



A purpose-oriented, multi-stakeholder and multi-evidence-based biodiversity global review: rationale, modalities & gaps

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Adopted at COP15, the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) sets ambitious targets for 2030 and overarching goals for 2050 to halt and reverse biodiversity loss. As part of this framework, there has been a concerted effort to strengthen transparency and accountability mechanisms, responding to the implementation gaps seen in the implementation of the Aichi targets. These gaps were partly due to the absence of robust review mechanisms that could bridge global ambitions with national and non-state actor actions. COP16 will play a crucial role in defining and refining the modalities of these mechanisms, ensuring that collective progress is regularly assessed and adjusted to meet the 2030 targets.

This *Policy Brief* aims to propose specific modalities that can strengthen the review processes of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). It advocates for a purpose-oriented, multi-evidence, and multi-stakeholder approach that not only tracks progress but also fosters constructive dialogue, identifies solutions, and enables transformative actions to meet the 2050 goals to achieve a stepping up of efforts if needed ('ratcheting effect') towards and beyond 2030. These recommendations are critical for ensuring that the GBF's ambitious goals are effectively implemented, particularly through inclusive and transparent global reviews.

KEY MESSAGES

The multidimensional approach proposed by COP15 represents a significant step forward in closing the "implementation gap" by enhancing the coherence between international ambitions and national efforts. Review mechanisms allow the international community to track progress and adjust strategies before the 2030 deadline, thereby reinforcing accountability and enhancing global biodiversity governance.

A purpose-oriented global review aims not only at tracking progress but also identifying solutions, barriers, and transformative pathways for the effective implementation of the GBF. It should enhance learning and enable course corrections to achieve a 'ratcheting effect' while staying within the non-punitive approach adopted in the GBF.

Integrating diverse knowledge systems (scientific, technical, and stakeholder inputs) into the review process will provide a more comprehen-

sive understanding of the progress, challenges, and opportunities in implementing the GBF.

A review process that includes the perspectives of civil society, indigenous groups, private sector actors, and local communities is crucial for building an inclusive, participatory approach to biodiversity governance. Dedicated dialogues between stakeholders and parties should be institutionalized within the review process.

To ensure a robust global review, it is essential to anticipate potential gaps and challenges in the implementation of the GBF's review mechanisms. Proactive efforts must be made to identify and fill these gaps, whether in data collection, national reporting, or stakeholder engagement. By promoting a culture of continuous improvement and transparency, Parties and stakeholders can strengthen the overall effectiveness of the review process and enhance global biodiversity governance.

INTRODUCTION

The Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)'s structure includes overarching 2050 goals and 2030 global action targets as common and collective objectives, employing a bottom-up approach to offer flexibility for Parties and non-State actors in the ways (how) they are contributing to these global targets. So far within the CBD, a significant gap has been "the implementation gap", due among other factors to the lack of review mechanisms to assess the coherence between the international ambition and national and non-State ambition and implementation and thus connecting the top-down and bottom-up approaches to international biodiversity governance ([Maljean-Dubois et al., 2022](#); [Friedman et al., 2022](#); [Petersson & Stoett, 2022](#); [Smallwood et al., 2022](#)). However, review mechanisms to enhance transparency and accountability should not be an end in itself but rather be developed to understand problems, formulate alternatives and choose appropriate strategies for action ([Kramarz & Park, 2016](#)).

The gap became especially clear during the implementation of the Aichi targets, in which despite a global analysis of progress in GBO-4 ([Secretariat of the CBD, 2014](#); [Tittensor et al., 2014](#)), it did not lead to any course corrections, as no mechanisms or dialogue were established to facilitate such adjustments. COP Decision 15/6 aims to reinforce the review of ambition and implementation, address gaps, and enhance action before the 2030 deadline. This Decision introduced a "multidimensional approach to planning, monitoring, reporting and review" comprising several building blocks: National Biodiversity Strategies and Actions Plans (NBSAPs) and national targets; national reports; global analysis of NBSAPs/national targets at each COP; global review of collective progress in 2026 and 2030; voluntary peer reviews; and the open-ended forum for voluntary country reviews. Furthermore, non-State actors are also invited to share their contributions to NBSAPs and the realization of the GBF goals and targets.

