

Revision and updating of the strategic plan: possible outline and elements of the new strategic plan from the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

A response by Wildlife and Countryside Link

Wildlife and Countryside Link (Link) brings together 35 voluntary organisations concerned with the conservation and protection of wildlife and the countryside. Our members practise and advocate environmentally sensitive land management, and encourage respect for and enjoyment of natural landscapes and features, the historic and marine environment and biodiversity. Taken together our members have the support of over 8 million people in the UK and manage over 690,000 hectares of land.

This document is supported by the following 15 organisations;

- Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust
- Badger Trust
- Bat Conservation Trust
- Buglife – The Invertebrate Conservation Trust
- Butterfly Conservation
- Campaign to Protect Rural England
- Friends of the Earth England
- The Grasslands Trust
- The Mammal Society
- Marine Conservation Society
- Plantlife International
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust
- The Wildlife Trusts
- Woodland Trust

1. Overview

Link agrees that the new CBD strategic plan should provide a framework for establishing national targets. In the UK, we should seek to ensure that the targets in the strategic plan are robust and challenging enough to **drive cross-sectoral delivery** and push us on to achieving the ultimate aims of halting and reversing the biodiversity loss we continue to observe.

We support the suggested strategic plan title “Sustaining Life on Earth” since this accurately places **biodiversity at the heart of sustainable living**.

Our comments relate to the position statement developed by Link throughout 2009 (Annex1) in respect of a post-2010 biodiversity target and possible sub-targets. We also support the conclusions of the Council of the European Union’s discussion on International Biodiversity Beyond 2010 (December 2009) and urge the integration of these with the CBD strategic plan development.

In the UK we have a specific responsibility to ensure that our efforts to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity are as rigorous as possible, given progress to date and the strength of support within society for conserving our natural heritage. Equally at the regional (European) level the bar must be raised in terms of our collective efforts to conserve biodiversity. We will continue to urge the UK to show its commitment to halting and reversing biodiversity loss by the strength of its response, in the UK and within Europe, to the CBD strategic plan. In some cases this should mean that milestones or sub-targets should go further than the global target minimum.

2. Issues

We advocate that the importance of biodiversity is restated in this section. In particular, the **inherent importance** of biodiversity and the moral duty for humanity to conserve the full range and diversity of ecosystems and the species that inhabit them which we share the planet should be clearly re-affirmed.

It is clear that the 2010 biodiversity target has not been met at regional (EU) and national (UK) levels as well as globally, despite significant efforts in these areas. However, we firmly believe that **halting the loss of biodiversity is attainable given adequate political will**. The CBD strategic plan for 2011 to 2020 should aim to build on progress to date and increase efforts to address the issues adversely impacting biodiversity.

This section should therefore acknowledge that we need **increased political commitment** to biodiversity conservation at national and global levels, if we are to achieve an appropriate post 2010 target.

We would favour using some of the specific case studies emerging from the TEEB study to illustrate some of the drastic consequences of biodiversity loss.

3. 2050 Vision

We are broadly supportive of the concept of a longer-term vision. This should cover factors such as the equitable sharing of benefits; contributing to poverty eradication; the maintenance of economic and social drivers within ecological limits; and public recognition of the value of biodiversity. However, this section does not convey **the urgency** or scale of the need to halt and reverse biodiversity loss. Biodiversity loss must already have been halted and moved into a state of restoration by 2020 to achieve the 2050 vision in which biodiversity is sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits for all:

“Living in harmony with nature - Biodiversity is conserved, restored and wisely used, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people”.

4. 2020 Mission

The possible elements of the mission statement listed on page 6 include what we consider is the overarching 2020 target, **to restore biodiversity and ecosystem services**. In addition, there are elements that we should seek to deliver as part of biodiversity conservation (equitable benefit sharing, and contribution to human well being and poverty reduction) and mechanisms that we should instigate (reduce

drivers of biodiversity loss and ensure all countries have the means to achieve the mission statement).

We do not believe that our ambition for biodiversity should be limited to preventing irreversible changes or avoiding loss that has dangerous implications for human well-being.

The mission statement should be short and as easy to understand as possible. For these reasons we would favour the second option, subject to the amendments below:

'By 2020, halt **and reverse** biodiversity loss, and enhance the capacity of ecosystems to **support biodiversity and** provide services, while equitably sharing the benefits contributing to human wellbeing and poverty reduction.'

5. Targets

In order to 'hit the ground running' and allow for flexibility in delivery, the targets in the CBD Strategic Plan should, where possible, be **linked to existing focal areas and targets within existing work programmes**.

