Global Species Action Plan

- The Global Species Action Plan brings together an outline of the species conservation actions required to implement the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, with supporting tools and guidelines.
- The Plan aims to assist all relevant actors in achieving the species Goal and Action Targets for 2030.
- It is applicable to all levels of species conservation action, from global to local. It is relevant to diverse actors, from international biodiversity conventions to national and local governments, from the private sector to Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities and civil society.
- It is being developed with input across IUCN, including the Secretariat, SSC and IUCN Members, and with strong engagement from Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).
- It will contribute to the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Issue Summary
Species conservation will be crucial to achievement of the Global Biodiversity Framework - not only the obviously critical species-related targets. Given the lack of progress towards Aichi Target 12, the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) needs an implementation support mechanism in the form of a clear "Global Species Action Plan" to assist governments and all stakeholders implement the actions that need to be taken to bring about the sustained recovery of wild species. This document explains how this will be done.

Background
The 2019 IPBES Global Assessment revealed that around 25% of species of animals and plants assessed on The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™ are threatened, suggesting that one million species may already face extinction. Without immediate action, there will be a further acceleration in the global rate of species extinction, already substantially higher than background extinction rates.

Aichi Target 12 called for action to bring about the sustained recovery of known threatened species. Regrettably GBO-5 concluded that Aichi target 12 was not achieved – highlighting that “Species continue to move, on average, closer to extinction”. However, it also emphasised that “the number of extinctions would likely have been higher without conservation actions over the past decade”.

Why was this? GBO-5 concluded that it was not possible to reduce and reverse pressures given that the drivers of species decline have not been addressed sufficiently or at scale (for example by integrating species considerations into multiple sectors, spatial and development planning).

GBO-5 also underscored that work programmes on species conservation (embracing knowledge including tools, conservation planning as well as targeted species conservation action) do exist; but such programmes are not well integrated into the day-to-day business of many government departments.

There is a need to develop a Global Species Action Plan (GSAP) to address this deterioration of our life support system through the essential but often neglected lens of species conservation. It should call for collaborative efforts by biodiversity-related conventions, by state and non-state actors, and society as a whole. Given the crucial role species play in the livelihoods and economies of people everywhere, maintaining healthy populations of species and ensuring the benefits from them are managed equitably and sustainably is an essential requirement to deliver the post-2020 GBF and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The millions of species on land, in freshwater, and in the ocean form the web of life that sustains the planet. Species make nature accessible to people. The multiple roles fulfilled by species include:

- Species and their interactions are the fundamental building blocks of ecosystems;
- Species act as indicators for the intactness, functionality, and health of ecosystems;
- Keystone species, such as pollinators and predators, are essential to ecosystem function;
- Livelihoods and well-being of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) all over the world depend on healthy populations of species and their sustainable use;
- Wild species are the basis of fishing and forestry;
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June 2021

- The wild relatives of crops and domestic livestock are a repository of irreplaceable genetic material for food security;
- Effective management of protected areas including World Heritage Sites, Ramsar Sites and biosphere reserves relies on accurate knowledge of species’ ecology and biology;
- Restoration and rewilding of habitats and ecosystems and their constituent species;
- Ensuring connectivity and movement between species’ populations is central to ecosystem integrity in all realms;
- Genetic diversity is assessed at the level of species’ populations;
- Assessments of species vulnerability to climate change inform future adaptation measures.

Developing and implementing an effective and comprehensive programme of actions to conserve species is integral to securing life on this planet.

Recommendations

The main threats to species are: destruction, degradation and fragmentation of natural habitats; unsustainable and/or illegal hunting; capture or harvest of species; invasive alien species; pollution; increasingly, climate change and ocean acidification. In addition, existing and emerging infectious diseases are having a devastating impact on species, including humans.

There is a need for urgent and effective action to address growing detrimental impacts on wild species from human activities. In addition to a clear and ambitious species goal for 2050, and specific targets on species for 2030 within the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, IUCN calls on the world’s governments and international agencies to develop and support an ambitious programme of work on species conservation.

The good news is that conservation action works! Many species have been saved from extinction or had their status improved. Native species and ecosystems have recovered following eradication of invasive alien species from islands, and habitats have been restored and re-wilded. New technologies provide major opportunities.

IUCN, with its Species Survival Commission, Members and the biodiversity-related conventions and partners are developing a Global Species Action Plan to provide a delivery mechanism for the sustained recovery of threatened and other species.

It will map to the framework, outlining all the existing species conservation actions and resources required to support implementation of the post-2020 framework, with training support.

The GSAP will be a unified plan to recognise the irreplaceable and vital role of species and massively scale-up efforts to conserve all species; to ensure that any use of them is legal and sustainable and not a threat to the health of humans or other species, and that their benefits are equitably shared. Ultimately, action ‘on-the-ground’ is the crucial step in alleviating threats, halting declines in threatened species and improving the status of all species.

Site protection and threat alleviation will be enough to prevent extinction, halt declines, and enable recovery of many threatened species and suites of species, if effectively implemented. However, species at highest risk of extinction may require targeted interventions, for example through habitat management, provision of breeding sites, reintroduction into the wild, translocation, ex-situ conservation (captive breeding), demographic and genetic rescue, and other interventions on-the-ground.

The GSAP will highlight action at global, regional and national levels given that establishing linkages between these levels, and synergies between all actors, are crucial to delivery on-the-ground. It will highlight the key stakeholder groups who will need to take such action.

Additional Information

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