

## Swimming the talk: How to strengthen synergies between the Climate and Biodiversity Conventions?

### KEY MESSAGES

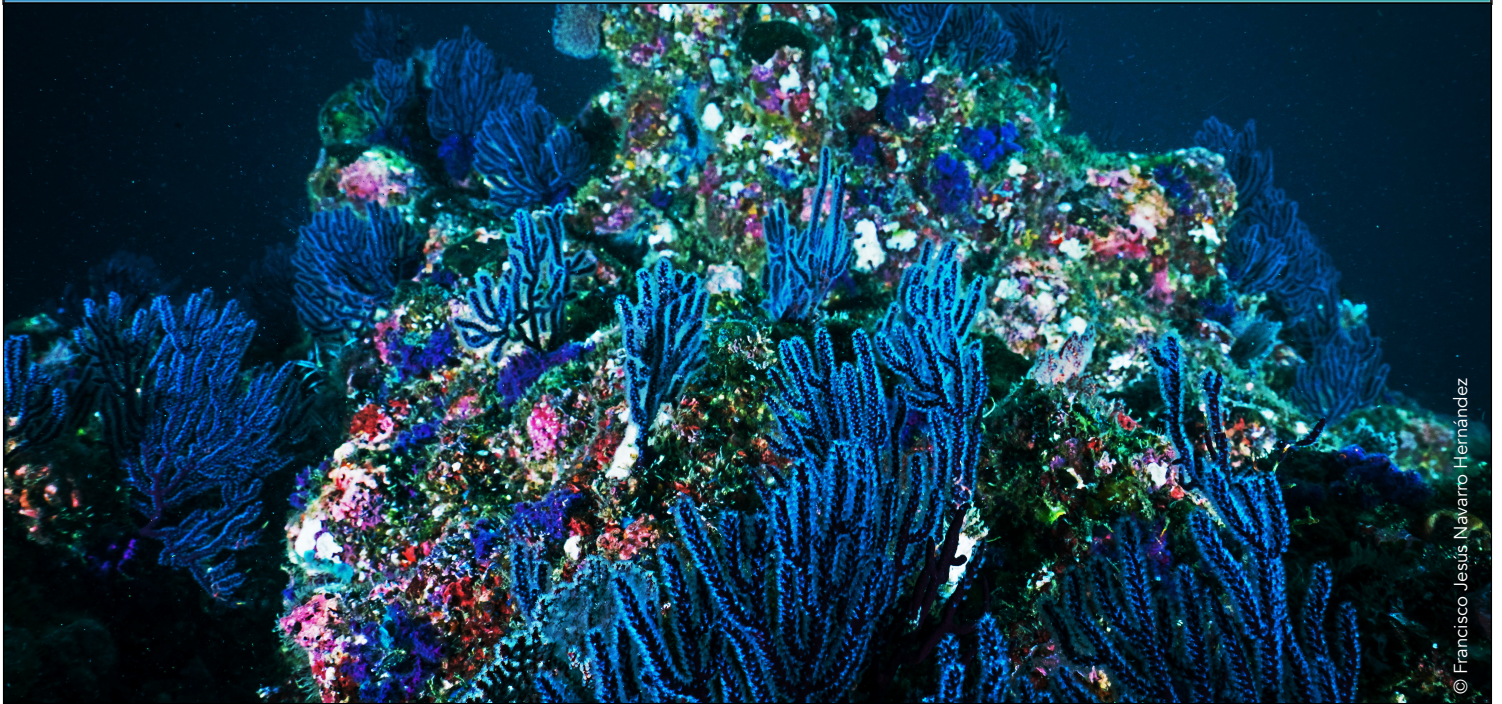
- ➔ **SCIENCE:** Scientists must continue to support **informed decision-making**, prompting policymakers to further consider ocean, climate and biodiversity interactions. **Intergovernmental science-policy bodies** (i.e., IPCC and IPBES) have a key role to play by increasing their cooperation. Similarly, further collaboration between the **Conventions' Subsidiary bodies** (i.e., SBSTA and SBSTTA) is another way forward to boost synergies between the CBD and UNFCCC.
- ➔ **POLICY:** Policymakers must work towards **increasing political coherence** between ocean, climate and biodiversity strategies. Coordinating **national commitments** (i.e., NDCs and NBSAPs) is an opportunity to align ambition towards both climate-smart and biodiversity-neutral or, ideally, biodiversity-positive targets. At the global level, opportunities for further communication and cooperation lie within the **Governing bodies** (i.e., COPs) and their related Presidencies, as well as within the Secretariats of the Conventions.
- ➔ **ACTION:** Non-State actors are agents of change and drivers for increased ambition. Building bridges among climate and biodiversity **communities of non-state actors**, including among the two **action agendas** (i.e., Global Climate Action Agenda and Action Agenda for People and Nature) could be a game-changer in the way non-party stakeholders mobilise and influence decision-makers to tackle the climate and biodiversity crisis as one and the same.
- ➔ **FINANCE:** Strengthening the ocean-climate-biodiversity nexus can be further achieved by better reflecting it in **investments or financing strategies**, and by increasing collaboration across the **financial mechanisms and institutions**. The GCF and GEF, which already operate with both Conventions, could strive to build bridges between their respective workstreams, mainstreaming climate issues in biodiversity projects and vice versa.

