



# A BUSINESS GUIDE TO **THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

OCTOBER 2020



**Convention on  
Biological Diversity**

The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) 15<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP15) will take place in Kunming, China.<sup>1</sup> At this meeting, we hope nations agree to adopt a new Post-2020 Global Framework for Biodiversity (Post-2020 Framework). This framework is intended to include goals, targets and policy directions for our global society over the next three decades which will lead the way to achieving the CBD 2050 vision of “Living in Harmony with Nature”<sup>2</sup>.

As was the case for the Paris Agreement on climate change, an ambitious, clear and implementable international agreement at COP15 will ensure that the nature agenda is raised to the highest political level. This would help set the direction for business action, and guide governments in adopting policies that unlock new business opportunities and create a level playing field and stable operating environment for businesses around the world. COP15, and the other key biodiversity events on the road to COP15, are opportunities for businesses to contribute to and shape the nature agenda for a resilient and sustainable future.

<sup>1</sup> Currently scheduled in May 2021 but timing is likely to change due to COVID-19  
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/0b54/1750/607267ea9109b52b750314a0/cop-14-09-en.pdf>

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

**We are losing nature** - The 2019 Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) [Global Assessment Report](#) warned that nature loss is accelerating at an unprecedented rate. Nearly 1 million species are at risk of extinction from human activities and 75% of the land surface has been significantly altered by human actions, with severe impacts for our livelihoods, economies, food security, health and quality of life worldwide.<sup>3</sup>

**Nature loss is putting our economies at risk** - According to the World Economic Forum, over half the world's total GDP – US\$44 trillion – is moderately or highly dependent on nature and its services and, as a result, exposed to risks from nature loss. At the same time, a nature-based transition could create US\$10 trillion in business opportunity and create 395 million jobs by 2030.

**We must address this emergency now** - The CBD COP15 is the most important UN Biodiversity Conference this decade and represents a unique opportunity for governments to agree an ambitious Post-2020 Framework that helps set humanity on course for achieving the CBD's 2050 vision of "Living in Harmony with Nature."

**We can't solve climate change without nature as our ally** - COVID-19 has demonstrated how interconnected everything is – nature, people, climate, health, food, finance and the economy. Nature-Based Solutions<sup>4</sup> are at the center of the

*"Over 1,240 businesses are already taking action for nature, but it's not enough. These challenges cannot be solved in isolation and leading companies are calling for governments to adopt policies now that will create a level playing field, a stable operating environment and unlock new business opportunities. An ambitious international agreement with clear and implementable targets is essential to help more businesses scale and speed up efforts to make the transition needed towards a sustainable, circular economy that respects the limits of the planet."*

*Eva Zabey, Executive Director, Business for Nature*

strategy in helping to address climate change. An ambitious outcome at CBD COP15 will encourage governments to include Nature-Based Solutions in their climate action plans and long-term strategies.

**Businesses have a critical role to play** - Businesses must engage in the discussion and demonstrate support so we reach an international agreement that is ambitious, clear and implementable. Indeed, business played a crucial role in supporting the successful adoption of the Paris Agreement on climate change in 2015. Not only by making voluntary climate commitments before the conference but also by [being present and active](#) in the lead up to and at the conference itself.

<sup>3</sup> IPBES (2019), Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, <https://ipbes.net/global-assessment>.

<sup>4</sup> Nature-based Solutions (NbS) are defined by IUCN as "actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems, that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits", <https://www.iucn.org/commissions/commission-ecosystem-management/our-work/nature-based-solutions>.



## 2. WHAT IS BEING **DISCUSSED AT THE CBD** AND WHY IS IT **RELEVANT FOR BUSINESS?**

### NEGOTIATION OF A **POST-2020 GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK**

The CBD is currently developing a new strategic framework to be adopted at COP15– the [Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework](#) (Post-2020 Framework).<sup>5</sup>

This will build on and replace the current [Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020](#), which includes twenty time-bound and measurable targets, the [Aichi Biodiversity Targets](#) for protecting and conserving natural systems. Despite commitments by Parties and stakeholders, none of the 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets were achieved<sup>6</sup> in full by 2020, and only six were even partially achieved. This is due to the lack of political willingness but also the over-abundance of targets and their lack of clarity, the lack of monitoring tools and the lack of financial resources.

