

What you need to know about COP15

Key takeaways from the world's most significant event for nature

Introduction

Delegations met in December 2022 in Montreal, Canada for the United Nations (UN) Biodiversity Conference aiming to establish targets to protect and conserve biodiversity and live in harmony with nature by 2030. Leaders met the call to action by coming to agreement on the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF),¹ what many are calling the 'Paris Agreement' moment for nature. At COP15, the conversation expanded beyond conservation and restoration towards understanding deep relationships between biodiversity, climate, and social justice. In the wake of this momentous achievement, the need to scale up implementation calls for multisectoral action and collaboration to understand and transform current approaches to measure, value, and report on nature. ➔

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework,² the world's most important deal for nature, established the following targets and goals:

- **Halt and reverse biodiversity loss** by 2030,³ effectively aiming for a nature positive future
- **Ensure 30x30 target** to conserve and protect 30% of terrestrial, inland water, coastal and marine areas of biological importance
- Require large companies and financial institutions to **assess and disclose biodiversity risks**, dependencies, and impacts
- **Eliminate, phase-out and reform** at least US\$500 billion of biodiversity-harmful subsidies and incentives by 2030
- **Mobilize at least US\$200 billion per year** from public and private sources for biodiversity funding, including US\$20 billion per year from developed to developing countries by 2025

Additional commitments to scale implementation:

- Monitoring framework is adopted as part of the decision texts, enhancing the effectiveness of implementation⁴
- National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans Accelerator Partnership launched to help scale up implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans⁵
- World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) published a road map to help companies assess, commit, transform and disclose their nature impacts⁶
- Emmanuel Faber, chair of the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB), announced the inclusion of natural ecosystems and just transition into standards⁷
- Government of Germany announced multi-year funding commitment of US\$31 million to the Task Force for Nature-Related Financial Disclosures (TNFD)⁸

Three key takeaway actions for the business community

1. Prepare to assess and disclose impacts and dependencies on nature

Among the most important outcomes of COP15 is agreement on Target 15,⁹ which calls on countries to take measures to ensure large businesses and financial institutions disclose their risks, dependencies, and impacts on biodiversity. While the target does not include "mandatory" in the language, it specifies that governments will "ensure" and "include with requirements" nature-related disclosures for entire supply and value chains and portfolios. The TNFD framework will become a key milestone for companies to better understand and disclose their biodiversity impact. Businesses can get ahead by engaging with the [TNFD beta framework](#) under development.

Notably, countries agreed on numerous additional decision texts that are critical to implementation of the GBF. The monitoring framework lays out proposed indicators to assess progress, such as the number of companies disclosing impacts and dependencies for Target 15.¹⁰ The high ambition of the new agreement demands that businesses proactively assess their nature readiness and enhance their data.

2. Support Indigenous leadership and nature stewardship

Nature positive depends on the private sector supporting Indigenous-led conservation. The rights and roles of Indigenous peoples is highlighted throughout the GBF, calling on governments, businesses and society to ensure that action on nature is also action supporting and collaborating with Indigenous people and local communities. Although clear progress was made in the text, Indigenous leaders such as Kenneth Deer, Kanie'keha'ka Elder from Kanawà:ke, urged that Indigenous nations should have a representative body of equal status to countries at United Nations negotiations.¹¹

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Businesses should also be aware of future compliance obligations towards access and benefit-sharing as part of Target 15 regulatory measures.¹² Community-based monitoring approaches were highlighted in the monitoring framework,¹³ calling on businesses to support community monitoring strategies, improve relations, and ensure that nature positive is also a commitment to support stewardship.

3. Shift harmful financial flows to nature positive

Implementation of the GBF requires shifting financial flows, an opportunity for the private sector. Financial flows were highlighted throughout the decision texts but will become more critical in the lead up to COP15 and implementation of the GBF. Increased ambition was delivered on finance-related commitments, such as Target 18, which calls for reform of all environmentally harmful subsidies.¹⁴ Focused on financial resources, Target 19 asks countries to leverage private finance and blended finance by scaling up business investment through innovative instruments like green bonds, payment for ecosystem services, and biodiversity credits. Businesses will need to stay tuned to new programs, opportunities, incentives, and obligations towards transformative biodiversity finance mechanisms.

