

Towards the UN Biodiversity Conference COP15

EU and African positions

European Commission media briefing and interview opportunities

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Intervention of Alice Ruhweza, Africa Regional Director, WWF

Africa is rich in natural resources ranging from arable land, water, oil, natural gas, minerals, forests and wildlife. As well as the often cited 30% of world's mineral reserves, 12% of oil, and 40% of gold, Africa also has more than 50% of world's remaining arable land, 10% of its internal renewable fresh water and 25% of the world's biodiversity. Forests span almost a quarter of Africa's landmass, providing employment to millions of people - Sub-Saharan Africa's charcoal sector alone employs more than 7 million people. In most African countries, natural capital accounts for between 30 and 50 percent of total wealth. Over 70 per cent of people living in sub-Saharan Africa depend on forests and woodlands for their livelihoods.

A significant share of these resources is, however, used unsustainably while others are lost through illegal activities, meaning that the stream of benefits generated from these resources is being reduced over time. For instance, Africa loses an estimated USD 195 billion annually of its natural capital through illicit financial flows, illegal mining, illegal logging, the illegal trade in wildlife, unregulated fishing and environmental degradation and loss. Africa's rate of net forest loss is the highest in the world, with 3.9 million hectares – or an area almost the size of Tanzania - lost between 2010 and 2020.

Africa's biodiversity has fallen by 66% since 1970 according to the WWF Living Planet Report 2022 and the UN estimates that by 2050 the continent will have lost more than 50% of its bird and mammal species. Extreme weather events and other impacts of climate change are being felt with far more regularity, with severe economic and health impacts.

Collectively, Africa has a lot to gain in pulling together and harnessing its vast natural resources to finance the development agenda towards greater prosperity; and it must also ensure that future growth and exploitation of natural resources is sustainable and climate resilient. Successful fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals depends upon these natural resources, both through ecosystem services provided such as crop pollination, water supply and food protection, but also providing food and healthy diets, incomes and livelihoods as well as numerous other health benefits.

A development that positions this natural capital as a strategic natural resource and emphasises sustainably managing it for the future will provide Africa with the potential for truly sustainable economic growth and will actively drive resilience.

What we urgently need now is a plan that unites the African governments in dealing with this existential challenge. A plan that is agreed globally and implemented locally. A plan that clearly sets a measurable and time-bound global goal for nature as the Paris Agreement, with the net-zero emissions goal by 2050, did for climate.

But what can be the 'net-zero emissions' equivalent for biodiversity?

What is at stake at COP15

At the UN CBD COP 15, world leaders and decision-makers will have the opportunity to approve a historic global plan for protecting and restoring nature in the coming decade. The global biodiversity framework presents a once-in-a-decade opportunity to secure an ambitious and transformative global plan to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030, in support of climate action and the Sustainable Development Goals. For WWF, and for many other organisations and a growing number of country leaders agreeing on a nature-positive global goal is crucial and urgent. Political leaders representing

94 countries among them 17 African leaders, and including the President of the European Commission, have committed to reversing biodiversity loss by 2030 in the Leaders' Pledge for Nature.

Tackling an issue as big and as urgent as nature loss requires change across all areas of society. Just like how the Paris Agreement of 2015 united the world against the climate crisis, the global biodiversity framework (GBF) has the power to spark this very change, setting in motion a wave of action and awareness for nature on a global scale. Adopting a robust and fit for purpose GBF is the crucial first step we need to heal our broken relationship with nature and put us on the road to recovery. Nature is already in a state of emergency and time is running out. Unless we act now and commit to reversing nature loss by the end of the decade, we risk even greater (and potentially irreversible) harm to our planet, and us.

The first draft of the GBF falls far short of the ambition to which governments have already promised, in major international commitments which explicitly cover the negotiation of the GBF. This includes halving the footprint of production and consumption by 2030 and the commitment to eliminate or repurpose subsidies and other incentives that are harmful to nature, biodiversity and climate. The gap between existing political commitments and the CBD negotiations needs to be bridged by strengthening the GBF.

WWF has identified 7 key areas in which the global biodiversity framework must galvanise transformative action:

- **A nature-positive world by 2030**

A mission to reverse the loss of biodiversity and secure a nature-positive world by 2030 for the benefit of all people and the planet, must be enshrined in the global biodiversity framework. This means that the catastrophic loss of nature is reversed so that by 2030 we have more nature than there is now. Action on nature is essential to reducing our vulnerability to future pandemics, tackling the climate crisis, and protecting livelihoods. We need governments to secure a global agreement on biodiversity that is at least as comprehensive, science-based and ambitious as the Paris Agreement on climate change.

- **Targets to conserve at least 30% of land, freshwater and oceans and restore degraded ecosystems globally by 2030**

Together with Indigenous Peoples and local communities, we must protect and conserve 30% of the planet by 2030. WWF supports others in this global target, provided it is achieved through a rights-based approach that respects and secures the rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities to their lands and waters by respecting their Free, Prior and Informed Consent.

At least 21 countries from Africa have joined the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People championing a central goal of protecting at least 30% of the world's land and oceans by 2030. These critical biodiversity areas represent the most important sites for biodiversity conservation and will be key to meeting this target and others. But protecting areas isn't just about drawing a line in the sand, it's about increasing the integrity, area and connectivity of natural ecosystems to better allow nature and people the opportunity to thrive.

