



The EWT's perspective on the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Frameworks (GBF) goals and targets

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Background to the GBF and over-arching principles

The Endangered Wildlife Trust's (EWT) mission is to conserve threatened species and ecosystems in southern Africa to the benefit of all.

This perspective represents the EWT's position on the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework \(GBF\)](#), an outcome of the 2022 United Nations Biodiversity Conference of the Parties (COP15). South Africa, along with 196 other countries, is a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity and has committed to implementing the GBF and its targets and goals.

The GBF contains four global goals ("Kunming-Montreal Global Goals for 2050") and 23 targets ("Kunming-Montreal 2030 Global Targets"). "Target 3" is commonly referred to as the "30 by 30" target. It succeeds the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 (including the Aichi Biodiversity Targets). It is an ambitious global goal seen as the new roadmap towards humans living in harmony with nature and is considered equivalent to the 1.5°C climate target in importance for sustaining life on earth as we know it.

The vision of the GBF is a world in harmony with nature where: "By 2050, biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and wisely used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people." The mission of the framework for the period up to 2030, towards the 2050 vision, is: "To take urgent action to halt and reverse biodiversity loss to put nature on a path to recovery for the benefit of people and planet by conserving and sustainably using biodiversity and ensuring the fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the use of genetic resources, while providing the necessary means of implementation."

The EWT *supports* the GBF statement: "Biodiversity is fundamental to human well-being, a healthy planet, and economic prosperity for all people, and it supports all systems of life on earth."

The four GBF long-term goals

The EWT fully supports all four of the GBF's 2050 goals. The EWT's work contributes directly to each of these high-level goals, with particular emphasis on the first two goals, which speak to the protection and sustainable use of biological diversity. The details of the four goals can be accessed [here](#).

The 23 action-oriented global targets (2022-2030)

The EWT's programmatic work contributes to all 23 GBF targets in some way, with more emphasis on some targets than others. The targets themselves are divided into three categories, namely, 1. Reducing threats to biodiversity, 2. Meeting people's needs through sustainable use and benefit-sharing, and 3. Tools and solutions for implementation and mainstreaming. Our work continues to support many of the targets across all three categories, particularly category one. The EWT also recognises that the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) and National Protected



Area Expansion Strategy (NPAES) revision will be aligned to the GBF goals and targets, and we will play an integral role in assisting with this alignment process.

The EWT recognises the critical importance of Target 3, given its potential for achieving impact for the long-term conservation of terrestrial and marine systems. This target, commonly known as the '30x30' target, has attracted considerable attention in local and international media. It is worded as follows: "Ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 percent of terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, recognizing indigenous and traditional territories, where applicable, and integrated into wider landscapes, seascapes and the ocean, while ensuring that any sustainable use, where appropriate in such areas, is fully consistent with conservation outcomes, recognizing and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities including over their traditional territories." Linked to the importance of this global target, the EWT feels strongly that South Africa, as one of only 17 megadiverse countries in the world and an established advocate for increasing our own marine and terrestrial protected areas, can and must play a pivotal role in achieving and exceeding the '30x30' target at a global and national scale.

The EWT appreciates and echoes concerns around the potential for creating what are referred to as "paper parks" (protected areas formally proclaimed but not effectively managed or sustained in terms of conservation impact thereafter). This highlights the current shortfalls in effective management and institutional support for many provincial reserves, with the majority of [provincial reserves](#) across South Africa being poorly managed. This also emphasizes the need for more administrative transparency, supportive policies, and the development of sustainable financing solutions for the long-term maintenance of effective protected areas.

In South Africa, according to the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), 16.65% of South Africa's 121 million hectares of terrestrial land are under conservation estate (just over 20 million hectares) and about 14.5% of South Africa's coastal and marine areas are protected. However, it is important to note that this terrestrial protection percentage includes the country's vast biosphere reserves, which have expansive buffer zones but offer no real or effective protection for biodiversity. According to the South African Protected Area Database ([SAPAD, accessed in March 2023](#)), our protected area estate would actually equate to around 11.7% without these biosphere buffer areas.

South Africa's 20-year [NPAES \(2016\)](#) targets were determined by aligning to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Aichi biodiversity target 11, which states that "by 2020, at least 17% of terrestrial and inland water areas, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas". This strategy provides clear guidance towards achieving this initial protected area target. Still, as stated within the 2016 NPAES, there is provision made for the review and updating of the NPAES every five years, which is now overdue.

