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COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

SUB-COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

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MAINSTREAMING BIODIVERSITY IN FISHERIES MANAGEMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE KUNMING-MONTREAL GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

Executive Summary

At its 35th Session, the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) reviewed the progress made in the implementation of the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors and encouraged FAO to finalize the related 2024–2027 Action Plan, in particular the fisheries and aquaculture actions. It also made specific recommendations to FAO regarding its work on biodiversity, including in relation to fisheries management and appreciated FAO's support to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) process of developing the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

The 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity adopted the Kunming – Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) in December 2022. The GBF consists of four goals for 2050 and 23 targets for 2030 that aim to halt and reverse biodiversity loss and achieve the three objectives of the CBD – the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of the components of biological diversity and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources – following a 'whole-of-society and whole-of-government' approach. The GBF has broad applications to aquatic systems and agriculture, explicitly including the term 'fisheries' in Target 10. While the GBF has a wide-ranging focus, with many interlinkages and overlaps across its goals and targets, it provides limited direction for explicit action of fisheries and agriculture.

This document presents activities undertaken/foreseen by FAO in response to COFI recommendations on FAO elaborating fisheries and aquaculture elements across relevant targets and indicators of the GBF (COFI 35 para 17b). It highlights areas of the GBF that are relevant to fisheries and that offer opportunities to further mainstream biodiversity in fisheries and support the implementation of an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries in an equitable and inclusive way.

Suggested action by the Sub-Committee

The Sub-Committee is invited to:

- note the broad focus of the four goals and 23 targets of the CBD’s Kunming – Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) that are well aligned to policy actions articulated in the FAO ‘Strategy on Biodiversity Mainstreaming across Agricultural Sectors’ and the requirements and interests of fisheries and fisheries management;
- provide recommendations on support needed by Members in the implementation of the GBF;
- encourage Members to engage, as appropriate, in relevant multilateral environmental agreements processes such as the CBD, with support from FAO, to ensure that the voices of fisheries are incorporated, for example in i) defining, prioritising and communicating Members’ planned approaches to implement and report on progress in delivery of the CBD framework, ii) the revision of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), and iii) in the design of indicators and monitoring, evaluation and reporting to measure progress in delivery of the GBF;
- consider how GBF objectives are relevant to deliverables in other frameworks (e.g., SDGs), generating potential opportunities, conflicts and trade-offs among global instruments, and discuss how these considerations can be factored into fisheries management;
- welcome FAO progress on the implementation of the activities in response to the recommendations of COFI35, and on biodiversity mainstreaming in FAO (FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors and Action Plans); and
- review and provide recommendations, as appropriate, on FAO’s planned activities on mainstreaming biodiversity across fisheries (2024–2027 Action Plan and section IV of this working paper).

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I. BACKGROUND

1. Biodiversity for both fisheries and aquaculture is indispensable for food security, nutrition, and the supply of many ecosystem services that support sustainable development. Biodiversity increases a social-ecological systems' resilience to shocks and stresses, helps production systems adapt to emerging challenges like climate change while underpinning fishers' and fish farmers' livelihoods and ability to produce food.

2. In 1993 following the Rio Earth Summit, a multilateral treaty, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was established to respond to the global ambition to conserve biological diversity (or biodiversity).

3. In 2013, FAO welcomed an initiative to act as Biodiversity Mainstreaming Platform¹. To integrate FAO policy and practice for the conservation, sustainable use, management and restoration of biological diversity across agricultural sectors. FAO established a 'Strategy on Biodiversity Mainstreaming across Agricultural Sectors'², linked to action plans (2021-2023 and 2024-2027 Action Plans), that document and overview progress in delivering on biodiversity mainstreaming..

4. At its 35th Session, the Committee on Fisheries welcomed the progress made in the implementation of the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors, adopted by the Council, at its 163rd Session. It encouraged FAO to finalize the related 2024–2027 Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy, in particular the fisheries and aquaculture actions. All recommendations of the Committee have been integrated in the revised 2024–2027 Action Plan (Annex 1).

