BRIEFING NOTE ON TARGET 8

IN THE FIRST DRAFT OF THE POST 2020 GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

Friends of the Earth International

By Doreen Stabinsky

Proposed revised target 8

Minimise the impact of climate change on biodiversity, ***particularly by reducing emissions resulting from agriculture, animal production, and deforestation,*** *ensure that all mitigation and adaptation efforts avoid negative impacts on biodiversity, and contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation through* ***ecosystem approaches that protect, restore, and enhance biodiversity, while protecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities.***

1. WHAT THE TARGET SHOULD CONTAIN

Target eight is the last target listed in the first group of targets for "**Reducing Threats to Biodiversity**". Therefore, the target should be read in this context. It should clearly acknowledge the threats to biodiversity from climate change itself and from actions that might be taken to address climate change.

The elements of the target should first and foremost focus on reducing these two types of threats to biodiversity. An additional element would include actions that might be taken to mitigate and adapt to climate change that would enhance biodiversity at the same time.

The first and most obvious element of a target should be to reduce the threats to biodiversity from climate change by reducing emissions of greenhouse gases from all sources, including from deforestation and agriculture and animal production.

The second element of the target should ensure that mitigation **actions taken do not harm** biodiversity. The target should call attention to threats to biodiversity from, *inter alia*: geoengineering; large-scale afforestation that replaces forests and other natural ecosystems with tree plantations; and bioenergy carbon capture and storage (BECCS) projects, which will require enormous land areas to be set aside for biomass production.

A third element to be included in this target would prioritize mitigation and adaptation actions that protect, restore, and/or enhance biodiversity and nature's contribution to people. Such actions include approaches for ecosystem restoration and sustainable, resilient, and equitable management practices in agriculture, such as agroecology, agroforestry, and silvopastoralism, which enhance biological diversity in agroecosystems.

August 2021

2. WHAT THE TARGET SHOULD NOT CONTAIN

We recommend deletion of the phrase "*contributing at least 10 Gt CO_2-e per year to global mitigation efforts".*

There are at least five reasons to delete this phrase.

First, the GBF is about ***biodiversity***. The target is about reducing climate-change-related threats to biodiversity. Therefore the target should be worded to reflect actions and objectives for the protection, restoration, enhancement of biodiversity. Carbon is not a metric that can do this.

Second, carbon storage varies widely across ecosystems and is not correlated with richness of biodiversity. Using a carbon-based target could actually incentivize the destruction of species-rich ecosystems that have low carbon-sequestration value. The prioritization of carbon could provide incentives to convert species-rich ecosystems to projects focused on carbon sequestration, such as large-scale afforestation with monoculture tree plantations and/or BECCS projects.

Third, the figure 10 Gt CO_2-e attempts to sum the mitigation potential from two types of mitigation action that **are not** commensurable. The first type of action is **avoiding and reducing emissions** through halting deforestation and adopting alternative management practices in working lands and forest. The second type of action is **sequestering carbon** (sometimes described as enhancing removals) through ecosystem restoration and alternative management practices.

Avoiding emissions and enhancing sequestration are not equivalent processes and therefore **not additive**. 10 Gt CO_2-e is a scientifically meaningless, inaccurate, and inappropriate figure to include, either in the target itself or as an indicator.

Fourth, the 10 Gt CO_2-e figure is derived from a set of scientific papers that measure the mitigation potential of very specific types of actions that take ecosystem protection and enhancement into consideration. It is dangerous to cite the 10 Gt CO_2-e figure without also describing the specific types of ecosystem-based mitigation actions from which the figure is derived, which actually protect, restore, and enhance biodiversity. Specifically, the authors estimate that to reach their figures of 5 Gt CO_2-e of avoided emissions and 5 Gt CO_2-e of enhanced removals would require:

- stopping the destruction of ecosystems worldwide (including preventing deforestation on 270 million hectares);
- restoring 678 million hectares of ecosystems (more than twice the size of India); and
- improving the management of around 2.5 billion hectares of land by mid-century.

Fifth, valuing biodiversity in terms of its carbon is the first step necessary to turn nature into a commodity for the carbon offset market. This should be avoided.