



UNITED NATIONS

ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT GROUP

**EMG**



UN-HABITAT

EMG Issue Management Group on Biodiversity  
UN Common Approach to Biodiversity: Webinar Series

# Urban Spatial Planning for Biodiversity Conservation and Preservation Webinar

**Date:** Wednesday 24 April 2024

**Time:** 15:00 – 16:30 CEST

**Format:** Virtual (MS Teams)

**Language:** English

## Concept Note

### Webinar Objectives

- Raise awareness on the need to take urgent action at urban and peri-urban level to preserve and conserve biodiversity, in support of the GBF.
- Promote awareness and implementation of the Common Approach in the UN system, as well as exchange and disseminate best practices and lessons learned from the implementation of urban and peri-urban spatial planning actions for biodiversity conservation and preservation.
- Gather inputs on related areas and themes of interest for potential future webinars on biodiversity and human settlements.

### Background

Biodiversity is fundamental for the processes that support all life on earth. Humans depend on biodiversity for all ecosystem services including air and water quality, climate regulation, pollination, disease control, food, raw materials, medicines, and cultural activities<sup>i</sup>. Additionally, biodiversity is essential for economic prosperity, as it underpins over half of global GDP<sup>ii</sup>.

Humanity is altering the planet and its biodiversity to an unparalleled degree; biodiversity is declining faster than at any time during human history. Consequently, biodiversity loss is considered one of the triple planetary crises, alongside climate change and pollution. Several ramifications stemming from these interlinking crises include the destruction of natural habitat, deterioration of key ecosystem

services, species extinction, ecosystem restructuring, and extreme climatic events such as storms and wildfires<sup>iii,iv</sup>. The triple planetary crises urgently need to be resolved if humanity is to have a viable future on this planet<sup>v</sup>.

In 2022, at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP-15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)<sup>vi</sup>, Member States adopted a landmark agreement which signified a collective commitment to confront the escalating crisis of biodiversity loss. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework<sup>vii</sup> (GBF) sets out twenty-three ambitious targets and four overarching goals seeking to halt the degradation of ecosystems and promote the protection and sustainable use of the world's living resources. Its role is to guide urgent and transformative international cooperation on achieving the 2050 vision of 'living in harmony with nature'. In adopting the GBF, all Parties committed to setting national targets to implement the framework and catalyze action within their governments, subnational and local authorities, and societies.

In addition, the United Nations (UN) system has established its own commitments through the adoption of the "Common approach to integrating biodiversity and nature-based solutions for sustainable development into the United Nations policy and programme planning and delivery". Through the Common Approach, the UN system recognizes the urgency of acting and commits to mainstreaming biodiversity, and nature-based solutions, and to catalyzing collective action to address the drivers of biodiversity loss, restore ecosystems and ultimately living in harmony with nature. By leveraging the convening power and expertise from across the UN system, the Common Approach will contribute to and support the implementation of the GBF and the realization of the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity, in alignment with the SDGs and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

The Common Approach is focused on creating opportunities for collective action and joint delivery of initiatives at the global, regional and country levels, while pursuing alignment within the respective entities. One of the impact areas explored within the Common Approach concerns peaceful societies and planetary stability. In this regard, the Common Approach includes a joint commitment to improve the quality of urbanization and limit encroachment, recognizing the importance of nature in cities and the protective role of spatial planning.

### **Cities, nature and biodiversity**

Land use change is the main driver of habitat loss. Among the vast direct and indirect impacts of land use change is the fragmentation of habitats, reduction of water availability and quality, and contribution to the pollution crisis. When the change is urban, it also often alters microclimates.

Though agriculture is the main indirect cause of this change, it frequently prepares the ground for a second, successive conversion of use to sub/urban purposes. In many cases urban areas host a higher richness of biodiversity than the agricultural areas they replace; at the same time, they are much more permanent, and ecosystem restoration is usually too difficult and costly to be feasible. Urban growth is estimated to have caused 190,000 km<sup>2</sup> of habitat loss between 1992 and 2000, with a further 290,000 km<sup>2</sup> expected to be lost between 2000 and 2030<sup>viii</sup>. The quality of this growth will be critical. Unfortunately, instead of compact and integrated, trendlines suggest that urban growth is increasingly sprawling and segregated. Most of it is also located in ignorance of which natural habitat is most valuable or vulnerable.

To address this challenge and the causes of land use change and derived socio-environmental impacts, different actions and interventions are being implemented at global level aimed at **preventing the degradation and destruction of natural habitat** by **preserving and conserving biodiversity** in peri-urban areas and restoring and creating habitat in urban areas.

One such action, as referenced in the GBF, is spatial planning at the territorial scale. Another is improving the area, quality, connectivity of green and blue spaces within urban areas. Well-managed green and blue spaces in and around cities provide positive examples of how nature and humanity can coexist in harmony. And they enhance both the physical and mental well-being of humans, mitigate the effects of severe weather events, provide vital habitats for species, enhance habitat connectivity and can significantly contribute to biodiversity conservation.

## Agenda

Time	Agenda Item	Speaker
5'	Welcome and opening remarks	<b>Hossein Fadaei</b> , Head of Secretariat, UN Environment Management Group
15'	<b>Setting the scene:</b> the Kunming-Montreal GBF and challenges for addressing biodiversity loss in urban and peri-urban areas	<b>Andrew Rudd</b> , Urban Environment Officer, UN-Habitat
15'	<b>Case #1:</b> lessons learned from Santiago, Chile (Stgo+ Green Infrastructure Plan)	<b>Rodrigo Caimanque</b> Santiago+ Technical Committee University of Chile Chile
15'	<b>Case #2:</b> lessons learned from San José, Costa Rica	<b>Alvaro Mendieta &amp; Manuel Morales</b> Ministry of Housing and Human Settlements Costa Rica
15'	<b>Case #3:</b> lessons learned from Nairobi, Kenya	<b>Mumo Musuva</b> Commissioner, Nairobi Rivers Commission
15'	Q&A with guiding questions	All participants
5'	Closing remarks	<b>Jannica Pitkanen</b> , Programme Management Officer, UN Environment Management Group

## Moderator

Paola Deda – Director of Forests, Land and Housing Division, UN Economic Commission for Europe

## Target audience

Global, regional and national level dissemination to UN entities, including their HQs, UNRCs and UNCTs. Additionally, technical specialists, researchers, practitioners involved and interested in urban and peri-urban spatial planning and biodiversity conservation and preservation.

The webinar will be held in English.

## Contact:

EMG Secretariat: [emg@un.org](mailto:emg@un.org)

<sup>i</sup> [GBF Introduction](#)

<sup>ii</sup> United Nations: “[Biodiversity - our strongest natural defense against climate change](#)”

<sup>iii</sup> IPCC: “[Sixth Assessment Report](#)”

<sup>iv</sup> [The Dasgupta Review](#)

<sup>v</sup> [UNFCCC](#)

<sup>vi</sup> [COP-15](#)

<sup>vii</sup> [GBF](#)

<sup>viii</sup> [The Nature Conservancy](#)