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*The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) were both adopted at the Rio Earth Summit, in 1992. The two Conventions were created to be compatible from the outset and this strong potential for complementarity has only grown since then. However, despite these promising signs, cooperation mechanisms remain weak and insufficient. There is no common vision or long-term strategy between the climate and biodiversity regimes. A movement has emerged over the last couple of years to bridge these gaps and overcome this lingering tendency to work in silos. Building synergies among the climate and biodiversity regimes will be a decisive move towards effective and holistic governance, and the ocean has a key role to play in this climate-biodiversity reconciliation. Indeed, addressing the decline in ocean health, climate change and biodiversity separately could seriously jeopardise our ability to deal with these critical challenges. Integrating the ocean, climate and biodiversity agendas necessitates a comprehensive approach that builds on enhanced collaboration and cooperation among the scientific community, decision-makers, civil society and the financial world.*

## INTRODUCTION



“A peaceful future can only be assured if we make our peace with nature”(Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany, Earth Summit, 1992). The Earth Summit of 1992 marked the founding of the three Rio Conventions on Biodiversity, Climate and Desertification: the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). At the heart of the Summit laid the transboundary nature of environmental issues, the concept of Sustainable Development and the precautionary approach. Given the magnitude of the challenges ahead, countries agreed they needed to work collectively in addition to acting individually. A formidable boost to multilateralism.

Almost 30 years later, while we have moved from a context of post-Cold War to a global pandemic, the state of the environment is alarming. None other than António Guterres, UN Secretary General, declared in 2020 that “Humanity is waging war on nature” and that “Making peace with nature is the defining task of the 21st century” (The State of the Planet, 2020). In other words, peace-building requires us to look together after the natural world; the times when security policies were restricted to the protection of human-made borders are long gone.

A number of countries have declared the state of “environmental emergency” and global environmental targets to safeguard the health of our Planet have long been forsaken. In light of this rather gloomy realisation, an emerging response looks at breaking down silos across the Rio Conventions. Building synergies among the Climate and Biodiversity regimes, among others, could be a decisive move towards effective and integrated governance, albeit not fully sufficient, but a step in the right direction. Since immemorial times a battlefield for humans at war with each other - the Ocean - has now also become the theatre of our collective war to sustain and protect the natural world. As a powerful and untapped source of solutions to tackle the climate and biodiversity crises, the ocean has a key role to play in building bridges between the two regimes.

## The ocean at the heart of climate and biodiversity interactions

Covering 71 % of the globe, the ocean is the largest ecosystem on Earth - our Blue Planet. This complex and largely unexplored ecosystem is at the heart of the global climate system and is essential for the maintenance of life. The ocean regulates major climate processes, but at an increasingly great cost to its health and integrity (see IPCC, Special Report on Ocean and the Cryosphere in a Changing Climate, 2019).

Despite its vital role, the ocean will no longer sustain its regulating activities. The ocean, its many organisms, habitats, ecosystems, resources and the key services it provides, are under heightened pressure from multiple threats. On the front line from the impacts of climate change, the consequences for the ocean are further exacerbated by other human-induced stressors such as pollution, eutrophication, and over-exploitation of marine resources (see IPBES, Global Assessment, 2019).

Climate change is ocean change. Addressing the decline in ocean health, climate change and biodiversity loss separately could seriously jeopardise our ability to successfully overcome these challenges. The ocean is fundamental to the sustainable world we must build, as it sits at the crossroads of all major challenges facing humanity today - namely climate change, biodiversity loss, the energy transition, international trade, food security, social equity and, of course, health.

## The need to simultaneously address ocean, climate and biodiversity challenges

Marine and coastal ecosystems are still underrepresented as an integral part of the solution in both climate mitigation and adaptation strategies. As we face increasingly severe climate impacts and growing human pressures, marine and coastal ecosystems continue to be destroyed and degraded. Conservation measures are still largely slow and underfunded, making it quite difficult for these ecosystems to recover. If the Covid-19 pandemic has taught us anything, it is that the health of our Planet and the health of its human inhabitants are inextricably connected. It is urgent to implement policies to protect and restore the integrity of marine ecosystems, while drastically reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, including from sea-based activities (e.g., fisheries, shipping, coastal settlements including tourism).

To that end, decision-makers must break down silos at all levels of governance, and treat as one crisis the decline in ocean health, climate change and biodiversity loss. While much of recent attention has focused on the problems that the ocean faces, the ocean is also a key part of the global response, providing untapped and powerful solutions. Internationally agreed goals and targets to safeguard our Planet (e.g., Sustainable Development Goals; Aichi Biodiversity Targets) remain out of reach - even though their levels of ambition, reflecting only the lowest common denominator of the international community are limited. It is time for governments and society as a whole to join forces and strive to speed up action to ensure an equitable transition towards sustainable societies and economies. We need to start swimming the talk a lot faster if we are to truly live in harmony with Nature.



## Laying the foundation for enhanced collaboration and synergies between the Climate (UNFCCC) and Biodiversity (CBD) Conventions

Synergies among the Climate and Biodiversity Conventions have been recognised from the beginning, as interlinkages between climate and biodiversity were enshrined in both the UNFCCC and CBD, as early as 1992. The UNFCCC stated that “such a level [of stabilisation of atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases] should be achieved within a time-frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change” (UNFCCC Article 2). Besides, the CBD implicitly identified climate change as one of the “processes and categories of activities which have or are likely to have significant adverse impacts on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity” (CBD Article 7).

