



UNITED NATIONS

ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT GROUP



Terms of Reference for the EMG Issue Management Group on Biodiversity

Background

In September 2019, the UN Environment Management Group (EMG), established a Consultative Process on Biodiversity, with representatives from 51 international agencies coming together to provide coordinated inputs across the UN system to the preparation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and its implementation. Among other things, this has resulted in the preparation of a report entitled “A UN System Commitment for Action to assist Member States delivering on the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)” that was endorsed by the EMG Senior Officials at its meeting in October 2020. The report was formally launched at an event held on 25 May 2021, together with the UN Common Approach to Biodiversity prepared under the auspices of the UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB).

The UN Common Approach to Biodiversity builds on the work of the EMG and was approved by the High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) at its 41st session, and endorsed by the CEB on 4 May 2021. Through this document, the UN system commits to mainstream biodiversity in its programming, catalyse collective actions to address the drivers of biodiversity loss and restore biodiversity in view of achieving the 2050 vision of ‘living in harmony with nature’. The achievement of the 2050 Vision will serve as the overall objective of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, expected to be adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at its fifteenth meeting. Annex 1 provides the summary of the relevant UN decisions concerning biodiversity.

Both processes further point to the need to mainstream biodiversity and catalyse the actions required to halt its loss, whilst restoring biodiversity by addressing the drivers of biodiversity loss and ultimately ‘making peace with nature’ as mandated by the UN Secretary-General. Annex 2 provides an overview of the medium-term objectives and socioeconomic transformations required to achieve the vision of living in harmony with nature.

Both the UN Common Approach and the EMG Consultative Process re-iterated the UN system’s commitment and shared recognition of the urgency to address the loss of biodiversity. Annex 3 provides an overview of the opportunities for the UN System to integrate biodiversity at the global, regional and country levels.

The proposed EMG Issue Management Group (IMG) on Biodiversity provides a mechanism to merge the follow-up of these two interagency processes on biodiversity at the global and regional levels.

The Mid-Term Technical Segment of the 27th Senior Officials Meeting of the Environment Management Group held on 30 June 2021 put forward for consideration the establishment of two additional Issue Management Groups on (i) Enhancing Synergies between the post-2020 Biodiversity and Chemicals Framework, and (ii) UN System Response to the Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. Certain elements of these proposals can be addressed by the IMG on Biodiversity as described below.

EMG Issue Management Group on Biodiversity

The EMG Issue Management Group on Biodiversity will facilitate and enable a streamlined approach to implementing the UN Common Approach to Biodiversity and the recommendations of the EMG Consultative Process on Biodiversity. This will aim to support Member States in the implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, in the context of achieving the SDGs and meeting the targets and objectives of the Multilateral Environment Agreements, including the Rio and biodiversity-related Conventions.

It will be implemented by the collaborative efforts of relevant United Nations entities, primarily at the global and regional levels. It will consider the strengths and mandates of each entity, and relevant inter-agency mechanisms and partnerships, including those that are operationally oriented or mandated.

Two overarching streams of work are initially proposed as follows:

Activities	Outputs	Existing processes/ mechanisms for alignment
<i>#1: Awareness raising and knowledge sharing on the UN Common Approach to Biodiversity and continued interagency dialogue and cooperation on the preparation and implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework</i>		
Guidance, knowledge products and advocacy material in support of the 15 medium-term objectives of the Common Approach (Annex 2) along with access to biodiversity-related knowledge products	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Source and share existing technical guidance, knowledge products and training materials, as well as communications materials / narratives while also encouraging EMG members to develop and share succinct internal advocacy pieces to support national and regional engagement. 2. Increase the availability of knowledge products to regional and national teams, as well as other coordination mechanisms. 	Work with EMG members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Divisions and Regional Offices • Thematic coordination mechanisms Collaborate with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNSDG • Regional Collaborative Platforms Thematic coordination mechanisms
Exploring and enhancing collaboration on the post-2020 biodiversity and the pollution agendas	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Explore and raise awareness on the interlinkages between the post-2020 global biodiversity and beyond 2020 chemicals and waste agenda, and articulate guidance for the EMG members to tackle the interconnected crises of biodiversity loss and global pollution through their mandates, initiatives and programmes in an integrated and complementary manner that responds to a system-level approach. 	Work with EMG Members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Divisions and Regional Offices • Thematic coordination mechanisms • System-wide awareness-raising of interlinkages between biodiversity loss and pollution.

UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration	4. Facilitate and scale-up UN system-wide response to the Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030).	Work with EMG Members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Divisions and Regional Offices • Coordination Group and Task Forces of the UN Decade • Thematic coordination mechanisms
#2: Accountability & global-level reporting within the UN system on its implementation of agreed internal policy to mainstream biodiversity in its programmes and operations		
Common Approach indicators for the QCPR ¹ Monitoring framework	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Share individual entity inputs, map indicators and potential gaps in reporting on QCPR operational paragraphs related to biodiversity in policy and programming. 2. Liaise with facilities and operations reporting: assess indicators in collaboration with SUN Team and IMG on Sustainability Management. 3. Liaise with DCO and UNSDG representatives on UNCT reporting related to indicators at the national level as part of UN INFO. 4. Internally promote a limited number of measurable targets and related indicators to include in the QCPR monitoring framework. 	Link with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UN INFO • Greening the Blue • Sustainability Strategy Phase I and Phase II
Common Approach reporting framework development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Produce an overview of the reporting mechanisms relevant to biodiversity. 2. Produce a synthesis of existing data availability, baselines and periodicity of submission of reporting. 3. Produce a reporting framework for the Common Approach to biodiversity. 4. Report at the global level on collective action on biodiversity to the relevant mechanisms (EMG SOM, CEB/HLCP), as well to the drafting process of the Secretary General’s (SG) reports on the QCPR. 	Coordinate with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UN entities-specific reporting mechanism • CEB/HLCP • QCPR reporting framework

¹ UN DESA is initiating a full overhaul of the current quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system [QCPR Monitoring and Reporting Framework](#). This work is being organized by DESA in its role as custodian of the QCPR, under the overall guidance of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, and in close collaboration with the UN development system. The data collection instruments that populate the framework, in particular the DESA QCPR surveys, will be revised to enable their (re-)launch in the third and fourth quarter of 2021.

Composition and governance

The IMG will be composed of focal points nominated by the member entities of the EMG, and will report to the EMG Senior Officials Meeting. The IMG will have three co-chairs elected from among its participating entities, working in close coordination with the CBD secretariat. It is proposed that to provide continuity to the work undertaken in preparation of the Common Approach and under the Consultative Process, the IMG be co-chaired by UNEP, UNDP and UNESCO for the period 2021-2022. The EMG Secretariat will support the IMG in facilitating its work.

The IMG may co-opt inputs from non-UN entities whose knowledge, activities or expertise could be relevant and useful to the work of the IMG, and it will also explore linkages with other EMG processes, as appropriate. The IMG is to decide the frequency of its meetings; however, it is encouraged that it meets at least quarterly per annum or as requested by its Chairs.

The IMG may decide to establish (a) time-bound task team(s) to facilitate the delivery of outputs associated with the abovementioned activities. These task teams would be established on a needs basis and their membership/participation would be interest-based. The representatives nominated to the task teams by participating entities could be the IMG focal points or specialists nominated for their expertise. The task teams would be chaired or co-chaired by relevant entities on a voluntary basis.

There is an expectation that the EMG will collaborate with other UN interagency mechanisms in its efforts to mainstream biodiversity. The most direct linkages for the above work streams are the UNSDG and the SUN, but knowledge sharing activities should also connect with the secretariats associated with the UN Decades and other thematic coordination mechanisms.

Timeline of the IMG on Biodiversity

It is proposed that the present Terms of Reference of the IMG on Biodiversity, including its chairing arrangements, is valid until the Senior Officials Meeting in September 2022 and reviewed every second year thereafter.

The operational period of the Common Approach to Biodiversity is aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the UN Decades 2021-2030, and the intended timeline of the 2030 milestones and action targets of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, with implementation foreseen for 2021-2030. This is consistent with the timeline for the implementation of the recommendations of the Consultative Process on Biodiversity, which were anticipated for the decade 2021-2030 with a mid-point review foreseen for 2024.

Progress on the delivery of the outputs realised by the EMG IMG on Biodiversity, as outlined in the table above, are to be presented to the EMG Senior Official Meeting in 2022 (SOM 28).