- **Transformative action across the key productive sectors to tackle the drivers of biodiversity loss.**

The way we produce and consume food and resources has to change. Food systems drive 70% of biodiversity loss on land and 50% in freshwater. At present, agriculture occupies about one-third of the Earth's total land area and accounts for almost 70 per cent of water use. Global food systems are the number one driver of biodiversity loss. The global biodiversity framework offers a unique opportunity to agree on the global, collective action required to reduce the footprint of our production and consumption and to address the direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss. A goal to halve the footprint of production and consumption emphasises the importance of and addressing our impact on the natural world.

- **A strong and effective implementation mechanism**

Ambitious goals and targets are only meaningful if they guide and stimulate ambitious action. To ensure the right activities are implemented the framework should include a mechanism

that holds all parties to account, allowing actions to be assessed and ratcheted up if countries are collectively falling behind. This means countries committing to review progress and increase action if they're not on track to achieve the targets and it is important to emphasise that this is for both action targets as well as those on biodiversity financing and other means of implementation.

- **Comprehensive financing aligned with nature-positive outcomes.**

We must urgently address the negative impact of finance on our world's natural resources, by aligning public and private financial flows with nature-positive practices and eliminating or repurposing perverse incentives, including harmful subsidies.

The EU is already a major donor for biodiversity and we welcome that the European Commission has pledged to double biodiversity spending from its external budget and will spend €7bn over the next six years on biodiversity-related projects outside of the EU. However, we need a comprehensive finance and resource mobilisation strategy to generate a significant increase in funding for biodiversity from all sources, including overseas development assistance, domestic biodiversity finance, and public and private finance. Only with enough money in the right places and with the urgency required can transformative action really take effect. This includes repurposing incentives such as subsidies that are harmful to biodiversity.

- **Strengthening nature-based solutions**

Nature holds the answers to many of the world's most pressing challenges, including to achieving key health, poverty reduction, climate and economic objectives. The global biodiversity framework must signpost the value of equitable and rights-based nature-based solutions for the benefit of both people and biodiversity.

- **A human rights-based and whole-of-society approach must be integrated across the entire GBF, including the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.**

The GBF should integrate a human rights-based approach (RBA) to ensure the respect of human rights and the full, effective and equitable participation of indigenous peoples and local communities, women and girls, youth and other people in vulnerable situations. This is critical for a transformative GBF and the realisation of a nature-positive world by 2030. The conservation of a substantial proportion of the world's biodiversity and its provision of essential goods and services to people largely depends on the customary institutions and management systems of indigenous peoples and local communities. Taking a RBA, in the context of achieving global biodiversity targets, means that biodiversity 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. It is an essential enabling condition for the resilience of systems of life, good health, and the use, management, restoration and conservation of natural resources.

The role of Africa - EU Partnership

In the context of the Africa - EU Partnership, the EU must continue to play a leading role in shaping and adopting an ambitious GBF, including by committing to provide adequate financial support to African partners for conservation, livelihoods and nature restoration work. Implementing an effective GBF will demand ambitious and appropriate use of biodiversity policy instruments, and other measures, to promote sustainable patterns of production and consumption. It will also require the EU to scale up biodiversity finance and both parties to reduce finance flows that harm biodiversity.

The EU should substantially and consistently increase support to African governments primarily in two key areas:

- **Enhancing the availability of biodiversity finance and their effective and efficient use at all levels:** the EU should support African partner countries to revise their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) to align them with the GBF and define all new and complementary activities, including at landscape- and seascape scale, and at the levels of policy and incentives across all of the government, to implement them in the most cost-effective way.

- **Strengthening of capacity will be required at all levels of the African partner countries' government** and across all relevant ministries, including ministries of finance, justice and economy. To successfully implement NBSAPs in line with a transformative GBF, with a whole-of-government approach, all ministries that are responsible for overseeing the sectors that drive biodiversity loss and associated harmful subsidies, require sufficient knowledge, expertise, and capacity to do their part. As a result, capacity-building, technical assistance, technological cooperation and knowledge sharing should be significantly scaled up.

Closure

Just as the global goal of 'net-zero emissions by 2050' is disrupting the energy sector so that it shifts towards renewables, 'nature positive by 2030' will disrupt the sectors that are drivers of nature loss – agriculture, fishing, forestry, infrastructure and extractives – driving innovation and acceleration towards sustainable production and consumption behaviours. Our society is at the most important fork in its history, and is facing its deepest systems change challenge around what is perhaps the most existential of all our relationships: the one with nature. And all this at a time when it is becoming more obvious that we depend on nature much more than nature depends on us. The COP15 biodiversity conference can be the moment when the world comes together on nature.

We need a plan that is both fair and inclusive, that everyone can play a part in delivering. The plan must deliver on all three objectives of the convention. We need a rights-based approach including securing the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to their lands, freshwater and seas. We need to recognise that protecting and restoring nature will only be achieved by addressing the drivers of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation – including the global food system – that are primarily driven by those of us who live outside those places. And above all we need to deliver lasting results on a greater scale, justly and with greater urgency than we have ever seen before.

Additional resources:

WWF COP15 resources: <https://explore.panda.org/cop15>

[WWF COP15 expectations paper](#)

2022 WWF Living Planet Report:

https://wwflpr.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/lpr_2022_full_report.pdf

[Making nature everyone's business](#) - WWF strategic plan for Africa 2021 - 2025

Towards a green, just and equitable EU - Africa partnership:

https://wwfeu.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/wwf_recommendations_eu_africa_summit_2022.pdf