These building blocks and their associated modalities could address gaps in the implementation of the CBD and the GBF. Those modalities are expected to be specified by subsequent decisions at COP16. Following intersessional meetings in May 2024, and ahead of COP16, we are still facing unresolved issues, especially regarding the establishment and effectiveness of those building blocks. There remain misunderstandings about how these components work together and their impact on the global analysis and review mechanisms, and their uptake at global and national levels. This *Policy Brief* aims to propose modalities to strengthen CBD processes.

1. TOWARDS A ROBUST ANALYSIS AND REVIEW, FOR WHICH EFFECTS?

International environmental governance trends indicate a preference for adopting (increasingly) specific and measurable global goals and targets, as a common framework with shared

principles and flexibility for implementing those targets. This 'soft' governance approach, brings its challenges in ensuring that global ambitions will be realized. In the CBD context, it requires more regular stocktaking, review, and potentially a stepping up of efforts, particularly before the 2030 GBF deadline. Review mechanisms' outcomes should include sending clearer signals on effective ways forward towards 2050 (encouraging transformative pathways or actions), informing responsible stakeholders, putting challenges under the spotlight, evaluating the pace of implementation and establishing momentum for long-term goals ([Landry et al., 2024](#)). To achieve these objectives, the process should be more clearly defined.

Effective mechanisms should be based on diverse sources and inputs, including technical, scientific and stakeholder views. In terms of format, the process should incorporate dialogues that facilitate mutual-learning and exchanges with the 'whole of society', actors taking part in implementing the GBF. These considerations are included in the [document](#) that will be negotiated and adopted at COP16: the objective is in this case for the review to support a "ratchet-up effect", meaning adjusting the path countries are collectively taking, in a facilitative, non-intrusive, and non-punitive manner, avoiding undue burden. Establishing a learning-oriented global review at the CBD is crucial: this process should support the identification of challenges, barriers, opportunities, and enablers for local and national implementers of the GBF.

1.1. Why a purpose-oriented review process?

A purpose-oriented process means the review aims to create effects, identify solutions, barriers and pathways for further action as an outcome. It complements national planning efforts by providing a broader, global perspective. It enables collective reflection on the pathways towards achieving the GBF, while allowing for course corrections without imposing specific policy prescriptions. This forward-looking approach ensures that the global review is not merely an exercise in tracking progress, but also a tool to guide all stakeholders in their future actions ([Kramarz & Park, 2016](#)). By assessing current progress and identifying areas where adjustments are needed, the review can facilitate adaptive and dynamic response to challenges and gaps. The process should be designed to inform the COP in a way that fosters constructive, long-term planning.

1.2. Why a multi-evidence-based approach?

A multi-evidence-based approach, as defined by [Tengö et al. \(2014\)](#), offers a comprehensive framework for integrating diverse knowledge systems, including scientific, technical and local stakeholder perspectives. By drawing on a variety of knowledge sources, this approach creates a more nuanced understanding of the issues at hand, generating new insights through the complementarity of different knowledge systems. In addition, adopting a pluralistic perspective on biodiversity governance could lead to more effective and socially just outcomes ([Pascual et al., 2021](#)),

by aligning with the “whole-of-society” approach advocated by the GBF and gaining credibility and robustness in the evaluation of the implementation. This enriched knowledge base is crucial for evaluating progress and identifying barriers and enablers for the implementation of the GBF for a variety of actors. For instance, public policy assessments, in their various forms represent a significant form of knowledge, which can help identify challenges and potential levers needed to unlock progress.

The advisory bodies supervising the review—which will be agreed upon at COP16—must ensure that knowledge gaps are addressed. This could include inviting new types of assessments, such as a UNEP Biodiversity Gap Report or sectoral assessments by organizations like the FAO, mirroring efforts seen in climate governance (UNEP’s *Emission Gap Report*, IEA’s *World Energy Outlook*). The current negotiation document outlines guidelines for selecting the references and inputs for the global review, under the supervision of an advisory group and subsidiary bodies. A potential risk here is that this process could result in prolonged negotiations in 2025 over which sources should be considered “relevant” for the review. Instead of focusing solely on source selection, it is important to consider additional components that could strengthen a multi-evidenced-based approach. For instance, this could include inviting and engaging custodians of specific targets to contribute to the global analysis and stocktake of both state and non-State actor commitments and actions.

1.3. Why a multi-stakeholder approach?

A multi-stakeholder approach is essential for fostering a holistic and improved understanding of the challenges and progress. The “whole-of-society” and “whole-of-government” approaches underscore the importance of engaging all levels of government and a diverse range of societal actors. A multi-stakeholder review process not only enhances mutual understanding but also facilitates shared learning, as stakeholders can exchange knowledge, experiences, and best practices in a participatory and cooperative setting. This process in this way allows for the identification of practical solutions that can support the implementation of the GBF in a supportive manner. Especially for thorny and long term issues, such deliberative approaches between Parties and non-State actors are crucial to explore transition pathways, as they typically cannot be resolved in a negotiation setting within CBD (Widerberg *et al.*, 2021).

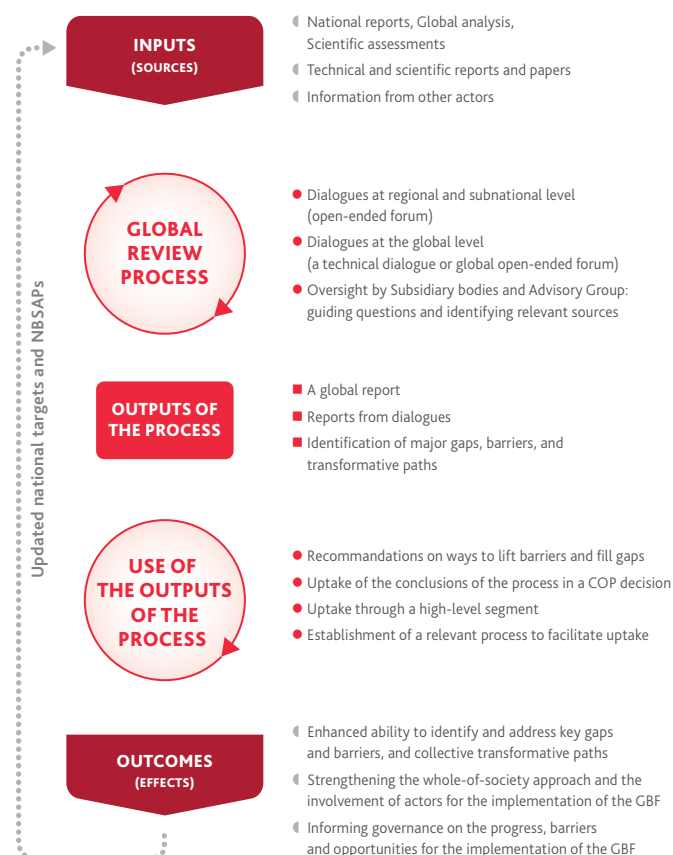
Engaging multiple stakeholders in the review process ensures that the voices of both State and non-State actors are heard. Studies have shown that such dialogues, as seen in the climate Global Stocktake (Peringer & Rietig, 2024), enable more open exchanges, increasing collaboration between all, and refining policy messages. The technical dialogues in the climate regime have demonstrated the potential of such processes to generate productive outcomes. The GBF can benefit from similar approaches, particularly in the context of regional and global dialogues. The current options being considered include the possibility of a technical dialogue. A technical dialogue among Parties and other stakeholders is proposed and would include the sharing of best practices, challenges, gaps, and solutions.

2. HOW TO ESTABLISH A PURPOSE-ORIENTED, MULTI-STAKEHOLDER AND MULTI-EVIDENCE APPROACH?

The discussions within the CBD highlight the confusion surrounding the establishment and conduct of the multidimensional approach for planning, monitoring, reporting and review. Their modalities, how they are working together and the desired outcomes should be specified. The considerations around the most recent component, the global review, involve inputs, components, governance, and outcomes, and its relationship with other mechanisms. This requires considering the hierarchy and logic between them to achieve the desired outcomes. We suggest the following rationale for the construction of this process (Figure 1).

