What is ecosystem restoration?

**Ecosystem restoration** is defined as "a process of reversing the degradation of ecosystems, such as landscapes, lakes and oceans to regain their ecological functionality; in other words, to improve the productivity and capacity of ecosystems to meet the needs of society. This can be done by allowing the natural regeneration of overexploited ecosystems or by planting trees and other plants" (UNEP, 2019).

The **objective of ecosystem restoration** is to contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity as well as create social, economic and environmental benefits, whereby healthy and connected ecosystems should contribute to improve food and water security, peoples’ livelihoods and to mitigate and adapt to climate change” (CBD, 2019). Considering ecosystems as socio-ecological areas which deliver multiple functions that benefit a diversity of stakeholders can help to identify the drivers of ecosystem degradation and loss, the existing interests to manage the landscape, economic issues and long-term goals for the ecosystem (IUCN, 2008).

Art 2 of the Convention on Biological Diversity defines an "'ecosystem' as a dynamic complex of plant, animal and micro-organism communities and their non-living environment interacting as a functional unit" (CBD, 1992). The term "ecosystem" can refer to any functioning unit at any scale which is determined by the problem being addressed (CBD, n.d.).

**Restoration** is defined as “any intentional activity that initiates or accelerates the recovery of an ecosystem from a degraded state”; whatever is the form or intensity of degradation (IPBES, 2018). Restoration responses are diverse depending on the type of ecosystem in which they are to be applied (croplands, forests, rangeland, urban land, wetlands, etc.). To enable ecosystems to provide essential functions those responses should consider landscape-level strategies, responding to local and enabling conditions, as well as integrate indigenous and local knowledge (IPBES, 2018; CBD, 2019).

Ecosystem restoration is guided by **principles** adopted by the Parties to the CBD (CBD, 2019). It:

i) Is a complement to and should not replace conservation activities;

ii) Should be consistent with CBD provisions including the ecosystem approach **principles**; and,

iii) Should be planned at various scales and implemented using the best available science and traditional knowledge.

Ecosystem restoration substantially supports the objectives of **international agreements and global objectives**, including the Sustainable Development Goals (specifically Target 6, 14, and 15), the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 (specifically Target 15), the Paris Agreement, the Land Degradation Neutrality goal, the Global Forest Goals, and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

References:


