1. Set national targets to implement the [Kunming-Montreal Framework](#) in a way that recognises the interconnected systems embedding unsustainable pressures on nature.
2. Support a [Land Use Framework](#) that takes a strategic approach to all forms of land use, utilising scientific insights to maximise the 'ecosystem services' which land can provide and environmental land management to safeguard natural resources.
3. Protect nature during planning processes and through appropriate landscape designations, including in the [Levelling-Up Bill](#). When dealing with the impact of planning on nature, use the mitigation hierarchy (avoid, minimise, restore and offset).
4. Give nature a home at the local level. Each Local Authority should employ ecologists and planners should be trained in key ecological principles.
5. Facilitate nature recovery through [improved landscape designations](#), effective [management and monitoring](#) of protected sites, and appropriate funding.

How can environmental experts help?

1. Recognise that all communities can benefit from the implementation of the Framework and engage with your Local Authority to support local nature recovery plans that help to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030.
2. Articulate the [risks of biodiversity loss](#) and the potential value associated with nature.
3. Start conversations about [co-producing](#) the community's approach to nature and local plans for nature recovery.
4. Promote resources on [biodiversity](#), [biodiversity loss](#), and the [benefits of healthy ecosystems](#) for friends or colleagues who want to know more about biodiversity.

If you need more information about any of these recommendations or how to help your community support nature and biodiversity, contact the IES at joseph@the-ies.org.

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What was COP15?

[COP15](#) was a global summit for the parties to the UN's [Convention on Biological Diversity](#) (CBD), which is its key environmental treaty for addressing biodiversity loss at a global level. Summits for the CBD are less frequent than for the equivalent climate change treaty, [the UNFCCC](#), though no less important in securing positive environmental and social outcomes.

The summit held in December, COP15, was particularly important as it produced a post-2020 framework of targets and rules to address biodiversity loss. The first set of [targets under the CBD](#), set out in 2010 in Aichi, Japan, were due to be met in 2020 and were universally unmet. COP15 was scheduled to take place in line with the expiry of the first set of targets to negotiate a new series of targets and to advance action on biodiversity loss.

COP15 has now created what some commentators are referring to as having the potential to become a 'Paris Agreement for nature', the [Kunming-Montreal Framework](#).

What does the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework include?

During COP15, six agreements were adopted, including the [Global Biodiversity Framework](#), which has become the key framework for coordinating action to address biodiversity loss on a global level. The Framework itself contains four overarching long-term goals, as well as 23 targets. The long-term goals address a vision for biodiversity and global action with a view to 2050, whereas the majority of the targets focus on the next seven years until 2030.

The global goals address:

1. The integrity, connectivity, and resilience of ecosystems, as well as the threat of human-induced extinction of species;
2. The sustainable use and management of nature and its contributions to people;
3. The fair and equitable utilisation of genetic resources for monetary and non-monetary benefits; and
4. The implementation of the Framework, including funding, capacity, technical and scientific cooperation, and access to technology.

The targets address how the global community must achieve those goals, including a crucial commitment that at least 30% of terrestrial, inland water, and coastal & marine areas will be effectively conserved and managed by 2030 (known as the [30x30 initiative](#)).



How should international governments and the UK approach biodiversity loss?

The UK Government and its international partners should seek to achieve [transformative change](#) by addressing the unsustainable systems which embed pressure on nature. Nature does not recognise political or national borders, so our approach must be global, though we must also implement the [Kunming-Montreal Framework](#) at a national level, while recognising the nature of interconnected systems and their potential for positive or negative effects.

How can we change our relationship with nature?

We require a paradigm shift in the way we think about the environment, towards a functional view that acknowledges that different ecosystems cannot be approached in isolation and that interventions will have repercussions beyond immediate spatial boundaries. Only by moving to proactive, regenerative actions based on systems thinking can we deliver the transformative change needed to meet climate ambitions, whilst restoring ecosystems and protecting biodiversity.

How can we take a systems approach to land use?