The Post-2020 Framework must build on these lessons to create a transformative framework that sets the world on the path to reversing nature loss by 2030 and living in harmony with nature by 2050.

*“Companies that have embraced the transition to green models can prosper, and even gain competitive advantage while showing vision and leadership. The time is now to act. We need to find common solutions to our problems by reimagining business models, redesigning value chains, addressing current flows and reaching the right level of ambition to reverse natural loss.”*

*Elizabeth Mrema, Executive Secretary, CBD*

### WHY IS IT **RELEVANT FOR BUSINESS?**

The Post-2020 Framework will translate into actions, policies and regulations at regional and national levels that will have direct consequences on the operations of companies.

The key elements of the agreement will have an impact on how companies operate and how they can transform their business models. The agreement has the potential to unlock new business opportunities and will help create a level playing field and stable operating environment for business globally.

Business participation is essential to drive the agenda in a direction that is aligned with business expectations, experiences and realities, and is sufficiently ambitious to achieve the level of action the biodiversity crisis demands.

<sup>5</sup> In the 2018 Sharm El Sheikh Declaration, the 196 Parties to the CBD committed to developing, through enhanced strategic collaboration and cooperation with non-State actors, an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

<sup>6</sup> WBCSD Business summary of the Global Biodiversity Outlook 5 [available here](#)

# WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS FOR THE POST-2020 FRAMEWORK FOR BUSINESS?

The Post-2020 Framework will include:

## 1. A mission, goals, milestones and targets to achieve the 2050 vision

**Current status** – The current draft of the Post-2020 Framework fails to learn from the Aichi Targets. It includes too many goals and targets that fail to set the right level of ambition that are not SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic/Relevant and Time Bound) and fail to provide clear guidance to businesses on how to act.

**How is this relevant for business?** Businesses need the Post-2020 Framework to provide direction with goals and targets informed by science, which can be implemented by companies. Long-term certainty is crucial for businesses to invest in changing their business models.

## 2. A 2030 target on harmful incentives for biodiversity

**Current status** – The current draft of the Post-2020 Framework (Target 17) suggests redirecting, repurposing, reforming or eliminating incentives and subsidies which are harmful to biodiversity.

**How is this relevant for business?** Ending incentives and subsidies for harmful practices and implementing biodiversity-positive incentives would support a level playing field for companies, therefore encouraging positive business action including sustainable use, resilience, restoration and circularity. The Post-2020 Framework could commit to the elimination of harmful subsidies and also 'redirect' them to incentivize sustainable practices.

## 3. Approaches to the mobilization of financial resources to ensure a successful implementation of the framework

**Current status** – This is a critical and difficult diplomatic issue being negotiated by countries. The current options being discussed include financing mechanisms involving businesses and transformation of subsidy frameworks.

**How is this relevant for business?** The proposed approach in the Post-2020 Framework could support and incentivize the integration of biodiversity value and considerations into business operations and decision-making. Companies must play an important role in contributing insights and perspectives on the financial mechanisms which they believe can most effectively achieve the goals.

## 4. An approach to mainstreaming nature in all decision making

**Current status** – The CBD is developing a Long-Term Approach to Mainstreaming strategy that identifies governments, financial institutions and civil society as the main actors to mainstream nature. The main recommendations of the strategy are not yet included in the framework, especially the need to give business a concrete role in the implementation of the framework.

**How is this relevant for business?** Mainstreaming nature should be made an essential element of the framework as policy coherence at global, national and local levels is essential to facilitate business action.

## 5. An implementation mechanism

**Current status** – The current foreseen implementation mechanism relies on National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) as the principal instrument for implementing the framework at national level. This includes the development by countries of national strategies and action plans as well as national reporting reports. The mechanisms do not yet consider the role of the private sector.

**How is it relevant for business?** – The implementation mechanism is essential for business as only if the framework is consistently implemented can there be a level playing field globally. The framework could identify the private sector as a key partner to deliver solutions and include business commitments in national strategies to establish a public-private plan.

## 6. A potential extension of the access and benefit sharing obligations

**Current status** – A possible extension of access and benefit sharing (ABS) obligations to genetic sequences data ("digital sequence information") is being discussed and is one of the two 'make-or-break' issues in the negotiations. The Nagoya Protocol currently regulates access to physical genetic resources, and the sharing of benefits from R&D using these.<sup>7</sup>

**How is this relevant for business?** Extending these obligations to genetic resource sequence data could have a strong impact on private and public scientific research and innovation so it is essential for business to contribute to this discussion.

**To learn more on why to engage on the CBD – read the publication [\*"No business on a dead planet – why an ambitious Post-2020 Framework also makes economic sense"\*](#).**

<sup>7</sup> ICC statement: "Digital Sequence Information and the Nagoya Protocol" and Joint stakeholder statement: "Promoting sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity through open exchange of Digital Sequence Information"



## 3. HOW DOES THE **CBD** WORK?

### ABOUT THE **CONVENTION**

The Convention on Biological Diversity is an international legally binding treaty between 196 signatory countries (referred to as the Parties), that was concluded in 1992 to provide a global framework for action on biodiversity. It is one of the three Rio Conventions, alongside the UNFCCC (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) and UNCCD (UN Convention to Combat Desertification).

#### The CBD has three main goals:

- The **conservation** of biological diversity;
- The **sustainable use** of the components of biodiversity; and
- A **fair and equitable sharing** of benefits arising from the utilization<sup>8</sup> of genetic resources.<sup>9</sup>

### CONVENTION **PROTOCOLS**

In addition to the strategic frameworks being negotiated and adopted by the convention (i.e. the [Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020](#) adopted in 2011 and the [Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework](#) expected to be adopted at COP15 in 2021) that set the global ambition and strategy to achieve the three convention objectives, the CBD has two supplementary agreements – called Protocols.

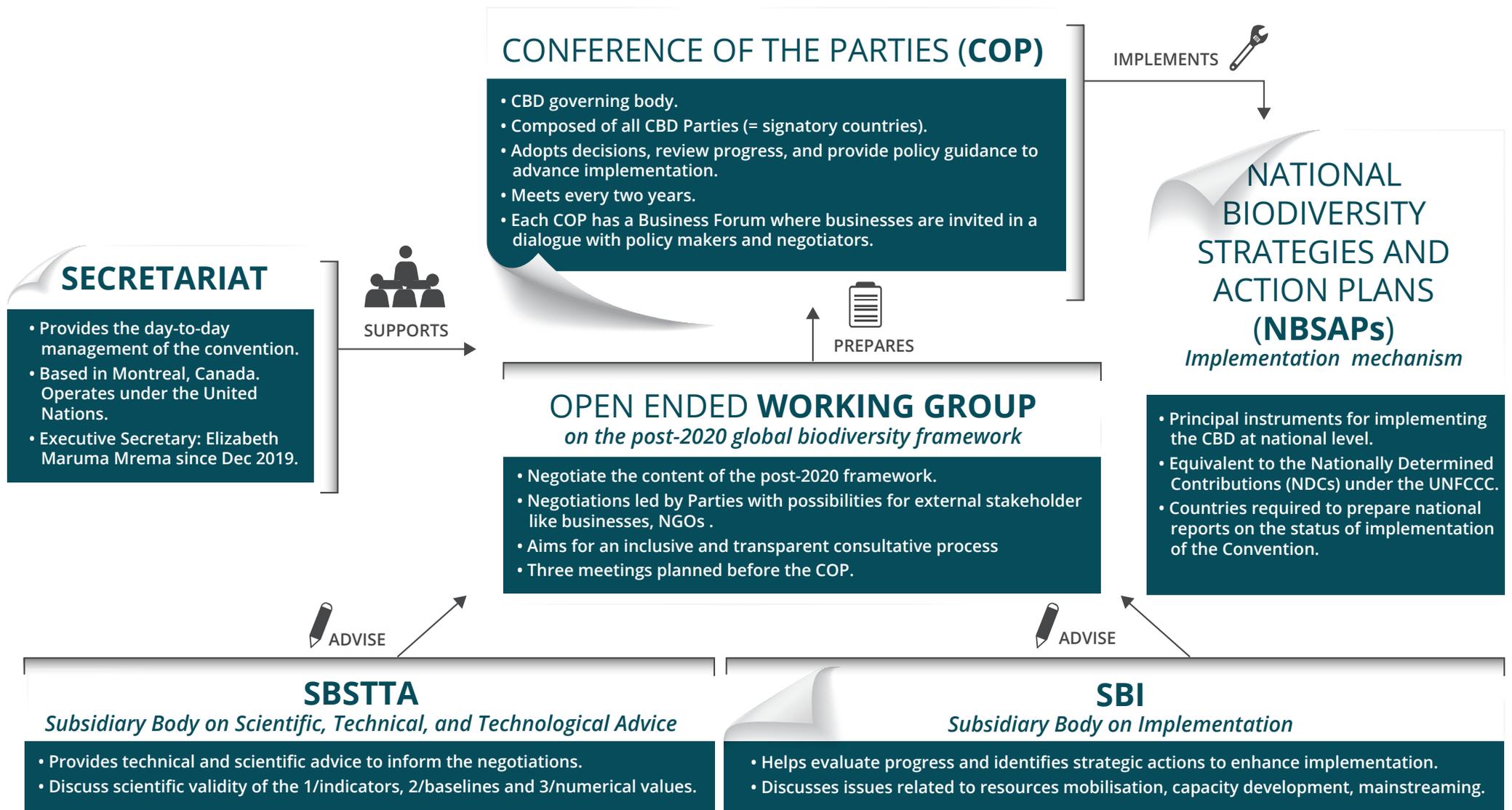
#### These protocols have an impact on business activities in the areas below:

- **Cross border movements of genetically modified organisms:** the **Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety** (2003) governs the movements of living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology from one country to another.
- **Use of genetic resources in R&D:** The **Nagoya Protocol** on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising (ABS) from their Utilization (2014) provides a framework for national regulation on modalities for accessing genetic resources and for sharing benefits arising from their utilization (primarily R&D), as well as on compliance by domestic users with ABS regulations in provider countries.

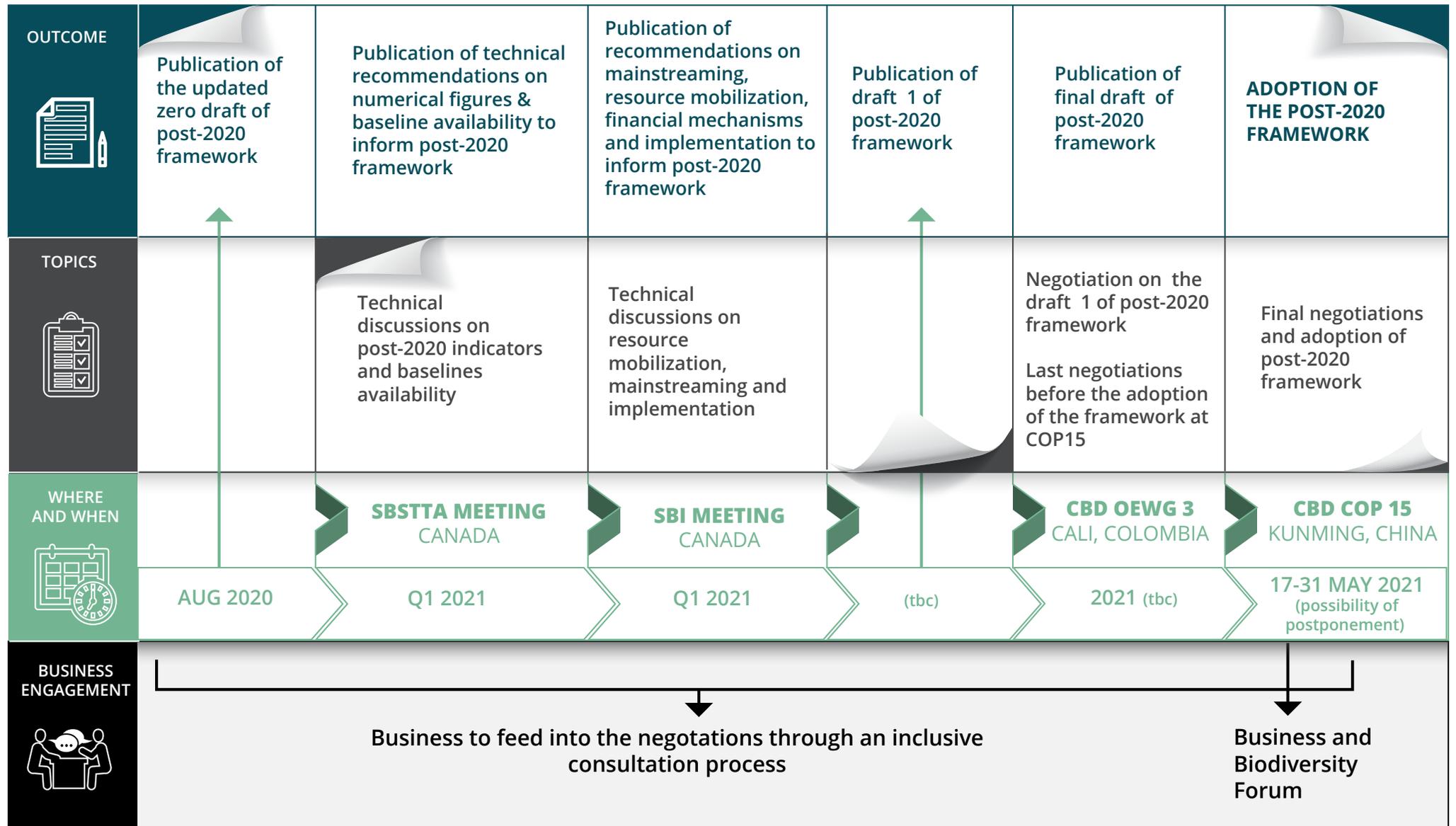
<sup>8</sup> Article 2 Nagoya Protocol: "Utilization of genetic resources" means to conduct research and development on the genetic and/or biochemical composition of genetic resources, including through the application of biotechnology as defined in Article 2 of the Convention.

<sup>9</sup> CBD Article 2: "Genetic resources" means genetic material of actual or potential value.

# CONVENTION GOVERNANCE



# PROCESS AND TIMELINE FOR THE ADOPTION OF THE POST-2020 BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK



## WHAT WILL HAPPEN AT COP15 AND HOW CAN BUSINESS ENGAGE?

The CBD COP15 is currently scheduled to take place in Kunming, China on 17-30 May 2021. This is when the Post-2020 Global Framework for Biodiversity should be adopted by the CBD country signatories.

COP15 will consist of plenary meetings and working groups where Parties will negotiate the agreement. These meetings are open to Non-State Actors, including businesses, that are invited to attend and contribute to the discussions. There will also be a two-day **high-level segment** where Heads of State, Governments and ministers will meet for final negotiations on the agreement.