Annex 1: Summary of relevant UN Decisions

EMG processes related to biodiversity

- **The Environment Management Group (EMG) is facilitating the contribution of the United Nations System to the preparation and implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework**, as invited by Member States². In response to this call, the 25th EMG Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) in September 2019 established an inter-agency Consultative Process composed of 51 agencies to prepare the UN system's contribution³.
- **Through the EMG Consultative Process, and all 51 EMG members provided information on the relevance of biodiversity to their existing mandates**, as well as to their current activities and programmes. Two contributions were prepared through the EMG and submitted to the Open-Ended Working Groups to support the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. In parallel, the Consultative Process was also used to prepare a report describing the UN system's approach to the implementation of the Framework, including a UN system high-level commitment to engage in its implementation.
- **The EMG Consultative Process on Biodiversity approved the report** titled *A UN System Commitment for Action to assist Member States to deliver on the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)*, which was launched on 25 May 2021. The report recommends four overarching action areas in support of the 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework: (a) support country abilities to halt biodiversity loss and to sustainably use and enhance biodiversity through policies and programmes; (b) establish strong coalitions for biodiversity; (c) mainstream biodiversity in UN internal operations; and (d) enhance UN-wide coherence and follow-up on biodiversity.
- **UNEP and other EMG members also responded to the SG's requests for the UN System's own commitment to sustainability** and proposed a Strategy for Sustainability Management in the UN System 2020-2030. Phase I of the strategy, which focuses on internal environmental sustainability, was endorsed at the CEB's spring meeting in Geneva on 9th May 2019. Phase II of the strategy, coordinated by the EMG and with the scope of internal environmental and social sustainability in UN system policies, programming and facilities and operations, is now available for consultation and review. The EMG developed the Model Approach to Environmental and Social Standards for UN Programming, including a benchmark standard on Biodiversity, Ecosystems and Sustainable Natural Resource Management.

²Through the CBD COP decision 14/34 and the conclusions of the first meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

³This report is the second UN System Wide Framework of Strategies on the Environment (SWFS). In November 2016, the EMG launched a survey to gather information on EMG Member Agencies' support and contributions to the implementation of the environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In 2017 the first SWFS Synthesis Report titled '[UN System-wide Collaboration on the Environment: Synthesis Report on UN System-wide Contributions to the Implementation of the Environmental Dimension in the Sustainable Development Goals](#)' was released. It was an important inter-agency milestone as it gauged the strategic alignment of 51 UN Member Agencies to the Agenda 2030 and the UN SDGs.

UN System decisions on biodiversity

- **The Secretary General called on the UN System to mainstream biodiversity work in key areas** (e.g. food and agriculture, sustainable forest management, ecosystems, biosafety, governance and justice, etc.), engage in cross-agency collaboration (including by entities not traditionally involved in biodiversity work), and enhance UN communications and advocacy (Executive Committee meeting, 25 March 2020). UNEP was tasked with the implementation of the Executive Committee (EC) decision 2020/21 on biodiversity.
- **The United Nations Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 21 December 2020. Quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system.** Resolution 75/233 called upon the entities of the UN Development System (UNDS) to continue to provide evidence-based and integrated policy advice, and programmatic support to help countries in the implementation of, follow-up to and reporting on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Emphasis was placed on mainstreaming the SDGs into national plans, including by promoting sustained and inclusive economic growth, social development, environmental protection, and ending poverty in all its forms and dimensions.
- **The Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) meeting on 14 May 2020 endorsed a stronger focus on nature across the UN system** and tasked its High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) to develop a common approach to integrating biodiversity and nature-based solutions for sustainable development into the UN's policy, programme planning and delivery.
- **In response to the CEB decision, the HLCP established a time-bound task team to collaborate on delivery of a common approach and collective action across the system** to integrate biodiversity for sustainable development into the UN's policy, programme planning and delivery. This builds on the work of the United Nations Environment Management Group (EMG) on biodiversity and other inter-agency coordination mechanisms, including drawing on current commitments by agencies, funds and programmes.
- **The High-Level Committee on Programme (HLCP) at its 41st session on 30 March 2021 approved the UN Common Approach to Biodiversity**, which was endorsed by the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) at its meeting on 4 May 2021.

Annex 2: Impact areas & 15 medium-term objectives⁴

Human rights, peaceful societies, and planetary stability

#1: Human rights are protected and can be exercised, including the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

#2: Persons, groups and people in vulnerable situations, particularly those who rely on natural resources for subsistence and cultural identity, and who are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation, are prioritised.

#3: A One Health approach is implemented, and the interconnections among people, animals and ecosystems are recognized.

#4: Nature is conserved and restored, while nature-based solutions for disaster risk reduction, climate action are accelerated

#5: The links between biological and cultural diversity are recognized, and the protection of sites of international importance for biological and cultural diversity enhanced.