Guidance should be provided on the establishment of baselines against which progress and target achievement is to be measured. These should also seek to use the best-available scientific evidence. We note that some of these targets are currently not measurable or are subjective. Link believes that the overall status of biodiversity should be subject to **independent inter-governmental scrutiny and assessment**. For those targets with existing and sound mechanisms for assessing progress we would advocate setting 2015 milestones as well as 2020 targets, and in this respect we support IUCN's position relating to action on biodiversity loss by 2015.

The current grouping of targets under the various goals is a source of confusion. For example, all targets under goal C should relate to climate change mitigation and adaptation yet target 10 sits under goal B and is specifically worded to relate to climate change. Under target 10 we clearly state that climate change should be considered against each target, especially under goals A, B and C, rather than restricted to only a few targets.

We agree there is a need for indicators to measure progress towards the post 2010 targets, and that these should be measurable, scalable, understandable and clearly relevant to the targets. We believe that there would be benefit in assessing which of these are pressure, state, benefit or response indicators in relation to the biodiversity conservation targets.

Target 1. By 2020, Everyone is aware of the value of biodiversity and what steps they can take to protect it;

This target should more explicitly aim to instil an understanding of the need to maintain and restore biodiversity in order to sustain life on earth.

Target 2. By 2020, The value of biodiversity, and the opportunities derived from its conservation and sustainable use, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of its genetic resources, are recognized and reflected by all countries in their national development and poverty reduction policies and strategies, national accounts, economic sectors and spatial

planning processes at all levels of government, and by the private sector, applying the ecosystem approach;

We suggest this target is amended to seek **integration and alignment** of policies to achieve biodiversity objectives rather than merely a recognition to promote the protection, enhancement and sustainable use of biodiversity. Currently the scope of this target is vast and we advise consideration of a series of sub-targets, or 2015 milestones, relevant to individual sectors such as development and trade.

More work will be needed to define how progress against this target can be meaningfully assessed.

Target 3. By 2020, Subsidies harmful to biodiversity are eliminated;

This target should also seek to develop alternative subsidies that support biodiversity conservation, in line with society recognising the value of biodiversity and the ecosystem services thereby provided. For example, the REDD schemes mentioned in the technical rationale for target 14.

Target 4. By 2020, Governments and stakeholders at all levels have formulated and begun to implement sustainability plans to increase efficiency, reduce waste and maintain the use of resources within ecological limits;

We would favour the use of outcome indicators as soon as possible for this target, and guidance on defining ecological limits.

Target 5. By 2020, Deforestation and forest degradation, and the loss and degradation of other natural habitats is halved;

The structure of this target suggests that it was originally drafted specifically for natural forests and subsequently other natural habitats have been included. We suggest a series of options: a) this target is limited to forests and similar targets are set for other natural habitats; b) the overarching theme of this target becomes natural habitats with sub-targets relating to specific habitats; c) if the current target wording remains there must be a series of sub-targets relating to other natural habitats (e.g. peatlands, reefs). On balance, we support the 'unpacking' of this target to address individual broad habitat types.

As it stands we do not support the current wording of this target since this falls considerably short of the proposal supported by Link to 'prevent further loss and fragmentation of priority habitats, such as native forests, by 2020'. We strongly urge that this target wording be strengthened to '*by 2020, deforestation and forest degradation is **stopped***' or '*by 2020 the loss and degradation of natural habitats is **stopped***'.

Target 6. By 2020, Pressure on marine ecosystems through overfishing halved, and destructive fishing practices are eliminated;

Similarly, we believe this target to be inadequate. The 2002 WSSD target states that all global fish stocks should be managed sustainably by 2015. We therefore believe that this target should be strengthened to state 'By 2020, Pressure on marine ecosystems through overfishing is removed with all fish stocks within sustainable limits and destructive fishing practices eliminated.'

Target 7. By 2020, All areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry are managed according to sustainability criteria;

This target requires a global minimum threshold relating to biodiversity maintenance and restoration, plus the development of regional and national criteria. An alternative

would be to set a target for the extent of high biodiversity value agricultural land managed sustainably with biodiversity as a central theme.

Target 8. By 2020, Pollution from excess nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) has been brought below critical ecosystem loads;

Guidance should be issued on the determination of critical ecosystem loads at the earliest opportunity.

Target 9. By 2020, The introduction and establishment of invasive species has been prevented and emerging infectious diseases of wildlife controlled;

Two issues have been unhelpfully conflated in this target; invasive species and infectious disease and we suggest that the two be addressed separately. With relation to invasive species the target must also include measures to manage existing threats posed by invasive species. One way of addressing this would be to have a separate, or sub-target 'the negative impacts of established invasive species are halved against a 2010 baseline.'