In parallel to the official negotiations, China - as the hosting country and the CBD secretariat - is organizing a **Business and Biodiversity Forum**. This will be a two-day event, organized back-to-back with the high-level segment, with the aim to have business-government dialogues and to bring business considerations into the negotiations.

During COP14, the [Sharm El Sheikh to Kunming Action Agenda for Nature and People](#) was launched. This is an online platform that seeks to mobilize ambitious actions from all stakeholders, including businesses, in support of biodiversity. The **Action Agenda** is an opportunity for business to showcase their commitments and contributions to reversing nature loss and restoring the planet's vital natural systems ahead of COP15.

*“Recent events have made very clear the importance of natural environments to the health and prosperity of communities, livelihoods and economies the world over. But effectively addressing the pressing challenge of increasing biodiversity loss in nature will require leadership and solutions that are both global and local, with all stakeholders stepping up. Biodiversity is good for business, and the private sector can and must help to protect, conserve and restore our ecosystems. In partnership with Business for Nature, ICC will work to unite global business behind these critical efforts.”*

*John WH Denton AO, Secretary General, International Chamber of Commerce*



## 4. HOW CAN YOU ENGAGE?



### 1. Raise your voice and call for an ambitious Post-2020 Framework which:

- is underpinned by science,
- provides specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time bound (SMART) targets,
- mainstreams nature and is coherent and integrated with other policies, including on climate,
- values and embeds nature in decision-making and disclosure,
- reforms subsidies and incentives to reward positive action on nature and promotes financial solutions that support nature,
- includes a strong implementation mechanism with a ratchet mechanism to ensure a level playing field for businesses.