The 1992 Rio Earth Summit also gave rise to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and integration must definitely occur between all three of the Rio Conventions (i.e., CBD, UNFCCC and UNCCD). Interconnections between land degradation, climate and marine ecosystems are undeniable, especially from a source-to-sea approach (i.e., considering global water governance to address mismanagements). For instance, desert dust deposited on ocean surfaces influences key metabolic processes driving the biogeochemical cycles in the ocean, and also supplies nutrients for marine biodiversity. As a result, the restoration of degraded land can reduce negative impacts on marine ecosystems, and contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 Life below water<sup>1</sup>. Notwithstanding these interactions and resulting needs for cooperation with the UNCCD, we will focus on the interconnections between the CBD and the UNFCCC, this policy brief will focus on the synergies between the CBD and the UNFCCC to present possible steps towards increased integration of the ocean-climate-biodiversity nexus in international governance.

There was strong potential for co-benefits between the three Conventions from the outset, which has only grown since then. Statements in favour of political coherence and enhanced synergies have multiplied in the last years. A *Joint Liaison Group* between the three Rio Conventions was established in 2001, with the aim to disseminate relevant information to and about the Conventions. In 2012, the *Future We Want*, the outcome document of the Rio+20 Conference called for “promot[ing] policy coherence at all relevant levels [...] and enhanc[ing] coordination and cooperation among Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEA), including the three Rio conventions” (2012). Of course, the Paris Agreement (2015) paved the way for enhanced synergies between climate and biodiversity actions, by clearly identifying the role of planetary ecosystems, including the ocean, in mitigating and adapting to climate change.

Most recently, the Leaders’ Pledge for Nature encouraged “increased synergies between climate and biodiversity” (2020). The updated zero draft of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) “takes into account the long-term strategies and targets of other MEAs [...] to ensure synergistic delivery of benefits from all the agreements for the planet and people” (2020). Moreover, the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework identifies climate change as a driver of biodiversity loss, and plans to “increase contributions to climate change mitigation adaptation and disaster risk reduction from nature-based solutions and ecosystems based approaches”<sup>2</sup>.

Are we truly witnessing a willingness of governments to build bridges between the climate and biodiversity regimes and join forces around common goals (i.e., fight climate change and its impacts on biodiversity) and principles (e.g., nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based approaches), with relevant means of implementation (i.e., political and legal reforms)? If so, we need to identify what swimming the talk means and how it can be done in a comprehensive manner, while not overstepping the scope of each Convention.

<sup>1</sup> UNEP (2020) *Impacts of Sand and Dust Storms on Oceans: A Scientific Environmental Assessment for Policy Makers*, available at <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/impacts-sand-and-dust-storms-oceans>

<sup>2</sup> CBD (2020). *Update of the Zero Draft of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework*, available at <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/3064/749a/0f65ac7f9def86707f4eaefa/post2020-prep-02-01-en.pdf>



## The need to consolidate efforts to ensure effective cooperation between the Conventions

Notwithstanding those positive signals, serious challenges remain, and countries must continue to scale-up their efforts, especially since the ocean (with its fragmented governance) is still left out of many discussions on global environmental governance and synergies among related Conventions.

Despite being compatible, the Biodiversity and Climate Conventions do not refer explicitly to one another, and cooperation mechanisms remain weak and insufficient. For instance, the previously mentioned Joint Liaison Group has only very limited impact, mainly because of “state reluctance or even political opposition to a defragmentation of these regimes”<sup>3</sup>. There is no common vision or long-term strategy between the climate and biodiversity ambitions. The two regimes have a lingering tendency to work in silos, although a movement of

bridging these gaps has certainly emerged over the last couple of years. As a result, domestic policies and other forms of action at the national level suffer from this specialisation. On the ground, work would certainly benefit from integration at the global level, especially since silos are less prominent at the local level. Bottom-up approaches could also provide opportunities to enhance synergies globally.

Specialisation between the climate and biodiversity regimes resulted in a drifting apart that poses a series of limitations for action. For instance, many decarbonisation pathways can be harmful to nature, including marine ecosystems. The ideal way forward is now to prioritise actions allowing to reach both biodiversity and climate objectives, that is to say climate-smart and biodiversity positive plans. This has very concrete and practical implications. On that front, for instance, scientists are currently studying and assessing how to improve the climate resilience of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) networks (e.g., through the application of climate change vulnerability criteria in network design).

## HOW TO RECONCILE THE CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY REGIMES

Reconciling the ocean, climate and biodiversity agendas necessitates a holistic approach building on enhanced collaboration among the scientific community, decision-makers, civil society and the financial world. Comprehensive integration and reciprocal mainstreaming require to fully consider the synergies and trade-offs between climate and biodiversity goals<sup>4</sup>. Political groups (e.g., G7, G20, EU, etc.), multilateral financial institutions (e.g., IMF, World Bank, multilateral development banks, etc.) and UN agencies and programmes (e.g., UNDP, FAO, UNEP, IMO, RFMOs, Regional Seas Programmes, etc.) must also be involved in the discussion so that they can mainstream relevant work and knowledge as part of their respective agendas. The climate-

biodiversity reconciliation could come from pushing for synergies across such political groups. For instance, the Group of 20 (G20), which stands above the “negotiating silos” of the two Conventions, could reaffirm the cross-cutting nature of nature-based solutions by presenting them as a multi-purpose solution for climate adaptation and mitigation, and conservation of biodiversity. G20 could also explicitly recall the principle, found in both UNFCCC and CBD decisions, that the conservation of the most carbon-dense and biodiversity-rich natural ecosystems is a priority<sup>5</sup>, and suggest the use of nature-based solutions in marine and coastal ecosystems to achieve this strategic priority - including leading by example.

<sup>3</sup> Maljean-Dubois, S. and Wemaere, M. (2017). *Climate Change and Biodiversity*. Ed. Elisa Morgera et Jona Razzaque. *Biodiversity and Nature Protection Law, III*, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2017, Elgar Encyclopedia of Environmental Law series, 978-1-78347-424-0. <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-01675503>

<sup>4</sup> Deprez, A. et al. (2021). *Aligning high climate and biodiversity ambitions in 2021 and beyond: why, what, and how?* IDDRI, Study N°05/21.