A green and inclusive economic recovery

#6: Public and private finance and investments, especially those mobilized to respond to the COVID-19 induced crisis, accelerate green, just and inclusive socioeconomic transitions, including from the informal to formal economy.

#7: Sustainable consumption, including sustainable lifestyles and livelihoods, is promoted, inequalities are eliminated and biodiversity loss halted.

#8: Material-intensive socioeconomic production systems are transformed to create better outcomes for people and nature, while meeting increased demand for resources and materials.

#9: Sustainable and secure food systems are ensured through urgent action by all actors.

#10: Markets, economic and financial practices are fundamentally reformed and use metrics for governments, the private sector and society, to measure progress towards sustainable development, supported by strengthened regulations to conserve and restore natural capital.

Strengthened institutions, accountability, and justice

#11: Institutional capacity is supported to plan and pursue integrated solutions to reverse biodiversity loss and accelerate progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

#12: Safeguards on biodiversity and the integrity of all ecosystems are implemented, sectoral and national accountability is clarified, and monitoring and reporting against environmental obligations fulfilled.

#13: Environmental rule of law and procedural rights on access to information and justice are promoted, and meaningful participation in environmental decision-making is enabled.

#14: Criminal justice and anti-corruption measures to environment-related crimes are strengthened as an essential part of the integrated solutions to protecting biodiversity.

#15: Advanced digital information and communication technologies (ICTs) are deployed to ensure open access to and equitable coverage of data and repositories.

⁴ As identified under the UN Common Approach to Biodiversity

Annex 3: Opportunities for the UN system to integrate biodiversity at global, regional & country levels⁵

Global advocacy and normative frameworks

#1: UN system entities demonstrate leadership on biodiversity and promote strong commitments for nature and with rights-based approach.

#2: The UN system delivers unified communications campaigns to mobilize demand for global action for nature.

#3: Through initiatives such as the SG's Common Agenda, the UN system convenes dialogues on systemic challenges that can only be addressed through multilateral action.

#4: The Secretary-General's Call to Action on Human Rights is implemented to support action on biodiversity

#5: UN system entities collaborate with partners to provide data for insight, impact & integrity, and aligned to the SG's Data Strategy.

Regional collaboration

#6: The UN regional mechanisms foster collaboration within and between regions to address biodiversity-related challenges that transcend borders.

#7: Member States are supported to position regional and national priorities in biodiversity-related multilateral negotiations and processes.

#8: Regional development banks are engaged to integrate biodiversity conservation and nature-based solutions in economic models, and design incentives and policies for investment in ecological and social sustainability.

National implementation

#9: UN Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams support Member States to implement MEA decisions, through the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and the COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plans.

#10: UN Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams support the inclusion of biodiversity and nature-based solutions in Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFF).

#11: UN Country Teams promote environmental and intergenerational justice as an integral part of the UN's advocacy on human rights, rule of law and governance

⁵ As identified under the UN Common Approach to Biodiversity

#12: UN Country Teams facilitate inclusive multi-stakeholder partnerships and promote networking to resolve development conflicts, nexus issues and landscape/seascape level challenges in a transparent and equitable manner.

Internal policy alignment and coherence

#1: The UN system can prove its commitment to biodiversity and nature-based solutions through its corporate behaviour.

#2: The UN system needs to lead by example in its policy, programme planning and implementation.

Align current resources and mobilize additional joint financing

#3: UN entities can review their current programming and resources to ensure that operations integrate biodiversity and nature-based solutions, prevent or account for negative impacts, and do not exacerbate and accelerate biodiversity loss.

#4: Collaborative efforts can support the creation and capitalization of new pooled funding mechanisms for joint programming needed to restore our relationship to biodiversity and ecosystem services at scale.

Exchange knowledge needed to identify, prioritize, scale up and accelerate action

#5: Working together, UN system data, knowledge and expertise can be leveraged at all levels to provide capacity building.

#6: Knowledge-sharing via the UN regional mechanisms, notably Regional Collaborative Platforms, Regional Issue-based coalitions and Regional Peer Support Groups can strengthen intra-regional advocacy, engagement, and technical work.

#7: Greater engagement with and visibility of biodiversity in existing global coordination mechanisms.

Coordinate outreach and communications efforts

#8: UN entities can contribute to and use coherent narratives during the UN Decades of Action for SDGs, on Ecosystem Restoration, on Family Farming and on Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

#9: UN entities can coordinate efforts to capitalize on the political leadership, key outcomes, and messages of the UNGA Summit on Biodiversity held in September 2020.