The EWT recognises the intentions and, in principle, commitments of the [draft white paper](#) on the conservation and sustainable use of South Africa's biological diversity. This is being developed to set



the country on a clear path of sustainable development based on the rich biodiversity and ecological infrastructure that supports ecosystem functioning for livelihoods and the well-being of people. This White Paper recognises and emphasises the importance of protected area expansion and good governance of effective protected areas towards the country's ecological and economic sustainability.

The EWT emphasises our support of target 3, particularly through expanding our protected area estate. In the pursuit of this target in South Africa, the EWT:

- a) *Emphasises* that the next revision of the NPAES must align with the '30x30' targets of the GBF at a national scale by continuing to include Protected Areas (special nature reserves, national parks, nature reserves, marine protected areas, protected environments and world heritage sites) and additionally recognise the contribution of the IUCN's Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures ([OECMs](#)) and the land and territories of Indigenous People and Local Communities (IPLCs), that bring about "the effective and long-term *in situ* conservation of biodiversity, support associated ecosystem functions and services, and promote cultural, spiritual, socio-economic and other locally relevant values".
- b) *Highlights* that as one of the world's most biologically diverse countries, South Africa must protect at least 30% of our own land and marine mass to support the global '30x30' target.
- c) *Recognises* the [importance of private sector role players](#) in achieving national targets and commits to working closely with private landowners, businesses and community landowners to assist them in contributing to relevant national targets through initiatives tailored to their specific impact and relevant opportunities.
- d) *Acknowledges* the value of, and opportunity in, encouraging the contributions from a variety of stakeholder groups to enable the 30x30 conservation target to be met and exceeded. To undertake this effectively, candidate OECM sites can be assessed for biodiversity value across land owned, managed or governed by Indigenous People and Local Communities (IPLC), business and industry, private landowners and many state-owned entities. Once biodiversity value has been confirmed, the sites can be reviewed for their governance capability, management, and effectiveness to ensure they can be sustained in the long term before being secured. Security can be attained through the stewardship of conservation areas (community lands and concessions; game reserves; private industry land; and private landowner land) or by securing sites through management agreements that have biodiversity value and fall outside of stewardship, including tourism sites (botanical gardens and outdoor art galleries etc.), national key point sites, state-owned entity land (energy, transport, forestry, academic institutions etc.) and other state-owned property (military, agriculture and forestry etc.).
- e) *Encourages* the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment to adopt an approach towards achieving the '30x30' target by removing key barriers to protected area expansion and unlocking opportunities to engage non-traditional stakeholders in the process. This will require strategic coordination between the various government departments with either aligned or competing agendas in the landscape, including but



- not limited to the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE) and the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD).
- f) *Stresses* that protected area expansion does not occur solely through government processes and with public funds and is heavily supported by the NGO sector and private sector funding; we also *recognise* that resource mobilization from the global community is important for ramping up our ability to achieve the global targets.
 - g) *Underscores* that there is currently poor political will, resource allocation and support at a provincial level for protected area expansion, which must be addressed to assist in achieving the 30X30 target.
 - h) *Emphasises* the importance of increasing financial support for provincial conservation agencies to enable them to support protected area expansion and to effectively manage existing protected area networks.
 - i) *Highlights* the importance of embracing a holistic and collaborative approach towards achieving protected area targets by supporting the co-creation and participatory co-management of new protected area expansion and management models.
 - j) *Recognises* that the DFFE and the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) are committed to securing Strategic Water Source Areas (SWSAs) for the protection of critical ecosystem services which enhance climate resilience, but also *highlighting* the challenges faced by poor resourcing, which hamper these efforts.
 - k) *Highlights* that there is [scientific evidence](#) to support that protecting and restoring ecosystems with a complete collective of wild animals that can fulfil their functional roles enhances natural carbon capture and storage and ecosystem health. The restoration and conservation of wild animals, as ecosystem engineers, and their ecosystem roles present a critical option for addressing climate change by enhancing our ability to reduce climate warming beyond 1.5 °C.

In closing, the EWT supports the Kunming-Montreal GBF goals and targets and encourages South Africa to take a bold approach towards achieving protected area expansion targets through enhanced collaboration, participation and the co-creation of a variety of biodiversity protection models with new stakeholders to achieve these important national targets which will, in turn, benefit all through building sustainable livelihoods, enhancing climate resilience, supporting the green economy and enabling social equity at a national scale.

The EWT bases its perspectives on the best available information and data available at the time. Our positions and opinions may change as more information and data become available.