<sup>5</sup> Barber, C.V., R. Petersen, V. Young, B. Mackey, C. Kormos. 2020. *The Nexus Report: Nature Based Solutions to the Biodiversity and Climate Crisis*. F20 Foundations, Campaign for Nature and SEE Foundation

Here, we would like to further explore some of these options to build synergies between the CBD and UNFCCC, and try to better understand what it would concretely look like to move from political statements to effective cooperation. By taking a deep dive into the skeleton of the Biodiversity and Climate Conventions, we aim at identifying possible actions to be undertaken across their respective bodies, processes and mechanisms to strengthen the ocean-climate-biodiversity nexus. To put meat around the bones of such “synergies”, we have identified four entry points, as follows: science, policy, action, and finance (see figure 1).

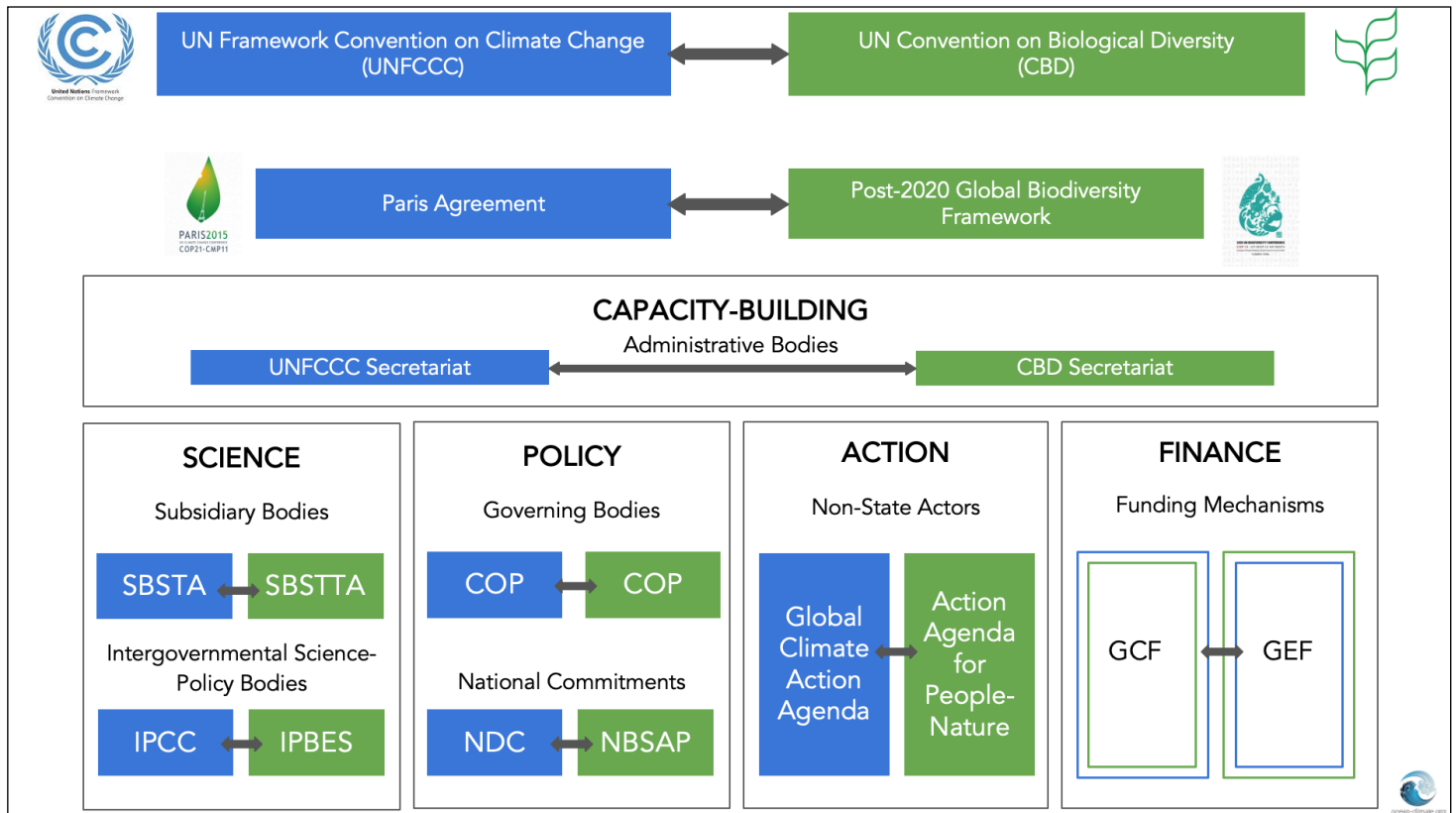


Figure 1. Building bridges between the UNFCCC and the CBD

## Science: Supporting science-based and evidence-based decision-making

In a fast-changing world that faces the increasing threat of climate change and nature degradation, reducing uncertainties in global environmental governance is key, and rests on our ability to assess and render knowledge accessible to policy makers. Intergovernmental expert groups, i.e., Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), are responsible for reviewing and assessing the most recent scientific information produced worldwide, thereby guiding policymakers in their work. They exercise a remarkable amount of epistemic and political authority<sup>6</sup>, promoting environmental sustainability within and beyond the scientific community.