### 2. Sign up to the [Nature is Everyone's Business Call to Action](#) and demonstrate the business momentum in favor of ambitious policies and collective action on nature.

#### You can also:

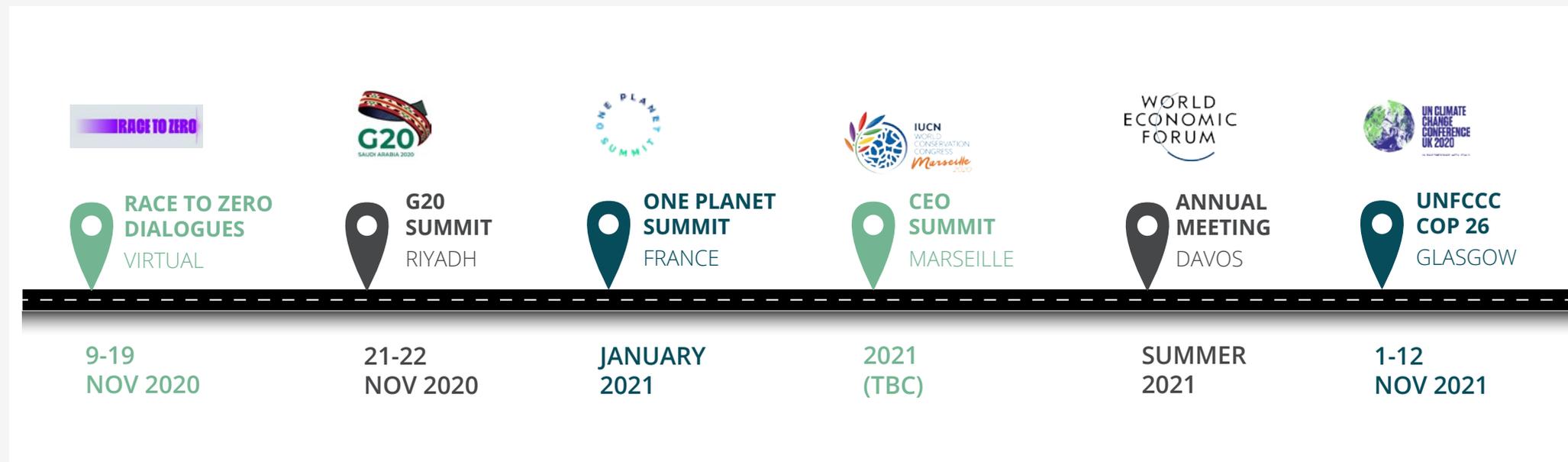
- **Commit:** [Make a commitment](#) for nature through one of the platforms identified by Business for Nature and register it on the [CBD Action Agenda](#).
  - **Act:** Integrate nature in your business strategy, measure and report your impact on nature, reduce your company's impact on nature, invest in protecting and restoring nature, innovate and scale up products and technologies with a lower impact, tackle biodiversity impacts in your supply chain and more. [Review existing business actions](#) for inspiration and implement your own solutions.
  - **Advocate:** Engage with national governments to demonstrate business leadership on nature and show your support for Business for Nature's [policy recommendations](#). Contact [Business for Nature](#) to engage in advocacy activities.
- ### 3. Attend events and meetings to demonstrate that nature is a business priority:
- **Contribute to preparatory COP15 events** (see timeline on page 8) physically or virtually. Save-the-date of key meetings and contact [Business for Nature](#) about how you can join us at these meetings and make your voice heard.
  - **Attend COP15 and the Business and Biodiversity Forum** (see page 8) to contribute to the business-government dialogue.

# ANNEX

## BEYOND THE CBD: KEY MILESTONE EVENTS ON THE ROAD TO COP15

To ensure a successful outcome at the COP15, nature must be elevated to the top of the international agenda.

