

Third Biodiversity Workshop

SUMMARY REPORT

**EU-China dialogue on the road to COP15:
2030 Mission; SMART targets; implementation, assessment,
reporting, and review; ABCMs and ecological redlines**

31 October – 1 November 2019, Beijing

Organized by the EU-China Environment Project





Table of contents

1. Introduction	3
2. The 2030 Mission and SMART targets	4
3. Implementation, assessment, reporting, and review	6
4. Area-based conservation measures (ABCMs) and ecological redlines	6

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Report prepared by:

Aleksandar Rankovic, Senior Research Fellow & Coordinator on
Post-2020 International Biodiversity Governance, Institute for Sustainable Development and
International Relations (IDDRI), aleksandar.rankovic@iddri.org

Zou Yueyu, Division of Convention on Biological Diversity, Foreign Environmental Cooperation
Office, Ministry Ecology and Environment, China, zou.yueyu@fecomee.org.cn

1. Introduction

After a first and second workshops on 9-10 October 2018 and 13-14 May 2019, the EU-China Environment Project organized a third workshop on 31 October-1 November 2020, in Beijing. On the road to COP15, it aimed at exchanging perspectives on topics that are currently being discussed internationally.

The meeting was held under Chatham House rules. It gathered representatives from China, France, Germany, the European Commission, Norway, Switzerland, Expertise France, and IDDRI, as well as one post-2020 OEWG co-chair.

2. The 2030 Mission and SMART targets

2.1. THE 2030 MISSION

The 2030 Mission should represent a milestone towards the 2050 Vision, and enable the assessment of progress towards 2050 Vision.

The 2030 Mission should be inspiring, easily communicable, and achievable. It should also cover both biodiversity and people's needs, and the three objectives of the CBD.

The 2030 Mission should constitute a clear narrative of the actions that must be taken in the next ten years, and help non-experts understand what actions and outcomes are expected by 2030.

The global rate of species extinction could constitute an integrated indicator of the pressures experienced by ecosystems, and could be an option for the apex target(s). However, it also poses several issues, notably the difficulty of disaggregating the target at the national level, and a stronger scientific base should be developed (*e.g.*, on the natural baseline of extinctions, globally and in different countries).

For China, the ideas of Ecological Civilization are very much in line with the 2050 Vision. Discussions on the concept could be useful or inspirational, when trying to define transformative change and the 2030 Mission.

BOX 1. The Chinese perspective on Ecological Civilization

“Ecological Civilization” is a Chinese approach for establishing harmony between people and nature, inscribed in the Constitution of China in March 2018. It implies the pursuit of green, high-quality development and good natural environment, as it is the fundamental basis for human well-being. The Chinese government now holds Ecological Civilization as a guiding principle to shift the development planning, industrial structure, production mode and the lifestyle of people. It is carried out through a series of institutional arrangements and policy tools, including property rights system for natural resources, spatial planning, ecological compensation, market system, evaluation of officials' ecological conservation performance, green finance, and so forth.

2.2. THE SMART TARGETS

The discussion was organized around three types of targets to help structure reflections: targets on the state of biodiversity, on pressures on biodiversity, and on enabling conditions.

Targets on the state of biodiversity

There could be interest in having targets on three dimensions of biodiversity (*e.g.*, state of genetic diversity, state of species diversity, state of ecosystem diversity) and integrative indicators of the state of biodiversity (there are different examples of such indicators, such as the Multidimensional Biodiversity Index developed by the Luc Hoffmann Institute, the WCMC, and WWF).

The development and selection of indicators should occur before COP15. This can be based on existing works, such as the indicators developed for the Aichi Targets (e.g., decision XIII/28, Biodiversity Indicators Partnership). They should make connections with the indicators that were developed for the SDGs. The ease of communication of indicators to the public, as well as the availability and aggregation of data should also be considered.

The choice of indicators should also be based on how they can be disaggregated/applied to the national level. This could improve the comparability of actions and outcomes between countries.

Concerning future targets on protected areas, marine protected areas require more discussions. They should take stock of the EBSAs process at the CBD, and other scientific outputs, to assess the proportion of the ocean that should be protected from an ecological and conservation point of view. Then, for the high seas, synergies should be considered with the BBNJ process at UNCLOS, as well as the Antarctic Treaty System and other relevant regional and international processes.

The different levels of protection, and the associated enforcement and management measures, as well as different available instruments such as OECMs (see Box 2), should be considered when setting the quantitative targets for protection.

On restoration, the UNCCD is important and synergies with its work should be increased to avoid duplication. Recent scientific works can help better define the restoration target and its implementation (e.g., the IPBES Assessment Report on Land Degradation and Restoration, or the IPCC report on land).