With announcements from the ISSB stating that natural ecosystems and just transitions will be embedded into its standards, companies should be aware of performance requirements becoming more holistic. The ISSB announced two key advisors, Karin Kemper, former global director for environment at World Bank, and Geordie Hungerford, CEO of the First Nations Financial Management Board in Canada, intending to utilize the work of the TNFD in its performance standards.

Resource mobilization is critical to effective implementation of the GBF. To address the estimated US\$598-824 billion per year biodiversity finance gap,¹⁵ countries agreed on strategies for resource mobilization,¹⁶ encouraging public and private sectors to contribute to newly established funds,¹⁷ and mobilizing private financial resources towards biodiversity. Businesses and governments need to be prepared for domestic and international actions slated for 2023-2024, including elimination, phase out and reform of harmful financial flows of international financial institutions and mainstreaming of biodiversity in the private sector.

Conclusion

At COP15, calls to meet the biodiversity crisis were answered through global consensus on the GBF. It became clear that a holistic view of value is necessary for people to address some of the most significant crises of our time: climate, nature, and justice.

Business and finance hold critical roles to ensure that nature and biodiversity values are enhanced and protected. Over the next two years, and in the lead up to COP16, companies need to start understanding their nature impacts to transform the way we do business—and to ensure a nature positive future. This process must be done with deep, authentic partners and relations among governments, businesses, NGOs, and Indigenous and local communities, because we are all part of and intimately depend on nature.

Endnotes

1. Convention on Biological Diversity, "[COP15: Nations Adopt Four Goals, 23 Targets For 2030 In Landmark UN Biodiversity Agreement](#)," press release, December 19, 2022.
2. Convention on Biological Diversity, "[Kunming-Montreal Global biodiversity framework](#)," draft decision submitted by the President, CBD/COP/15/L25, December 18, 2022.
3. Convention on Biological Diversity, "[Kunming-Montreal Global biodiversity framework](#)," p. 7.
4. Convention on Biological Diversity, "[Monitoring framework for the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#)," draft decision submitted by the President, CBD/COP.15/26, December 18, 2022, p. 18.
5. UN Environment Programme, "[New partnership aims to accelerate Global Biodiversity Framework implementation](#)," December 19, 2022.
6. WBCSD, "[Accelerating business accountability, ambition and action in support of Global Biodiversity framework implementation](#)," December 9, 2022.
7. International Financial Reporting Standards, "[ISSB describes the concept of sustainability and its articulation with financial value creation, and announces plans to advance work on natural ecosystems and just transition](#)," December 14, 2022.
8. Task Force on Nature-related Financial Disclosures, "[TNFD: Strategic support and market engagement for nature-related risk management and reporting gains momentum at COP-15](#)," December 15, 2022.
9. Convention on Biological Diversity, "[Kunming-Montreal Global biodiversity framework](#)," p. 11.
10. Convention on Biological Diversity, "[Monitoring framework for the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#)," p. 18.
11. Emelia Fournier, "[International plan to save biodiversity promises to respect Indigenous rights and knowledge](#)," APTN News, December 20, 2022.
12. Convention on Biological Diversity, "[Kunming-Montreal Global biodiversity framework](#)," p. 11.
13. Convention on Biological Diversity, "[Monitoring framework for the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#)," pp. 1, 24.
14. Convention on Biological Diversity, "[Kunming-Montreal Global biodiversity framework](#)," p. 11.
15. The Paulson Institute, The Nature Conservancy, and the Cornell Atkinson Center for Sustainability, "[Financing Nature: Closing the Global Biodiversity Financing Gap](#)," 2020.,
16. Resource mobilization, Draft decision submitted by the President (2022), CBD/COP.15/29, <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-15/cop-15-dec-07-en.pdf>
17. Resource mobilization, page 2 Para 7

Authors



Jennifer Steinmann
Deloitte Global Sustainability & Climate Practice Leader
jsteinmann@deloitte.com
+1 415-783-5247



Guy Williams
Asia Pacific & Global Nature Lead
guymwilliams@deloitte.com
+84 902-125-952



Geneva Claesson
Canada Sustainability & Climate Change Partner
gclaesson@deloitte.ca
+1 403-708-9164

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