Considering the key role science now plays in policymaking, it is crucial to further integrate the ocean-climate-biodiversity nexus in scientific research. Efforts have been undertaken in that regard, and significant progress has been made over the last 5 years, as evidenced by the publication of the IPCC Special Reports on both the “Ocean and Cryosphere” (SROCC) and on “Land” (SRCL), where for the first time in such an evident manner the IPCC displayed the essential role played by ecosystems in the climate system. Scientists must step up these efforts, providing the required knowledge to support informed decision-making, therefore prompting policymakers to further consider the ocean, climate and biodiversity connections in their decisions.

<sup>6</sup> Beck, S. et al. (2014). *Towards a Reflexive Turn in the Governance of Global Environmental Expertise. The Cases of the IPCC and the IPBES. GAIA - Ecological Perspectives on Science and Society*, 23(2), pp.80–87.

Further coordination between IPCC and IPBES could strengthen the way scientific evidence is valued to boost effective decision-making. More synergies between IPCC and IPBES could aim at strengthening the science-policy interface around the ocean-climate-biodiversity nexus by ensuring consistency between their respective assessment reports and processes<sup>7</sup>. Having the ocean as an integral part of both agendas surely provides opportunities for stronger cooperation between the two platforms to adjust how the ocean is being integrated into the reports of the Intergovernmental Panels and, more broadly, how ocean science is being integrated into multilateral frameworks.

In December 2020, IPBES-IPCC co-sponsored a workshop on biodiversity and climate change to look at how climate, biodiversity and human society are interconnected, and to consider solutions, options and co-benefits to holistically achieve these three issues, such as nature-based solutions (NbS). IPBES Chair, Ana Maria Hernandez Salgar, reminded that an “integrated approach to both biodiversity loss and climate change is required if we are to properly address these challenges”<sup>8</sup>. Likewise, IPCC Chair Hoesung Lee stressed the urgency to “bring biodiversity to the forefront of discussions regarding land- and ocean-based climate mitigation and adaptation”<sup>9</sup>. This workshop was an initial step for enhanced cooperation. Conclusions from this meeting should be taken into account in the upcoming CBD-COP15 and UNFCCC-COP26 negotiations by, for instance, requesting IPCC and IPBES to further this work to consider the role and effectiveness of ocean-based solutions, including nature-based solutions for marine and coastal ecosystems, in drawing pathways that are both net-zero and biodiversity-positive. The UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) could be a lever to push in this direction.

Moreover, the Climate and Biodiversity Conventions are both supported by Subsidiary Bodies (SB) to provide information and advice related to implementation of the Conventions’ respective mandate. Synergies among the two scientific subsidiary bodies, respectively called Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) and Subsidiary Body for Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA), is an evident way forward to boost collaboration among the Conventions. To that end, SBSTA and SBSTTA could define a joint long-term work process to deliberate on crucial mitigation and adaptation issues related to nature-based solutions. Given that both bodies report back to their respective COPs, progress could easily be tracked and direct inputs from Parties could be incorporated in the decisions emerging from inter-sessional negotiations under the SBST(T)As.

Additionally, specific mechanisms under each body could feed in the reflections. For instance, the Expert group on Ocean and Coastal Zones under the Nairobi Work Programme (NWP), launched in 2019, provides knowledge support to inform adaptation planning and actions at the regional, national and subnational level. The Expert group covers a range of issues to build the resilience of the ocean, coastal areas and ecosystems<sup>10</sup> - from coastal ecosystem restoration to better financing marine and coastal nature-based solutions - which are of important relevance to the work of the CBD and could be shared across the Conventions through facilitated communication streams under the SBST(T)As. In the spirit of addressing cross-cutting issues, the Expert group on Ocean has initiated collaboration with other Expert groups under the NWP, including on Biodiversity. Given that the expert organisations taking part in these thematic groups are pro-active in multiple international fora, strengthening collaboration among them (even horizontally within the UNFCCC) can be an important push forward.

<sup>7</sup> Pesche, D., Futhazar, G., Maljean-Dubois, S. (2016). *IPBES Mandate and Governance. The Intergovernmental platform on biodiversity and ecosystem service (IPBES): Challenges, knowledge and actors.*

<sup>8</sup> *IPBES-IPCC Co-Sponsored Workshop: Spotlighting Interactions of the Science of Biodiversity and Climate Change, May 2020*, available at <https://www.ipcc.ch/2020/12/13/ipbes-ipcc-co-sponsored-workshop/>

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>10</sup> *NWP (2020) Policy Brief on the Ocean: Scaling-up adaptation actions and co-operation to build climate resilience of the ocean, coastal areas and ecosystems*, available at <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/NWP%20policy%20brief%20on%20the%20ocean.pdf>



Placing science and science-based objectives at the centre of policy-making is not only a priority to ensure sound decisions, it is a necessity to align ambitions and enhance action. The UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), along with the UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030), provide a timely opportunity for coordinated and ambitious action, based on the best available science, to support both the Paris Agreement and the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

## Policy: Increasing political coherence between ocean, climate and biodiversity strategies

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are the cornerstone of the Paris Agreement to limit global warming to 2°C above pre-industrial levels and aim for 1.5°C - the mandate and obligation enshrined within the Paris Agreement. Each Party is requested to outline and communicate on its intended domestic measures to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Other policy processes to outline individual commitments and strategies for meeting the Paris goals include National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)<sup>11</sup>, which provide a domestic planning process that can set out how national adaptation goals are implemented. Similarly, the CBD requires its Parties to submit National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) to integrate consideration of the conservation and sustainable use of biological resources into national decision-making.