Targets on pressures on biodiversity

Addressing pressures could be one of the main targets, and there could then be some sub-targets to address the different pressures.

The IPBES Global Assessment has made it clear that land-use change and the overexploitation of species were the main direct driver of biodiversity loss at land and sea. How to develop SMART target on these drivers needs further discussions.

Working with international organizations or conventions that are addressing certain drivers could be complementary way to address drivers. For example, on pollutions, a joint work could be launched with the chemical conventions.

Global trade in its current form has increasingly impacted nature and its services to people. How to reflect this in the future framework needs more discussion.

Targets on enabling conditions

The availability or perspective of public and private funding will be an important prerequisite for an ambitious deal at COP15.

Recent works by the OECD estimate that subsidies that are harmful to biodiversity are ten to twelve times higher than funding for biodiversity. There is already an Aichi Target on harmful incentives (Aichi Target 3). The question is opened as whether a SMART target on this topic should be considered.

Synergies between climate and biodiversity spending should be built, they should benefit each other.

How to increase the efficiency of financial aid should also be reflected upon.

3. Implementation, assessment, reporting, and review

There is a general understanding that decisions aimed at reinforcing the CBD on these topics will be a major outcome of COP15.

The link between this cluster of elements and funding could be explored. In climate change discussions, for instance, developing countries can indicate, in their NDCs, the unconditional measures (not requiring additional support) and the conditional measures (requiring additional support). Reporting on how the related actions have been achieved could help assess the efficiency of funding.

Building upon existing tools such as the voluntary peer review, NBSAPs and national reports should be considered.

The production of the Global Biodiversity Outlook could mobilize the SBSTTA more, so as to increase the amount of discussions between Parties on obtained results.

Ten-year cycles might be too long to maintain a good momentum. For example, five-year periods could be considered.

It is important to launch the new mechanisms at COP15, so that certain guidelines and collective rules can be developed in time for the implementation of the post-2020 biodiversity framework.

4. Area-based conservation measures (ABCMs) and ecological redlines

As land-use change has been identified as a major driver of biodiversity loss, the importance of establishing protected areas and spatial planning policies, regulations, and tools, was stressed. Spatial planning has very different levels of development and implementation worldwide, and COP15 could contribute to reinforcing them. The Chinese experience with the “ecological redlines” (see Box 2) could be useful in this context.

Aichi Target 11 was very successful, and SMART targets capturing the notions of area under protection and or OECM, management effectiveness, coherence, representativity,... should be considered. We now have guidelines for the development of OECMs (see Box 2).

While discussing each element in depth, there could also be merit in thinking about the different elements pertaining to land-use as a cluster. In the targets, there could be targets on protected areas and OECMs, a target on restoration, a target on sustainable landscapes and seascapes (to capture the objective of sustainable use) and a target on ecological spatial planning (in the enabling conditions, for example).

Considering mainstreaming, a work with socioeconomic sectors could be developed, i.e. the agri-food sector, to develop changes in practices on the land they exploit and define OECMs.

At COP15, an international initiative sponsored by the host country could be proposed, and could aim at reinforcing spatial planning policies and technical tools.

In the COP15 decision, it could also be mentioned that the SBSTTA and/or SBI conduct a joint work with UNFCCC and its bodies (as well as UNCCD) to develop guidelines for the spatial planning and implementation of nature-based solutions.



BOX 2. Ecological Conservation Redlines (ECR) & OECMs

In China, Ecological Conservation Redlines (ECR) is an institutional arrangement that unifies the various conservation policies and measures, while taking into account the need for human settlement and development. It aims at safeguarding national ecological safety. It is seen as a way of preserving the “bottom line” of ecosystems that are needed to preserve the ecological safety. It is primarily a spatial planning process, accompanied by comprehensive management arrangements. It covers three types of space: important ecological function areas, ecological sensitive and fragile areas, key ecosystems and habitats of species. ECR has a broader connotation than Protected Areas (PA). Spatially speaking, PA are contained by ECR areas. The key concept is to give certainty and predictability to the land-use according to ecological function. ECR thus allow certain kinds of activities to take place, providing these do not diminish the environmental quality and ecological function of the area. ECR are delineated and managed by local governments directly. So far, ECR account for one quarter of China’s land area. The Chinese government has published guidelines for the delineation of ECR, and the construction of a law enforcement system is undergoing.

OECMs (“Other effective area-based conservation measures”) have been defined by decision XIV/4 (COP14) as: “a geographically defined area other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in situ conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values”.

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