Target 10. By 2020, The impacts of climate change and of ocean acidification on ecosystems have been reduced and responses to climate change that are not detrimental to biodiversity have been agreed;

Actions to alleviate the effects of climate change should cut across all targets of the CBD strategic plan, especially those under goals A, B and C, rather than be compressed into a single target. Each target should be referenced both to the impacts which climate change will have upon the delivery of that target, and to the effects which delivery of the biodiversity target will have in addressing climate change impacts (adaptation and mitigation, for biodiversity and society)..

We suggest that a target relating to the adaptation of biodiversity to climate change would be better expressed through reference to **habitat and ecosystem restoration at the landscape scale level**, for example 'sufficient habitat is reinstated or recreated to replace lost natural habitat of significance to biodiversity conservation and to **develop ecologically resilient landscapes**'. A series of sub-targets, or milestones, relating to specific habitats could be usefully developed. We fully agree with the comments of IUCN which state that targets for restoration and connectivity should be included within the CBD strategic plan.

Should the original target 10 wording be retained somewhere within the CBD strategic plan then it should seek not only to agree but also to implement responses.

Target 11. By 2020, At least 15% of land and sea areas, including the most critical terrestrial, freshwater and marine habitats, have been protected through effectively managed protected areas and/or other means, and integrated into the wider land- and seascape;

Given that the technical rationale for this target states that 13% of terrestrial areas are already protected, and since there are recommendations for 30% of seas to be protected as 'no-take zones'¹, the 15% suggested by 2020 is inadequate. We recognise that the percentage area that requires protection will vary between different habitat types and between different member states depending on history and past modification. This is one of several areas where careful scientific consideration and advice is needed urgently. We recommend that guidance on appropriate levels of protected areas is produced as soon as possible.

¹ Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (2004) "Turning The Tide: Addressing the impact of fisheries on the marine environment".

In addition, we believe it necessary to include a separate target relating specifically to the protection of biodiversity outside of protected area networks. For example, 'biodiversity in the wider land and seascapes is appropriately protected, and maintained or restored alongside human activity by 2020'. This issue could be addressed through targets 5, 7 and 11.

Target 12. The extinction of known threatened species (vertebrates and higher plants) has been prevented;

Targets relating to threatened species must apply to all taxonomic groups. Again this is in line with comments from the IUCN. In addition to this target on preventing extinctions this target we recommend that a target is introduced to 'stabilise or improve the status of half of all threatened species by 2020'.

Target 13. By 2020, The status of crop and livestock genetic diversity in agricultural ecosystems and of wild relatives has been improved;

We believe that this target could be strengthened to 'all wild relatives of domestic crops and livestock are effectively protected'.

Target 14. By 2020, The contribution of biodiversity and terrestrial, freshwater and coastal ecosystems to sequestering and retaining greenhouse gases has been enhanced;

We suggest the following text as an addition to this target 'by preventing any further loss of habitats and ecosystems that contribute to greenhouse gases sequestration and by recreating areas or facilitating the recovery of habitat in locations that increase greenhouse gas sequestration. This target could evolve to become the habitat restoration target suggested under target 10; however activity towards the delivery of this target must very clearly have biodiversity benefits rather than simply be for climate change mitigation purposes (e.g. new habitat should not be detrimental to existing natural habitats deemed to be less effective at sequestering carbon).

Target 15. By 2020, Terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems that provide critical services, and ecological resilience or that contribute to local livelihoods and climate change adaptation have been safeguarded or restored, and adequate and equitable access to essential ecosystem services is guaranteed for all, especially indigenous and local communities and the poor and vulnerable;

We note that there are no indicators suggested for this target.

Target 16. By 2020, Each Party has an appropriate, up-to-date, effective and operational national biodiversity strategy, consistent with this Strategic Plan, based on adequate assessment of biodiversity, its value and threats, with responsibilities allocated among sectors, levels of government, and other stakeholders, and coordination mechanisms are in place to ensure implementation of the actions needed;

We suggest that the term 'importance' replace the use of 'value' in this target in order to avoid an overemphasis on economic assessments.

Target 17. By 2020, Access to genetic resources is enhanced, and substantial benefits are shared, consistent with the international regime on access and benefit sharing;

We have no suggestions for this target.

Target 18. By 2020, Traditional knowledge, innovations and practices and the rights of indigenous and local communities over these are protected;

We suggest an addition to this target: 'where these are consistent with the sustainable conservation of biodiversity'.

Target 19. By 2020, Knowledge and technologies relating to biodiversity, its value and functioning, its status and trends, and the consequences of its loss, are improved and widely shared, and uncertainties concerning biodiversity change, ecosystem services and impacts on human well-being are reduced;

Monitoring of biodiversity, alongside knowledge and technologies, must be included within this target

Target 20. By 2020, Capacity (human resources and financing) for implementing the Convention has been increased tenfold;

Careful consideration must be given to the baseline set for measuring progress against this target.

