



Global Dialogue on Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic and Economic Crisis: Building Back Better Aligned to the SDGs and the Paris Agreement

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Key Takeaways from 4th Dialogue: Biodiversity, Land-Use, and Nature- Based Solutions

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- 1. We need a One Health approach that reflects the clear linkages between environmental and human health.** People feel that the world is out of balance with the pandemic and that we must do something about it. Biodiversity is in fact on fire: one million species are threatened by extinction, a trajectory coupled with and driven by substantial loss of ecosystems. As humans encroach further on natural ecosystems, the usual barrier between pathogens in animals and humans is being transformed into a “connecting highway,” while 70% of new emerging diseases — potentially including COVID-19 — are zoonotic in origin. The loss of ecosystem integrity increases the risks of these disease spillovers and pandemics by increasing contact with carriers of pathogens. It is also important to pay attention to pandemic risks that come from intense livestock production. Rather than reacting to pandemics and other disease outbreaks only after they occur, we should take urgent preemptive action now. We must close the disease highway and restore the barriers between humans and animals by protecting ecosystem integrity, restoring natural ecosystems and stopping the illegal wildlife trade.
- 2. In the recovery, we must take systemic approaches to addressing biodiversity and nature-based solutions for biodiversity, climate and SDGs.** Protection of biodiversity and ecosystems depends on treating vital landscapes as a comprehensive, integrated whole; we need resilient and sustainable rural landscapes that can also provide a range of ecosystem services including those needed for water and food security. Critically, agriculture and food systems, including livestock and other domesticated animals, are closely linked to biodiversity loss, land-use change, and mobilizing nature-based solutions. As part of recovery packages, we need to take a farm-to-fork approach (such as that in the European Green Deal) to address these issues, including how agriculture and food systems place

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pressure on ecosystems and biodiversity and how they can be mobilized to protect and restore ecosystems. These integrated approaches are vital for food security, jobs and livelihoods globally, especially in the global South. Key steps during the recovery also include restoration efforts that provide jobs and support ecotourism to ensure that protected (as well as other ecologically valuable) areas are sustained. In addition, urban greening and sustainable food production can be an important part of the solutions we advance.

- 3. Sustainable supply chains and private sector engagement are key to protecting biodiversity and ecosystems and advancing nature-based solutions.** As part of recovery efforts, we need to build supply chains that promote sustainable, resilient agriculture and sustainable practices in commodities such as coffee, cocoa and cotton. Collaboration with the private sector will be key: supply chain approaches can help catalyze private investments and shift the way in which businesses operate. As part of this effort, it will be essential to support smallholder farmers to adopt climate resilient agricultural practices and to promote jobs and livelihoods in the production, processing and retailing of sustainable products, including an important role for small and medium-sized enterprises. However, we need to recognize that many current policies, including subsidies, often promote action that is detrimental to biodiversity or does not incentivize better private sector action. A pact between producer and consumer countries on reducing deforestation through commodity supply chains could, therefore, play an important role in protecting ecosystems and biodiversity (with such a pact envisaged as a key deliverable from COP26 in November 2021).
- 4. Benchmarks and accountability are critical.** We need to put in place long-term objectives and benchmarks for action; international alignment on 2030 goals linked to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity could be used to benchmark and align actions. Critically, recovery packages need to be screened for alignment with biodiversity and ecosystem objectives, and a “do no harm” standard must be used as a minimum standard, including for infrastructure, agriculture, biofuels, and other investments. As countries try to stimulate their economies, we especially need to prevent large-scale investments from driving increased ecosystem and biodiversity loss. Accountability and governance are essential to ensuring that governments and private sector actors actually follow through on commitments to protect and restore ecosystems, including in recovery packages. Ex-post assessments of recovery packages and their impacts will be an important tool in promoting that accountability.
- 5. Finance can be mobilized for ecosystem protection and nature-based solutions, but it needs to be brought to scale.** To make the business case for nature-based solutions, it will be critical to highlight the evidence that investments in these solutions can provide significant economic benefits during the recovery. For example, every dollar of investment in mangroves can provide \$7 in economic benefits, and studies have shown that nature-based investments can have as much economic impact as traditional infrastructure. Ministers of finance, trade and planning must be part of the conversation, so they understand and support green finance and investment, particularly in those countries where much of the ecosystem loss is taking place. There are already innovative financial models underway, including to support preservation and restoration of forest and marine ecosystems, but these must be brought to scale and may require subsidies and financial support in some cases. There are also discussions about the possibility of debt-for-nature swaps as part of the recovery, but this approach will need to be explored further.
- 6. There are important differences between the situations in the global South and North.** The economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic put pressure on biodiversity, especially in developing countries, and issues such as food security are a high priority in the South, while those have not been the focus in the North in discussions of recovery packages. However, there are clear linkages and everyone can be united around the same solutions, including addressing supply chains, preserving protected areas, and building sustainable, resilient agriculture and food systems in all countries.
- 7. In the coming year, collaboration and multilateral processes are critical to advancing protection of biodiversity and ecosystems in line with climate and social objectives.** The confluence of the biodiversity COP and the climate COP next year will offer a key opportunity to bring together the agendas of biodiversity and climate, particularly through the implementation of nature-based solutions. Moreover, the CBD discussions on 2030 goals and the enhancement of Paris Agreement commitments (NDCs) for 2030 is an important opportunity for alignment on agendas for the coming decade.