Given the current emphasis on nature-based solutions and the importance of protecting and restoring nature to fight climate change, overlaps between measures included under NDCs, NAPs and NBSAPs are inevitable. For instance, commitments to protect and restore hectares of mangroves are not only a climate measure to sequester blue carbon and buffer against the impacts of extreme weather events, but also a conservation measure to protect natural habitats. The growing concern, however, rests on whether national strategies will indeed be both climate-smart and biodiversity-neutral or, ideally, biodiversity-positive. With the submissions of new or updated NDCs in 2021, as part of the first NDC revision cycle (i.e., initially scheduled for 2020, however countries were given some slack time to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic), and the negotiations of the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework, identifying these overlaps should happen sooner rather than later.

From a very trivial perspective, identifying these overlaps early on will prevent unnecessary duplicated efforts across national administrations. When it comes to alleviating the bureaucratic burden, no effort is negligible. Taking stock of what countries have already included under either national commitment could increase transparency, facilitate monitoring and reporting, and ensure targets are realistic and sufficiently ambitious. Support in building such bridges could also be considered at the UN level. Indeed, the UNFCCC and CBD could establish a dedicated workstream to facilitate information exchange on Parties' national submissions. Given that submission and revision cycles of NDCs and NBSAPs are not following the same timeline, every subsequent update should take into account the latest available submissions. For instance, new or updated NBSAPs submitted after 2021, and before 2025, should align with the strategies submitted as part of the first NDC revision cycle.

<sup>11</sup> It is important to note here that NAPs, like Adaptation Communications, can be included by countries in their NDCs.

It is necessary to align both short-term measures and long-term strategies to make sure that on-the-ground action has the potential to achieve long-term goals. The effectiveness of the Paris Agreement lies in its NDC revision cycle, translating internationally agreed goals into implementable and enforceable goals at the national level. In that regard, national-global and short-long term articulations must be applied to ocean-climate-biodiversity considerations, building a common vision on the long-term that will ensure political coherence in domestic on-the-ground work. Coordinating NDCs and NBSAPs is an opportunity to send a resounding political signal in favour of common ocean, climate and biodiversity ambitions, while reinforcing the impacts and coherence of national measures. We also need to start qualifying and quantifying the climate footprint of NBSAPs and the biodiversity footprint of NDCs. Countries must optimise the best tradeoffs and co-benefits between ocean, biodiversity and climate actions. This should be done both nationally and collectively at the international level.

In addition to national commitments, similarities between the two conventions allow for opportunities to strengthen collective efforts for integration at the international level. The two Governing bodies, i.e., Conferences of the Parties (COPs), could increase communication and cooperation between one another, and further consider setting up joint work programmes or joint actions to better integrate ocean-climate-biodiversity considerations. Joint meetings respectively on climate and biodiversity and their related interactions could support mainstreaming efforts in respective workstreams. In that regard, the two Secretariats to the Conventions have an important role to play in enhancing communication and cooperation between the UNFCCC and CBD governing bodies. The Secretariats are mandated to support the global response to the threat of climate change and biodiversity loss, which requires mutual support and collaborative action, beyond the scope of the Joint Liaison Group. As recalled by SBSTA 52 regarding its work on Cooperation with other international organizations, the CBD and UNFCCC Secretariats should therefore increase cooperative activities, including joint communication efforts, to “highlight the interlinkages and synergetic benefits of coordinated action to attain the objectives and goals of the respective intergovernmental processes”<sup>12</sup>.

Moreover, respective COP Presidencies must also strengthen their communication and cooperation, building bridges between the two events. Progress is already underway with the UK COP26 Presidency deploying an integrated ocean-climate-biodiversity vision, and establishing a constructive dialogue with the Chinese COP15 Presidency. While this year’s auspicious political agenda - with the concurring UNFCCC and CBD COPs, taking place back-to-back in time (subject to COVID-19 development), as well as other major MEA events - made the need to build synergies across conventions more obvious, such goodwill must persist in the long run.

With the ocean at the heart of both climate and biodiversity considerations, it would be relevant to hold one or more technical expert dialogues on specific ocean-climate-biodiversity topics, in line with the conclusions of the 2020 SBSTA Ocean-Climate Dialogue (e.g., providing responses to the gaps and topics identified). Such dialogues would present an opportunity to regularly assess progress made on closing the knowledge gaps regarding ocean-climate-biodiversity interlinkages, and effective ways to include the ocean’s mitigation and adaptation potential into appropriate workstreams. Capacity-building will be key to better integrate and mainstream these interlinkages, and such dialogues have the potential to improve literacy across climate and biodiversity actors, including across national delegations.

<sup>12</sup> UNFCCC (2020). *Summary of cooperative activities with United Nations entities and other intergovernmental organizations that contribute to the work under the Convention*. Available at: [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/sbsta2020\\_inf.02.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/sbsta2020_inf.02.pdf)

## Action: Strengthening the ties between ocean, climate and biodiversity non-state actors

Non-State actors are agents of change and drivers for increased ambition. A thought well embedded in the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action (MP-GCA), whose objective is to establish a constructive dialogue between Parties to the UNFCCC and non-state actors to bolster concrete action on climate change. Since its creation at COP22, in 2016, the GCA has identified the “Ocean and coastal zones” as one of seven key themes<sup>13</sup> to be addressed. The Ocean-Climate community under the GCA has been particularly active in mobilising non-state actors and raising the voice of the ocean in the climate fora.



