

Summary of WEOG regional consultations, 9-10th October 2023

This summary is not negotiated nor developed with full consensus and thus does not necessarily represent the views of individual Member States.

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[START]

Area 1: Best Practice

NbS are a crucial tool in tackling the planetary emergency caused by the interdependent phenomena climate change and biodiversity loss. We need to implement NbS now. In particular, practitioners and investors need strong criteria and clear guidance for action, not long reports of compiled examples. Existing reports have ample examples of gains of NbS. (e.g., UNDRR and ILO report). The challenge is to translate the Resolution into an **actionable set of criteria** that define “best practice” that can serve as a reference.

Best practice and their criteria are interlinked. UNEA Resolution 5/5 provides a very good starting point; it can serve as a reference and even a checklist to determine if an approach can qualify as a good or best example. **Without fulfilling all aspects of the definition, it is not considered an NbS.** Any given example can only qualify as a best practice if the case can be supported by data.

To translate UNEA Resolution 5/5 into actionable knowledge, UNEP should be tasked to make existing NbS good practices provided by Member States accessible in a **more comprehensive guide**. The examples will have to be checked if they qualify as good practices in accordance with the UNEA Resolution 5/5. In doing so it should consider providing a **classification or categorisation of existing types/examples** of NbS along an environmental challenge or along its characteristics, such as policy, sustainable finance, environmental benefits, Indigenous initiative. UNEP may consider turning the information in an open access **digital product**, such as the Nature Commitments Platform, in order to allow for analyses and inform global conversations, academic research and policy-making.

Furthermore, to make use of existing examples of NbS for **communication, advocacy and policy-making** purposes, UNEP should consider creating a very selective set of NbS for different sectors based on the best-in-class approach. **Best-in-class** examples fulfil all criteria given in UNEA Resolution 5/5 and show significant overlap with existing guidance on criteria and standards for NbS (see topic 2). The selective set of NbS could take the form of a (digital) brochure, a guidance paper, or a policy brief. Guiding question: what are the **existing “beacons” of implementation** that can inspire and guide others in their endeavour to implement NbS? (The *EU Urban Nature Atlas*¹ can serve as a reference and role model. Indigenous-led NBSs could also be highlighted.) The envisioned selective set of NbS should include statements on how existing NbS have been scaled up or can be further scaled up. **Knowledge hubs and learning communities** could be facilitated through UNEP’s regional offices.

To make a strong (business) case for NbS, it should be emphasized what the opportunities of NbS are. The **relative cost-efficiency** vis-à-vis grey infrastructure and **the multi-effectiveness of NbS** for various aspects at the same time (ecological/biodiversity gains including adaptation and resilience, financial benefits, job opportunities, health etc) deserve a very prominent role in the discourse. This way the conversation about

¹ <https://una.city/>

NbS can overcome the ecological niche and transcend into other policy fields. The relevance of NbS will become more visible and reveal the cross-cutting character of NbS. #endsilothinking

We further note that the social or ‘human’ safeguard elements of the UNEA definition are of particular importance for ensuring that the implementation of NbS respects the rights, leadership, and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples, and yet that these aspects are often overlooked. We therefore note this is one area where Indigenous leadership would help to ensure that people and communities are thriving alongside nature.

Area 2: Standards and criteria for NbS

UNEA Resolution 5/5—both the definition and the paragraphs which qualify the definition—provides the foundational, multilaterally-agreed understanding of what **factors are essential** for the successful implementation of NbS. We believe there is work to be done here, which perhaps UNEP is best placed to do, to **translate this multilateral language** of factors essential for the successful implementation of NbS into a **simple, accessible guide** for all relevant partners and stakeholders, in particular for those who are considering investing in and for those implementing NbS locally.