The following events are essential moments to mobilize businesses and other stakeholders to demonstrate the business case for nature and encourage CBD Parties to adopt a framework that puts the world on track to reverse nature loss by 2030.



## THE LINKS BETWEEN NATURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

One of the targets in the current draft of the Post-2020 Framework is “increase contributions to climate change mitigation adaptation and disaster risk reduction from nature-based solutions and ecosystems based approaches, ensuring resilience and minimizing any negative impacts on biodiversity”.

At the United Nations climate negotiations in 2019, a growing number of governments, businesses and civil society groups noted the important role of Nature-Based Solutions<sup>10</sup> in helping to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement. Nature-Based Solutions are a fundamental part of action on biodiversity but also climate action, and can help enhance climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as support sustainable development.

An ambitious outcome at CBD COP15 could help to support an ambitious outcome at the next climate negotiations and encourage governments to include Nature-Based Solutions in their climate action plans and long-term strategies.

<sup>10</sup> Nature-based Solutions (NbS) are defined by IUCN as “actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems, that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits”, <https://www.iucn.org/commissions/commission-ecosystem-management/our-work/nature-based-solutions>.

## ESSENTIAL READS

- [Business for Nature Policy Recommendations](#)
- [Business for Nature Inputs on the Zero Draft of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework](#)
- [ICC Policy Paper on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework](#)
- [ICC Comments on the Zero Draft of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework](#)
- [ICC Policy Paper on Digital Sequence Information and Benefit Sharing](#)
- [A Comprehensive Overview of Global Biodiversity Finance, OECD](#)
- [Tracking Economic Instruments and Finance for Biodiversity, OECD](#)
- [Nature Risk Rising - New Nature Economy Report, World Economic Forum](#)
- [The Future of Nature and Business – New Nature Economy Report II, World Economic Forum](#)
- [Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, IPBES](#)
- [Indebted to Nature: Exploring biodiversity risks for the Dutch financial sector](#)
- [WWF's Living Planet Report 2020: Bending the curve of biodiversity loss](#)
- [WWF Global Futures report](#)
- [WWF Nature is too big to fail report](#)
- [Financing Nature: Closing the Global Biodiversity Financing Gap, The Nature Conservancy](#)
- [Leaders' Pledge for Nature](#)
- [CBD Global Biodiversity Assessment 5](#)

**This publication was developed by Business for Nature in collaboration with the International Chamber of Commerce. It will be updated as further details are available.**

## BUSINESS FOR NATURE

Business for Nature is a global coalition launched in 2019 that brings together influential organizations and forward-thinking businesses to unite the network of business initiatives for nature.

The coalition is made up of more than 50 partner organizations, including the World Economic Forum, WWF, World Business Council for Sustainable Development, the International Chamber of Commerce and many more international, national and sectoral organizations. We also have a Strategic Advisory Group comprised of representatives from forward-thinking businesses who guide Business for Nature's work. Together, the coalition demonstrates credible business leadership and amplifies a powerful business voice calling for governments to reverse nature loss.

Business for Nature is the main Focal Point for Business in the discussions on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. To find out more about how to engage ahead and at COP15 please contact [Maelle.pelisson@businessfornature.org](mailto:Maelle.pelisson@businessfornature.org)

## INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) is the institutional representative of more than 45 million companies in over 100 countries. ICC's core mission is to make business work for everyone, every day, everywhere. Our members include many of the world's leading companies, SMEs, business associations and local chambers of commerce. ICC is actively engaged in discussions at the CBD on ABS and digital sequencing and is a founding member of Business for Nature coalition. ICC is mobilizing business to take action to reverse nature loss and stands ready to support countries to secure an ambitious Post-2020 Framework at COP15. ICC is also the official Focal Point for Business and Industry at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and is the only private sector organization to have Permanent Observer status at the United Nations General Assembly.

ICC is the main Focal Point for Business in the discussions on ABS and the Nagoya Protocol – to find out more about how to engage on ABS and Nagoya Protocol issues, please contact [Daphne Yong-d'Hervé](#), Director, Peace and Prosperity, ICC.



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