Wildlife and Countryside Link

January 2010

Annex 1

Wildlife and Countryside Link's Biodiversity Working Group Ideas for Defra on a post-2010 biodiversity target January 2009

Wildlife and Countryside Link (Link) brings together 39 voluntary organisations concerned with the conservation and protection of wildlife and the countryside. Our members practise and advocate environmentally sensitive land management, and encourage respect for and enjoyment of natural landscapes and features, the historic environment and biodiversity. Taken together, our members have the support of over 8 million people in the UK.

An initial discussion on ideas for a post-2010 biodiversity target was held at the Defra/ Natural England / Link liaison meeting in December 2008. Link agreed to collate principles and ideas for the setting of a post-2010 target from Link's Biodiversity Working Group.

These ideas are supported by the following 10 organisations:

- Badger Trust
- Bat Conservation Trust
- Buglife – The Invertebrate Conservation Trust
- The Grasslands Trust
- Herpetological Conservation Trust
- The Mammal Society
- Plantlife International
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust
- The Wildlife Trusts

Suggested global headline target

Halt and reverse global biodiversity loss by 2020

We believe that implicit in this is the need to help biodiversity to adapt to climate change, both for its own sake and so that it continues to provide benefits and enjoyment for humans.

The headline target should be underpinned by a number of sub-targets. These should be measurable and should be capable of adaptation to regional and national levels. We advocate the approach of setting sub targets broadly under the CBD's focal areas and we include some illustrative examples.

Possible sub-targets

Note that where we have included numbers within sub-targets this is to illustrate that they can be measurable, however such figures should be subject to detailed analysis and negotiation.

1. *Halt and reverse the loss of species, habitats and genetic diversity*

- Prevent further loss and fragmentation of priority habitats e.g. *the loss of native forests is halted by 2020*
 - All threatened species recovering by 2020 and/or threat removed
2. *Promote sustainable use*
- All fish stocks are within sustainable limits by 2020 or achieve sustainability in 95% of all fisheries
 - Biodiversity in the wider countryside is maintained or restored alongside human activities by 2020.
3. *Address major threats to biodiversity e.g. invasive non native species and climate change*
- Strategies/action plans, institutional structures and capacity are in place to manage threats from invasive alien species
 - Prevent the loss of carbon sequestering habitats e.g. *wetlands*
4. *Maintain ecosystem integrity*
- Robust protected areas networks are in place on land by 2015 and at sea by 2020
 - 2,000,000 ha of habitat is reinstated or recreated to replace lost habitat of significance to biodiversity conservation and to develop ecologically resilient landscapes
5. *Protect traditional knowledge*
- All wild relatives of domestic crops are effectively protected by 2015
 - Indigenous knowledge and practice that supports sustainable livelihoods is effectively conserved.
6. *Mobilise financial and technical resources*
- More resources are invested in threatened species conservation

Appendix 1 Broad principles

- The Global and European 2010 biodiversity target to reduce the rate of or halt the loss of biodiversity embody a positive, easily understood message relating to biodiversity – the simple need to halt its loss. This simplicity and clarity is a key strength of the current target, enabling the widest possible audience to grasp the concept and aim.
- Therefore the new target should build on these strengths and be short, simple, clear and focused on biodiversity.
- Although the current target will not be met (Environmental Audit Committee's report on Halting biodiversity loss), there are positives that should be drawn from the process not least the milestones which have been achieved through the range of programmes and projects initiated to halt the loss of biodiversity.
- Whilst halting the loss of biodiversity will not be achieved by 2010 this does not mean that this is unattainable, rather that we must build on progress to date and increase efforts. The aim of halting biodiversity loss therefore needs to be taken forward, and built upon, beyond 2010.
- The protection and enhancement of global biodiversity is central to sustainable living and as such biodiversity requires consideration within the context of wider environmental, social and economic issues. However, it is essential to retain a primary focus on biodiversity in the post-2010 target,

rather than dilute this message in a wider environmental context. Therefore whilst we appreciate the need for new wording around a post-2010 target we should not wish to risk losing the fundamental focus on species and habitats if new wording moves too far from the original target.

- We support the notion of an overarching global vision, or broad aim, for biodiversity. This should be aspirational but not unreasonable or unachievable.
- A vision, however, is not a replacement for a measurable, timed headline target.
- A headline target could be supported by a number of SMART sub-targets against which progress towards meeting the headline objective can be rigorously tested.
- The time period for a post-2010 target should give time for action and momentum to develop without being so far in the future to be unfocused.
- We recommend a coordinated UK approach to debating the options proposed and would support the UK hosting a global meeting in the summer of 2009 if the global and European post-2010 target discussion timetables allow.

**Wildlife and Countryside Link
January 2009**