We also believe there is work to be done, which again UNEP is best placed to do, in analysing existing criteria, standards and guidance – from multilateral fora, such as the Rio Conventions, and other respected international sources such as IUCN – that are relevant to the implementation of NbS and which **have a considerable track record of successful application**. A key purpose of this cross-analysis would be to **identify convergence of existing criteria** and common factors relevant to the successful implementation of NbS. This can be both to complement and signpost further detail for the factors identified in UNEA Resolution 5/5; and to highlight additional factors that can be considered important to the successful implementation of NbS. Such a cross-analysis may include factors that go beyond the foundational understanding within the UNEA Resolution 5/5. This analysis could further strengthen the implementation of NbS.

We recall that the UNEA Resolution 5/5 says NbS respect social and environmental safeguards, including for local communities and Indigenous Peoples, in line with the three Rio Conventions. Relatedly, 2022 saw the inclusion of NbS in all three of the Rio Conventions. As such, we would **welcome increased technical cooperation on NbS** between the Secretariats of the three Rio Conventions, particularly to identify and provide guidance on the relevant safeguards outlined in the Resolutions, building on existing work where possible, and while respecting their independent mandates. We would also **welcome extending this technical cooperation to other multilateral agreements**, such as the Ramsar Convention where in 2022 Parties also adopted a resolution related to NbS.

Area 3: Opportunities and obstacles: NbS and climate mitigation

We see NbS as an approach to work with **nature as an ally** to tackle various challenges. We acknowledge that—amongst others—one of these challenges is climate change mitigation. It can play a complimentary role and it may also be a co-benefit depending on the exact type of NbS. They are not a substitute for the need to urgently reduce emissions. We are cognisant that good examples of NbS do not tackle one challenge at the expense of another. NbS, regardless of their respective objective, should do **no harm to other** objectives. We encourage stakeholders to find ways to **increase transparency how NbS contribute to** climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience, while taking into account past experiences with mal-mitigation and mal-adaption. We acknowledge that NbS approaches currently benefit from various sources of funding, including from existing funds directed at climate action.

Many **NbS are cross-cutting** and are beneficial to tackle a range of challenges simultaneously, such as biodiversity loss and climate change. NbS do have a role to play in bridging the climate and biodiversity agendas. Being mindful of ongoing advanced technical and scientific conversations including between IPBES and IPCC, we **encourage further exchange on the nexus between** biodiversity and climate action and the role of NbS in this. UNEP as a convener could have a role to play in this. Such intensified exchange can help to cross-fertilise the discussions and help **overcome existing silos**. It seems promising to further enrich climate discussions with biodiversity perspectives and explore existing synergies and overlaps (ENACT being an example of an initiative in this regard). We strongly encourage UNEP Secretariat to consider including NbS as part of the MEA day at UNEA6 in Feb 2024. We also propose to UNEP to explore options for including the outcomes of this consultative process in their presentation for UNFCCC COP28.

We are fully aware of the scope of Targets 8 and 11 of the **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework** which reflects the value of NbS for climate change mitigation and emphasise the need to minimise negative and foster positive impacts of climate action on biodiversity. Furthermore, we reiterate that NbS are very relevant for **Article 5 of the Paris Agreement**. We encourage all stakeholders, in particular Member States, to explore what role NbS can play in operationalising Article 5 through implementation of NbS. Additionally, we stress that national climate action and biodiversity policies and planning documents should strive to be aligned in order to avoid conflicting policy objectives. We encourage inclusion of NbS in policy plans with reference to UNEA Resolution 5/5.

Area 4: Policy to support the implementation of NbS

We had a pragmatic discussion on how we can have a more coherent policy on NbS at the national level, based on our own experiences. Some key reflections here include:

- To better integrate NbS into key policy documents and government frameworks, such as NDCs and NBSAPs. UNEP could be **asked to analyse the renewed NBSAPS and NDCs** to evaluate the integration of NbS in these documents. When designing and delivering NbS, it is particularly important to coordinate across national government, as well as with other levels government, Indigenous Peoples and other partners, to exploit synergies. Involving external stakeholders and rights holders, such as the public and private sector, external experts and Indigenous People and local communities, are also key for better designing and delivering NbS.
- To better **coordinate across government, institutional strengthening** can play a fundamental role. This includes encouraging a shift in thinking and attitude across government about nature and potentially viewing **nature as the default solution for challenges to be addressed**. It can also involve making the case for NbS and how it can help to deliver the objectives of individual ministries – from environment to education. It may also be that ministries have already been deploying NbS for a long time without calling it as such. The **development of a “one stop shop”** in government to provide advice on accessing NbS funding, the projects that can be funded, and expertise to help develop interventions may also be useful.
- And finally, NbS can **need long-term political commitment** especially where they require, for example, permanent land use and long-term maintenance and funding. Through better coordination and institutional strengthening across government, as well as commitments in key policy and government frameworks and documents, this may help in securing consistent political commitment. Another useful way to secure consistent political commitment is to collaborate **with Indigenous Peoples and local communities** and actively communicate widely the opportunities which communities derive from the NbS.

Area 5: Measuring benefits and costs of NbS

We believe nature can be the default solution for many of the challenges we face. However, any discussion about the costs and benefits of NbS leads us beyond conventional economic metrics. We need to **consider innovative ways to measure the multiple benefits of NbS** which can be social, economic, environmental, cultural.

We must improve our methods of assessing NbS in the short and long term and the value of ecosystem services in more holistic way if we are to have a realistic reflection of cost and benefits. For example, how do you quantify mental health benefits that may arise from urban green infrastructure? UNEP may be well positioned to lead work on **developing a framework to measure the costs and benefits of NbS in a holistic way**.

We do also recognise the need to communicate the value of NbS to the private sector in a language which they can use to make the **strategic case for investing in NbS** – both in the short and long term. This is important because science tell us that despite comparatively high initial investment costs of NbS, they are in the long run cost-efficient but that some of the benefits come after a long period. Engagement with relevant stakeholders from private sector could help facilitating a more targeted conversation in this regard.

Area 6: Finance for NbS

We recognise the importance of significantly **increasing finance from all sources** into NbS, especially for developing countries.

We note that there are several funds that support NbS which Member States can already access, such as the Green Climate Fund, the Global Environment Facility and the new Global Biodiversity Framework Fund. We suggest including a **list of available funding options** in the Annex of the co-chairs report based on submissions from member states.

We have a few reflections on how we may be able to mobilise additional finance that we think would be useful for consideration.

First, internationally, how do we best **capitalise on organisational and political commitments** to mobilise private finance into NbS? For example, during COP26, multilateral development banks issued a joint [statement](#) which includes commitments to support countries with implementing NbS. Relatedly, in the Leaders Pledge for [Nature](#), which has been endorsed by leaders from 96 countries from all regions and the European Union, countries commit to incentivising the financial system to promote biodiversity conservation, restoration and its sustainable use in their investment and financing decisions. It also includes an explicit commitment to significantly scale up support for biodiversity from all sources, including through NbS.

Second, what **innovative financial mechanisms** can be better understood and promoted both domestically and internationally to facilitate investment into NbS? GBF Target 19(d) identifies potential pathways here, such as biodiversity credits.

Third, how can we better **encourage private and philanthropic contributions** to the Global Biodiversity Fund, which is able to support countries with achieving in the KMGBF, including Targets 8 and 11 (which reference NbS).

Fourth, we think it would be useful if UNEP could **develop a small list of examples** of where private sector finance models for NbS have been successful, including through identifying the conditions of success. It would make sense if UNEP, together with GEF and other multilateral financial instruments, **analyse how much funding** would qualify as NbS (measured against UNEA Resolution 5/5) and assess to what extent the siloed

character of multilateral funds is hampering funding NbS because some of the co-benefits of NbS are not considered (because they may not fit the objectives of that specific fund).

Fifth, we want to emphasize the **need to better re-allocate existing public funds** from grey infrastructure to NbS, keeping in mind the principle of working with nature as an ally.

And finally, in operationalising Targets 15 and 18 of the KMGBF, we need to consider how to better **stimulate private sector demand** into NbS with the vision of achieving a nature-positive future, and eliminate, phase out or reform incentives including subsidies that are harmful for biodiversity.

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