Our approach to land is a combination of a number of independent pressures: agriculture, planning, infrastructure, the conservation of nature, and other needs such as energy security. In the UK, each is covered by separate legislative and regulatory drivers, such as [Local Nature Recovery Strategies](#), [Environmental Land Management Schemes](#), and [Biodiversity Net Gain](#).

We need a coordinated approach to how we use our limited land across those sub-systems and drivers. The Government announced a Land Use Framework in June 2022, though details are yet to be confirmed. Both the [Food, Farming & Countryside Commission](#) and [Green Alliance](#) have outlined how to make the most of the opportunity.

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How can Local Authorities and planning processes support nature?

To deliver on our goals, it is essential that nature is given a home in Local Authorities. Every Local Authority should employ ecologists as an essential component in delivering both ecosystem restoration and climate ambitions.

To succeed, Local Authorities, which often bear the brunt of delivering environmental outcomes, must be properly resourced.

Equally, planning processes must recognise the mitigation hierarchy: we should avoid, minimise, restore and offset environmental harms wherever possible.

The [Levelling-Up & Regeneration Bill](#) is a crucial opportunity to ensure [effective landscape designations](#) can be employed to protect ecosystems and promote nature recovery.

What do we need to see from national targets?

The Framework agreed at COP15 promised to raise ambitions to realise the goal of halting and reversing biodiversity loss by 2030. National targets must be fully aligned with the Framework to drive action on the ground.

The Environment Act introduced [new targets on biodiversity](#), though these alone will [not be sufficient](#) to address biodiversity loss.

In particular, our targets must ensure transparency for businesses, helping consumers to make informed decisions and providing certainty to drive investment in nature. This will require effective monitoring of protected sites, as well as management plans for nature recovery at a local level.

While designating appropriate sites for nature recovery is essential, we must also seek to ensure the quality of protected sites through effective governance.

Find out more

The IES provides briefings on a range of policy-related topics, as well as guidance and other resources for IES members covering the full range of environmental science disciplines.

If you need more information about any of these recommendations or how to support nature and biodiversity, contact the IES at joseph@the-ies.org.



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Key concepts

Biodiversity and biodiversity loss

Biodiversity (or biological diversity) refers to the full range and variety of life found on Earth or in a particular ecosystem, from animals to plants, fungi, and other forms of life. Biodiversity plays a crucial role in the functioning of the natural world, as well as making vital contributions to human society and the economy.

Biodiversity loss relates to the decline, disappearance, or degradation of biodiversity. Globally, biodiversity is declining faster than at any time in human history. The [IPBES Global Assessment Report](#) provides full details of the evidence underpinning our understanding of biodiversity loss.

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

The [Convention on Biological Diversity](#) (CBD) is one of three treaties emerging from the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, along with the [UN Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) and the [Convention to Combat Desertification](#). The CBD is principally responsible for the conservation of biodiversity and the sustainable and equitable management of its benefits.

[COP15](#) was a summit bringing together the 196 countries who are parties to the Convention to negotiate a new framework of targets and to guide action to 2030, by which point the international community hopes to have halted or begun to reverse the decline of nature and biodiversity.

IPBES

IPBES is the [Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services](#). It is an international organisation established in 2012 to provide scientific support to global efforts to address nature and biodiversity. Although it is significantly different in its structure and scope, it plays a similar role to the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) (IPCC) and has produced crucial evidence such as the [Nexus Assessment](#) on the links between biodiversity, water, food and health and the [Values Assessment](#) on the multiple values of nature and its benefits.

Transformative change

An approach to change based on '[systems thinking](#)' and approaching complex global problems from the perspective of the systems which are causing those problems. [Transformative change](#) seeks to transform the entire system, rather than making small or incremental changes to individual symptoms of a wider problem.

Transformative change of global systems of consumption and production, including food, land use, and planning, will be necessary to protect nature and address the interlinking crises of climate change and biodiversity loss.

Find out more about influencing Government decisions

Our member briefing note: '[Influencing the UK Parliament](#)', first published in 2011 and most recently re-issued in 2022, provides an overview of some of the ways that environmental professionals can influence Parliament and legislation.

