

REGIONAL FORUM

ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR THE UNECE REGION

GENEVA | 1-2 March 2018



BIODIVERSITY AT THE HEART OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Geneva, 1 March 2018

Room 18, 16:30-18:00



- **Organizers:** CBD Secretariat and UN Environment
- **Moderator:** CBD Executive Secretary, Ms. Cristiana Pasca Palmer
- **Rapporteur:** Mr. Christoph Dürr, International Forest Policy Adviser, Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN), Switzerland

Background:

Biodiversity forms the foundation of the Earth's life support systems and underpins the provision of ecosystem services, which are critical for sustainable livelihoods and human well-being. People depend on biodiversity and healthy ecosystems as a source of food, income and insurance against various risks, such as external economic shocks, environmental disasters, impacts of climate change, or health risks arising from lack of access to clean drinking water and health-care services.

Biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides are essential for sustainable development and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is for this reason that maintaining healthy ecosystems and biodiversity is included in SDG 14 (Ocean, Seas, Marine resources), and SDG 15 (Terrestrial Ecosystems), as well as in many other goals and targets.

SDG 15 is closely aligned with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, and its Aichi Targets. As most UNECE members are Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), this is of direct relevance to the region to achieve all targets. The Conference of the Parties (COP) to the CBD has strongly recognized the importance of engaging in the 2030 Agenda, and how it can contribute to its implementation. At its thirteenth meeting (COP13 in Cancun, Mexico, December 2016), Parties were requested to mainstream biodiversity in the implementation of all relevant SDGs, and called on Parties in their efforts to utilize an integrated approach towards achieving the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and national biodiversity strategies and action plans.

In this context, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention is paying particular attention to the mainstreaming of biodiversity into specific economic sectors, which provide additional opportunities to undertake targeted, sector-specific analyses and to identify possible policy interventions on the interface between the CBD and the SDGs. At COP13, the Parties adopted decisions to mainstream biodiversity into agriculture, forestry, fisheries and tourism. The Conference of the Parties also decided to further consider the mainstreaming of biodiversity into infrastructure, energy and mining, manufacturing and processing, and health sectors at its fourteenth meeting, to be held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, in November 2018. These sectors are critical both for biodiversity and for achieving the SDGs.

The publication “Biodiversity and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, developed by the CBD secretariat, UN Environment, UNDP, FAO and the World Bank for the CBD COP13, provides an analysis of how the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 SDGs. It can be accessed in the following link: <https://www.cbd.int/development>

Objectives of the roundtable

The objectives of this round table are:

- To provide a forum for discussion on the **main challenges** related to ensuring the conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems and halt biodiversity loss in the UNECE region for policymakers and other relevant stakeholders; and
- To jointly identify **approaches and solutions, as well as main lessons and good practices** that support the attainment of this objective.

Presenting concrete and practical country progress at the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE region will allow undertaking and compiling a first regional set of key action areas of action towards achieving SDG 15 and other related SDGs, exchanging information on existing good practices and key challenges, and identifying opportunities for replication and scaling up of successful approaches.

Key questions for the roundtable

- Why are biodiversity and healthy ecosystems important for sustainable development in your countries? Are there recent examples that demonstrate the linkages between biodiversity and healthy ecosystems, and human wellbeing, in terms of providing revenues and jobs, clean water, sustainable agriculture, tourism, and other benefits, including enhanced resilience? (targets 15.1 to 15.4)
- How can policy makers enhance the integration or mainstreaming of ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and subnational planning and development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts? Are there specific examples of successful measures already put in place which could be replicated or scaled up, including measures which target specific economic sectors, such as infrastructure, energy and mining, manufacturing and processing, and health? (target 15.9)

- What are the most important obstacles and challenges for achieving a transformational change, via SDG 15, in the ways we address ecosystem management and the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity? What are some of the most important changes that are needed to address such challenges and achieve such a transformation? (15.A to 15.C)

Linkages with other SDGs

Sustainable Development Goal 15, and ecosystems and biodiversity more broadly, are directly relevant to the advancement of other SDGs being considered at the HLPF in 2018. Targets associated with maintaining biodiversity and healthy ecosystems and underpinning biodiversity are included in SDG14 and Goal15, as well as in other goals and targets, including: SDG 1 (poverty eradication), SDG 2 (hunger and food security), SDG 6 (water and sanitation), SDG 11 (cities and human settlements), SDG 12 (sustainable consumption and production) and SDG 13 (climate change adaptation and mitigation). In addition, a number of targets contained under SDG 15 relate to other SDGs. For example, Target 15.9 refers to poverty reduction strategies and is therefore relevant to SDG 1.

The suggested focus on specific biomes (forests, land, and mountains) and associated relevant ecosystem services, under the first set of questions, as well as the suggested focus on sectorial policies, plans, and programmes, in addition to poverty reduction strategies, under the second set of questions, is intended to facilitate making the linkages to the other relevant SDGs as enumerated above.

A complete analysis on how policies to maintain ecosystems and biodiversity contribute to achieving the SDGs is included in the above-referenced publication, available at: <https://www.cbd.int/development>

Target audience:

This round table will be of interest not just to policymakers and other stakeholders involved in biodiversity policy making, but also to those working in urban planning, infrastructure development, financing of public services, and business operation in a wide range of economic sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, forestry or retail.

Proposed case studies:

Expanding Protected Areas in the Balkans

Ms. Ljubica Teofilovska, Representative from the Minister's Cabinet.

Coordination and monitoring of national and international projects.

Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Shar Mountain, one of the main biodiversity hotspots in the Balkan Peninsula, is carrying out a valorisation study of its natural resources, including a detailed analysis of all available environmental, territorial and socio-economic information, with the aim to achieve the protection category of national park.

Earth Observation technologies designed for action

Mr. Gigia Aleksidze, Project Manager, World Resources Institute
Ministry for Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia

Global Forest Watch, an online platform, provides data and tools to monitor forests and call out unsustainable activities. Georgia is also developing Data Cube technology, a monitoring tool (impact assessment, change detection) to help mainstream biodiversity and integrate environmental policies into the political agenda.

Sustainable tourism development through the Carpathian Convention

Ms. Gabriela Szuba, Counselor to the Minister
Department of Nature Conservation, Ministry of Environment.
Poland

Through the project Carpathians Unite, the Polish Carpathians are implementing the Protocol on Biodiversity and the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism. It combines conservation efforts, sustainable land use, the preservation of traditional land and local livestock breeds with activities that promote tourism.

Participants

- Representatives of countries involved in work on terrestrial ecosystems, desertification, land degradation, and biodiversity loss
- Representatives of Permanent Missions to the United Nations Office in Geneva
- Regional or sub-regional organizations
- Non-governmental organizations
- Academia and Scientific community
- Stakeholders from the private sector

Outcomes and next steps:

The roundtable will allow an open exchange of experiences and peer learning on how biodiversity supports the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and its SDGs. The roundtable will result in some recommendations that the rapporteur will bring to the attention of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development **plenary session on 2 March 2018**.

The outcomes and main messages of the plenary session will be reflected in the **Chairperson's summary** to be transmitted to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (9-18 July 2018, New York) as a contribution from the UNECE region.