The importance of mobilising across sectors and stakeholders came forward at the CBD COP14, in 2018, where the Action Agenda for People and Nature (Action Agenda) was launched. Similarly to the GCA, the Action Agenda aims to catalyse a groundswell of actions around 7 pathways<sup>14</sup> in support of biodiversity conservation and its sustainable use, with a special emphasis placed on the Nature-Climate-Ocean-Water-Land nexus. However, the Action Agenda seems to remain at an initial stage of collecting pledges (i.e., 179 commitments to date) to enable the mapping of current global efforts, in order to assess impact and gaps. Going forward, the Action Agenda could take stock of the lessons learnt from its climate counterpart to build the next phase of its mobilisation. For instance, the 7 pathways identified could lead to communities of stakeholders, coordinated by elected focal points working closely with the CBD Secretariat, and working towards collective objectives and joint campaigns. Moreover, COP Presidencies could nominate Special Envoys for Biodiversity, not unlike the Climate Champions, to become ambassadors of the ecological transition, raise awareness across sectors, and increase the visibility of the Action Agenda for People and Nature.

In the longer run, the Global Climate Action Agenda and the Action Agenda for People and Nature could create new forms of collaboration. Building on the existing overlaps between the themes covered by both action agendas, joint work streams could be established to achieve common goals. Over the past year, each community of the MP-GCA has developed its Climate Action Pathway to outline the sectoral visions for a 1.5-degree climate-resilient world by 2050. These Pathways provide an overview of the transformational actions and milestones needed for system transformations within sectors, as well as the synergies and interlinkages across the thematic and cross-cutting areas that assist all actors to take an integrated approach. For instance, the key levers of change for the Ocean and Coastal Zones Pathway revolve around the need for an integrated climate, biodiversity and development agenda. It highlights related action plans starting at the local political level to global policies, applying to and by the business and private sector, as well as local communities and civil society. Among the targets set for different sectors all the way to 2040, there are some clear crossovers with the biodiversity agenda: By 2021, Improved understanding of the ocean and coastal ecosystems existing areas within UN frameworks such as the UNFCCC, CBD and other MEAs ; By 2025, Coastal planning tools, such as Integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) and Marine Spatial Planning (MSP), are utilised for holistic ecosystem approach that also incorporate climate indicators for mitigation and adaptation ; By 2030, 30% MPAs are designated and implemented. All the work already undertaken under the GCA could help operationalise the Action Agenda for People and Nature and set the path for a holistic and coordinated approach.

<sup>13</sup> Energy ; Human settlements ; Industry ; Land use ; Ocean and coastal zones ; Transport ; and Water.

<sup>14</sup> Land and forests; Freshwater; Fisheries and oceans; Sustainable agriculture; Food systems; Cities and infrastructure; Climate action; One health.



The voice of civil society is stronger when united. Building bridges among climate and biodiversity communities of non-state actors could be a game-changer in the way non-party stakeholders mobilise and influence decision-makers to tackle the climate and biodiversity crisis as one and the same.

## Finance: Mobilising resources to advance the ocean, climate and biodiversity nexus

Money is the crux of every issue, addressing the climate-biodiversity crisis is no exception. In the spirit of bridging climate-biodiversity efforts, world leaders such as French President Emmanuel Macron and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson encouraged donor countries to channel more climate finance to protect and restore nature, during the One Planet Summit for Biodiversity held in January 2021 in Paris. France hence committed to earmark 30% of its climate funding to nature-based solutions by 2030. While it is certainly sensible to increase the share of climate finance that also benefits biodiversity, we must remain cautious of the “announcement effect”. Indeed, let’s remember the failed commitment of developed countries to “mobilizing jointly USD 100 billion per year by 2020 to address the needs of developing countries” (Decision 2/CP.15), as early as 2009, at UNFCCC COP15 in Copenhagen. While no similar target has been set for biodiversity, we should bear in mind that this goal was never met.

Regardless, the mobilisation of financial resources is central to achieving the objectives of both Climate and Biodiversity Conventions (UNFCCC Article 7. 2(h) and Article 11, CBD Article 20), with a strong emphasis on the concept of “common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities” enshrined in the outcome of the 1992 Rio Conference. Indeed, the CBD states that “Each Contracting Party undertakes to provide, in accordance with its capabilities, financial support and incentives in respect of those national activities” and that “The developed country Parties shall provide new and additional financial resources to enable developing country Parties to meet the agreed full incremental costs to them of implementing measures”. To facilitate the financial flows coming from developed countries, the UNFCCC established a Financial Mechanism to provide and allocate funds to developing countries - its operation is entrusted to one or more existing international entities, including the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Adaptation Fund (AF) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF). Likewise, the GEF serves as the institutional structure to operate the financial mechanism under the Convention on Biological Diversity and is therefore accountable to, as well as guided by, both COPs to decide on climate and biodiversity policies, programme priorities and eligibility criteria for funding. Given its strategic role, the GEF is ideally positioned to promote true integration of biodiversity and climate issues. In addition, the CBD has launched an initial and promising collaboration with the GCF and recent approval of ocean projects by the GCF is encouraging.

Given that both Conventions already operate with the GCF and GEF, strengthening the climate-biodiversity nexus can be further achieved through increased collaboration across the financial mechanisms and institutions. Moreover, the two financial institutions also strive to build bridges between their respective workstreams, mainstreaming climate issues in biodiversity projects and vice versa. For instance, GCF and GEF organisation Heads already agreed to further cooperate to develop and pilot innovative projects, identify key co-financing opportunities, and scale up readiness support to lay the groundwork for enhanced climate finance in developing countries. In addition, current GEF and GCF strategies (i.e. GEF-7 Climate Change Focal Area Strategy and Updated Strategic Plan for the Green Climate Fund) are setting the foundation for further collaboration between the two agencies. Despite these encouraging signs of collaboration, it appears that the cooperation currently focuses more on climate than biodiversity action.



