

Coral Reefs and the First Draft of the Global Biodiversity Framework

11 August 2021

For the attention of CBD Parties in their preparation for Open-Ended Working Group 3,

Draft One of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) ([CBD/WG2020/3/3](#)) and the revised headline indicators of the monitoring framework ([CBD/WG2020/3/3/Add.1](#)) were published in July 2021 after a further year of consultation and negotiations. The Post-2020 GBF is one of the biggest opportunities to launch a critical decade of conservation action to prevent the collapse of coral reef ecosystems and every opportunity must be taken to ensure the framework is fit for this purpose.

We welcome and support the retention of the following three headline indicators set out in the [ICRI Recommendation of May 2020](#):

- A.0.1 Extent of selected natural and modified ecosystems (including coral reefs);
- 3.0.1 Coverage of Protected areas and OECMS (by effectiveness), with the proposed disaggregation by ecosystem (incorporating t3.4 Protected area coverage of coral reefs)
- 7.0.1 Index of Coastal Eutrophication potential

However, to be fit for purpose for highly vulnerable ecosystems, such as coral reefs, and in the absence of an equivalent to Aichi Target 10, the current draft needs a few more changes, in line with the [ICRI Recommendation](#). At the [third session of the Open-Ended Working Group](#) (virtual) in August 2021, we have identified the following key opportunities to strengthen the framework:

1. **Amend Milestone A.1 under Goal A, to provide necessary focus on addressing the decline of highly vulnerable ecosystems.** Aichi Target 10 previously addressed climate-vulnerable ecosystems, a concept that is not clear in the draft GBF. While all ecosystems are important, goals and targets should help prioritize action for those ecosystems projected to face significant decline due to globalized threats, such as coral reefs. An amendment to Milestone A.1, on ecosystem conservation, provides an opportunity to focus actions of CBD Parties and the financial mechanism on these vulnerable ecosystems:

Milestone A.1: A net gain in the area, connectivity and integrity of natural systems of at least 5 per cent noting that this is particularly critical for [climate] vulnerable ecosystems.

2. **Amend Target 1 on spatial planning and Target 2 on restoration in order to ensure attention is not diverted from the urgent need to retain intact, functional ecosystems as necessary first step in the conservation hierarchy.** ICRI recognises the important role that restoration must play and urges the target should be articulated in such a way that ensures appropriate and effective restoration. This is especially so for vulnerable marine ecosystems such as coral reefs, where restoration at the scale needed to achieve the proposed target of 20% is not feasible, is often costly

and risks diverting effort from conservation and management. The following amendments are proposed:

Target 1. Ensure that all land and sea areas globally are under integrated biodiversity-inclusive spatial planning addressing land- and sea-use change, retaining existing intact and wilderness areas and to reduce pressures on the most vulnerable ecosystems.

Target 2. Ensure that at least 20 per cent of degraded freshwater, marine and terrestrial ecosystems are under restoration, ~~ensuring~~ enhancing integrity and connectivity ~~among them~~ and focusing on priority ecosystems, and considering their exposure to vulnerability.

With regard to the headline indicator for measuring progress against this target (2.0.1), ensure the monitoring methodologies identified are appropriate to be able to track progress in all ecosystems, noting that some methodologies such as remote sensing are not yet adequate for monitoring actions, such as restoration in many marine or aquatic ecosystems.

3. Adopt a headline indicator “Cover of Live coral and other key benthic groups” to measure integrity aspects of Goal A to complement A.0.1

Indicator A.0.1 on ecosystem extent, as worded, is insufficient on its own as a headline indicator to provide meaningful information against Goal A, especially for critical, highly vulnerable ecosystem types such as coral reefs. Information on extent must be complemented with information on integrity and the headline indicator A.0.1 should therefore be complemented with an ecosystem condition indicator. In the case of coral reefs this should be “**Cover of live coral and other key benthic groups.**” Such an indicator would measure the integrity and functionality of coral reefs, and would draw on existing efforts at the national and international level (including through the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN)). It would also effectively combine [\(ICRI-recommended\) indicators](#) a.13, a.14, a.20 and a.21, simplifying the monitoring framework significantly and comprehensively addressing a flagship ecosystem.

4. Encourage Parties to draw on and refer to relevant indicators in their interventions when discussing goals and targets presented under CBD/WG2020/3/3.

The monitoring framework is fundamental to successful implementation of the GBF. It is a serious concern that there appears to be no specified opportunity to discuss the monitoring framework during the OEWG 3 sessions. ICRI believes that, if the goals and targets remain generalized, a complete monitoring framework is essential to provide the specificity needed to measure progress and inform adaptive management actions. Parties are encouraged to seek clarity on the timing and modalities to ensure the full monitoring framework that includes headline, component and complementary indicators [\(CBD/WG2020/3/Inf/2\)](#) is available to support implementation from adoption of the GBF. ICRI stands ready to continue its support contributing information and guidance relating to monitoring coral reef ecosystems including through the existing GCRMN through appropriate mechanisms.

This overview has been produced by the ICRI *ad hoc* committee to engage with the CBD Post-2020 process. For more information on the work of the ICRI *ad hoc* Committee and coral reefs within the Post-2020 GBF see www.coralpost2020.org or contact Francis Staub (fstaub@icriforum.org) / Emily Corcoran (emily.e.corcoran@gmail.com).