Confusion remains as to the differences between the global report and the global review process in its entirety. The global report should be one component as well as one output of the global review process. The confusion lies in the negotiation text which suggests that the process should be based on national reports, the global report, and other bracketed suggestions including a technical dialogue, and the outcomes of the open-ended forum. However, some overlap with the sources of information for the global report (an output). The open-ended forum

FIGURE 1. What could the global biodiversity review look like? Inputs, process, outputs, use and outcomes



offers a space for Parties to learn from each other. However, for the global review process to be effective, a multi-stakeholder and dedicated dialogue with associated funds and capacities is necessary or could be associated with the open-ended forum process (for instance as an integral part or in a back-to-back manner). Ideally, the open-ended forum should be used as a support dialogue for national planning and implementation and another dialogue in support of the global review. Either way, the global review should not only result in a report and a decision but should also include a dialogue between all Parties and non-State actors involved. Innovations, such as those seen during the technical dialogue of the first climate Global Stocktake (less formal exchanges, mixing Party and non-Party stakeholders, use of focusing questions, etc.) (Peringer & Rietig, 2024), could be beneficial. For the inputs to be robust, strengthening the range of reports will strengthen a multiple-evidence base. This, in turn, can inform the global report.

Challenges in terms of resources and coordination will depend on the formula chosen at COP16 (see Table in Annex on IDDRI's website). Given the importance of the matter, Parties should allocate budget for the CBD to conduct this process until 2026, while Parties and stakeholders should plan to invest enough time and efforts into it. As for the ultimate governance of the process, in any case, reviews from subsidiary bodies would ensure this is a Party-led process, while an advisory group will support the selection of inputs for the process.

Another critical issue is how to approach the 'global analysis', as this will be discussed at COP16. The Secretariat has submitted two working documents: an analysis of ambition within the NBSAPs and an analysis of national targets. However, it is important to broaden the scope to include a more qualitative and quantitative, in-depth reflection on the commitments (not just an inventory of targets), on whether the actions of countries add something new or different, and to include biodiversity-related actions under other conventions, or by non-State actors. There is likely additional relevant data available outside the CBD framework that could enrich a 'global analysis'.

This collective exercise is not about being prescriptive but providing collective guidance and overarching messages for strengthening implementation. The last phase of the process should include the consideration of all the components (the global report, the outcomes of the technical dialogues and other forums, etc.) to determine the signals that will inform on opportunities to enhance ambition and implementation. This will take the form of a COP decision, which could also consider a post-COP17 process to facilitate and support the uptake of these conclusions. It could also be an integral part of a high-level segment at COP17, orchestrated by the COP Presidency.

3. IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES AND GAPS TO ADDRESS BEYOND CBD

Several challenges and gaps may not be resolved at COP16. The tight timeline for considering inputs necessitates mobilization to anticipate COP17 outcomes. Some inputs may already be missing, requiring efforts to fill those evidence gaps.

The current lack of submissions of NBSAPs and national targets poses a challenge for the global analysis at COP16 and may also delay the seventh national report, due in February 2026. This delay risks complicating the global review, which relies on timely input. Although it is not necessary to delay the first global analysis until all NBSAPs and national targets have been submitted, a more comprehensive global analysis should proceed—with a global analysis already scheduled before each COP. The next analysis should also be well-integrated into the global review process. A rolling approach could be developed to allow for continuous updates as more NBSAPs and data are available. Rather than focusing solely on fixed dates for specific global reports, the emphasis should be on fostering a culture of accountability and transparency, where ongoing reports and contributions from various stakeholders help complete the broader picture throughout the implementation of the GBF. It is only when most countries have submitted their NBSAP and/or completed the on-line reporting tool that the analysis of global ambition will be possible and relevant.

Another critical gap is the limited participation of civil society and non-Party stakeholders. Mobilizing major groups could facilitate the submission of "shadow reports" for the global review. However, inviting and coordinating these efforts effectively in time for the 2026 deadline will be challenging. It will also be essential to engage other UN organizations, Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and conventions to mobilize additional reporting mechanisms and resources.

As the timeline tightens for 2025-2026, organizing a global dialogue on progress, key challenges and solutions could be beneficial but would require substantial resources and support, especially for developing countries. To address this caveat, a more inclusive open-ended forum might be a better short-term solution, ensuring broader engagement and laying the foundation for a second global review that could serve as a springboard for the next global (post-2030) framework.

Supplementary material: Building blocks of the biodiversity global review's multidimensional approach and their challenges

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