The Standing Committee on Finance (SCF), which supplements the UNFCCC Financial Mechanism, assists the COP in exercising its functions, which involves: improving coherence and coordination in the delivery of climate change financing; rationalising the Financial Mechanism; mobilising financial resources; and measurement, reporting and verification of support provided to developing country parties. In that regard, the SCF Forum, due to take place in 2021, will focus on financing nature-based solutions, including Marine and Coastal NbS. The UNFCCC therefore invited the CBD to provide inputs<sup>15</sup> related to nature-based solutions to the 2021 SCF Forum. The SCF is also exploring how to strengthen the collaboration across the constituted bodies on all ocean-related topics, and preparing an assessment of developing countries' needs for 2021, considering financial needs. Following the conclusions of the 2020 SBSTA Ocean-Climate Dialogue, the SCF could provide opportunities to address and overcome knowledge gaps in understanding finance requirements for a better understanding of where to invest in the ocean-climate-biodiversity nexus.

The interactions between the ocean, biodiversity and climate must be further considered and reflected in investments and financing strategies. All relevant financial mechanisms, including those listed above, should mainstream these interactions in their line of work, and increase as much as possible ocean-related topics in their portfolios. In that regard, clearer pathways to allow for the funding of ocean-related measures must be identified under existing entities such as GCF and GEF. In addition, it is necessary to mobilise additional financial resources and to continue to increase cooperation between existing financial entities, including between UN specialised financing institutions and multilateral banks. Existing entities must put aside specific funding for joint activities, ensuring coherence and complementary through concrete work.

Moreover, it is also important to consider other sources of funding, as planned by both Conventions, including through bilateral, regional and other multilateral channels, including financial institutions and development cooperation agencies. These other channels can provide support in the development of relevant synergies, and increased cooperation by ensuring that investments systematically integrate climate and biodiversity considerations. For example, this would mean integrating blue finance approaches and NbS into marine and coastal infrastructure financing and taking marine ecosystem services and blue natural capital considerations fully into account<sup>16</sup>. While, investors, business, asset owners and financial institutions are catching up on the importance and benefits of investing in the transition towards a sustainable blue economy (e.g., eco-friendly coastal tourism, deployment of offshore renewable energy and moving towards low-carbon emission shipping and fishing practices), we must further encourage philanthropic investment and innovative financial mechanism<sup>17</sup>. To date, blue investments are still lagging behind. For instance, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 "Life below water" received less investments for its implementation than all other goals, which speaks for itself<sup>18</sup>. This significant gap in resource mobilisation and finance must be overcome to support mitigation, adaptation and conservation actions.

<sup>15</sup> Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). *Proposals for the 2021 Forum of the Standing Committee on Finance* available at <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/Convention%20on%20Biological%20Diversity.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> OCEAN AND CLIMATE, 2019, *Policy Recommendations: A healthy ocean, a protected climate*, p.22-24

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

## SWIMMING IN HARMONY WITH NATURE: LOOKING AT 2021 AND BEYOND

Nearly halfway through 2021, the road ahead remains long and steep if we want to see real change in favour of protecting global biodiversity and tackling climate change. 2021 started with a blow of fresh air with the United States rejoining the ranks of the Paris Agreement, as well as Secretary John Kerry, the US Presidential Climate Envoy, emphasising repeatedly the need to combine climate and ocean action. Now that the Democrats hold the majority in both chambers at the US Congress, a push for the long-awaited US ratification of the UN Framework Convention on Biological Diversity would be consistent, as the international community is about to mark in 2022 the thirtieth anniversary of the Rio Conventions and at a time when so much attention is now being paid to the One Health Approach for people, animals, plants and their shared environment pursuant to the pandemic. The absence of the US from the CBD since 1992 has largely been due to pressures from Big Pharma's unwillingness to share with developing countries the benefits from the exploitation of genetic resources, but now is the time when the Biden Administration wants to stand and be perceived as an ocean champion (for example, by calling for the conclusion of the on-going negotiations on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ), or the designation by the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCMALT) of three new marine protection areas in the Southern Ocean). By the same token, it would also be in the interest of the US to join the rest of the international community and ratify the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) of 1982 before its fortieth anniversary next year.

In the spirit of this renewed leadership and commitment to safeguarding the health of our Planet for present and future generations, the upcoming semester will be decisive to pave the way for concrete and holistic actions at CBD-COP15 and UNFCCC-COP26. Some existing entry points have already been identified and need to be strengthened to ensure an integrated ocean-climate-biodiversity governance. The present paper shared some thoughts on possible, and certainly non-exhaustive, ways to boost cooperation between the Climate and Biodiversity regimes, while strengthening the consideration of the ocean in the process - including:

- **SCIENCE:** Strengthening information sharing between scientific bodies (SBSTA and SBSTTA); Encouraging joint works and assessments between IPCC and IPBES.
- **POLICY:** Building coherence across NDCs and NBSAPs; Promoting synergies at multiple levels (local, national, international) and among bodies (COPs, Secretariats).
- **ACTION:** Coordinating the Global Climate Action Agenda and Action Agenda for Nature and People.
- **FINANCE:** Increasing collaboration among financial mechanisms and institutions (GCF and GEF).

Policymakers, together with the scientific community, civil society and financial world must continue to work towards breaking down silos, if only to limit efforts. The international community found effective ways to move forward and maintain the momentum during the global pandemic, turning 2021 into the (new) "Super Year" for Ocean, Climate and Biodiversity. Let's make it count so that when we meet at Rio+30, in 2022, we can celebrate "a healthy ocean for a protected climate".



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