The IES also runs training to help environmental professionals learn more about policy, how it affects them, and how they can influence policy decisions. Regular training sessions are available for sign-ups [on the IES website](#).

In the UK, many issues of environmental policy are devolved to national administrations. If you live in Scotland, you can contact your [Member of Scottish Parliament](#) or [learn more](#) about influencing Scottish legislation. If you live in Wales, you can [contact your Member of Senedd Cymru](#) or learn more about the [business of the Senedd](#). If you live in Northern Ireland, you can [contact your local Member of the Legislative Assembly](#) or learn more about the [Assembly's work](#).

Other relevant legislation & regulation

Find out more about existing legislation on this topic:

- [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#)
- [Environmental Improvement Plan](#)
- [Scottish Biodiversity Strategy](#)
- [Environment Act 2021](#)
- [National Planning Policy Framework \(England\)](#)
- [Fourth National Planning Framework for Scotland](#)
- [The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017](#)
- [Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006](#)
- [Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981](#)
- [The Environmental Targets \(Biodiversity\) \(England\) Regulations 2023](#)
- [Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill](#)

Read other relevant briefings from the IES and IAQM:

- [A guide to the assessment of air quality impacts on designated nature conservation sites](#)
- [Levelling-Up & Regeneration Bill](#)
- [Land and nature policy \(horizon scanning\)](#)
- [A Manifesto for Transformative Change \(Climate change\)](#)

Is there a policy-related topic which you would like to see covered by the IES? Get in touch at joseph@the-ies.org to let us know your thoughts on potential topics for future briefings, or with your suggestions for other content.

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Appendix: What does the Kunming-Montreal Framework cover?

At a glance: Kunming-Montreal's four long-term global goals

1. The integrity, connectivity, and resilience of ecosystems, as well as the threat of human-induced extinction of species;
2. The sustainable use and management of nature and its contributions to people;
3. The fair and equitable utilisation of genetic resources for monetary and non-monetary benefits; and
4. The implementation of the Framework, including funding, capacity, technical and scientific cooperation, and access to technology.

For the full goals and more information about what they cover, see the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#).

At a glance: Kunming-Montreal's 23 action-oriented targets

Reducing threats to biodiversity

1. Spatial planning and effective management
2. Restoration of degraded terrestrial, inland water, and coastal and marine ecosystems
3. Management and integration of terrestrial, inland water, and coastal and marine ecosystems
4. Halt human-induced extinction and support recovery
5. Sustainable use and trade of wild species
6. Addressing the impacts of invasive alien species
7. Addressing the impacts of pollution (including nutrients, pesticides, and plastic)
8. Addressing the impact of climate change and ocean acidification

Meeting people's needs through sustainable use and benefit-sharing

9. Sustainable management of wild species for social, economic, and environmental benefits
10. Sustainable agriculture, fisheries, forestry for biodiversity and food security
11. Restore, maintain and enhance ecosystem services
12. Increased area and quality of green and blue spaces in urban environments with biodiversity-inclusive urban planning
13. Measures to ensure the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits of genetic resources

Tools and solutions for implementation and mainstreaming

14. Integration of biodiversity into policy, regulation, planning, EIA, and national accounting across all levels of government
15. Facilitate businesses engagement in monitoring, transparency, compliance and other means of ensuring sustainable consumption
16. Encourage and enable sustainable consumption choices and halve global food waste
17. Establish measures for biosafety in the context of biotechnology
18. Identify by 2025 and eliminate, phase out, or reform biodiversity-harming subsidies (reducing them by at least \$500bn per year by 2030)
19. Increase financial resources mobilizing at least \$200bn per year by 2030 (including finance from developed to developing countries should be \$20bn per year by 2025 and \$30bn per year by 2030, national biodiversity finance plans, private and blended finance, innovative financial tools, co-benefits and synergies with climate finance, and collective and non-market actions)
20. Strengthen capacity building and development, including through technology transfer
21. Ensure availability of data, information and knowledge
22. Justice, representation, and participation in decision making
23. Gender equality and equal rights in implementation

For the full goals and more information on what they cover, see the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#).



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