5. The Committee provided specific recommendations related to biodiversity mainstreaming in fisheries management, including on area-based management, the important role that regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) and other regional initiatives, actions to counter species risk of extinction, involvement in intergovernmental processes to establish legally binding instruments (e.g., sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, BBNJ), plus progressing work on the Global Plan of Action (GPA) for aquatic genetic resources (AqGR) and initiatives to counteract marine debris and litter.

6. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) was adopted. The GBF has broad applications to aquatic systems and fisheries. Several areas of the GBF are highly relevant to fisheries management and offer opportunities to further mainstream biodiversity in fisheries and support the implementation of an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries in an equitable and inclusive way.

II. KUNMING-MONTREAL GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

7. The Convention on Biological Diversity adopted in December 2022 the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) that defines global ambition for people and the rest of nature to 2030 and beyond and succeeds the CBD Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and its Aichi Targets.

8. This Agreement is based on a 'theory of change' comprising two main themes: (i) reducing 'threats' to biodiversity, and (ii) ensuring 'people's needs are met' from sustainable use of renewable resources.;

9. The GBF defines four goals and 23 targets to better link the Convention's objectives to achieve urgent transformational change in safeguarding, restoring, and investing in biodiversity. Some of the objectives are due for delivery in 2030, while others extend to 2050.

¹ FIAP/R1249.

² CL 163/11 Rev1, appendix.

10. The GBF will now need to be translated by National authorities into their operational country strategies, called National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), aimed at guiding national biodiversity conservation and sustainable use efforts and progress reporting to the global community so that collective progress in delivery of the GBF can be measured and shared.

11. Additionally, the GBF and related NBSAPs will influence the actions of environmental interests worldwide, as they try to articulate society's expectations for people and the rest of nature. For example, the GBF will also influence programmatic work of various multilateral agreements (e.g., Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES); Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ)), as well as business and civil society efforts to conserve species and ecosystems.

III. UNDERSTANDING FISHERIES CONSIDERATIONS WITHIN THE GBF

12. This section of the paper provides an overview of the GBF targets most relevant to fisheries and related planned action by FAO to support Members and partners in the achievement of the GBF for consideration by the Sub-Committee.

13. The GBF's 23 targets articulate a broad range of objectives for nature and people — covering ecosystems, species and genetic diversity, equitable sharing of benefits from nature, and setting of the enabling conditions for implementation of the treaty's framework.

14. Opportunities and responsibility for progressing the objectives of the GBF need to reflect the varied views of fisheries stakeholders and fisheries management objectives while at the same time delivering a coherent and unifying narrative on fisheries role in achieving GBF goals and targets. This need is well described in a publication that clearly describes peoples place in the GBF³, and a handbook by small-scale fisheries (SSF) organizations that explains the CBD and its importance to the sector⁴.

15. FAO's work in supporting the stewardship function of fisheries actors, including small scale fishers, will need to be enhanced to support Members transitioning from the previous CBD framework (2011-2020) to planning for and implementing requirements of the GBF⁵. Specific considerations for small-scale fisheries is warranted as they account for at least 40% of total capture fisheries, employing 90 percent of the people in capture fisheries that operate across many areas of high biodiversity importance.

16. Inland waterbodies also merit specific recognition as they support particularly high levels of biodiversity, making mainstreaming of biodiversity considerations in inland fisheries management a high priority.

17. The GBF sets out requirements that are diffused across its 23 targets, and in some cases target objectives appear to overlap across two or multiple targets, potentially making delivery and reporting for Members challenging.

18. As a result, there is a need to “translate” the GBF into sectoral-specific guidance, for example in relation to targets 1-3 (spatial planning, restoration and protection of aquatic spaces). In fisheries, varied forms of formally and informally recognized fishery tenure and spatial governance approaches exist (for example, Territorial User Rights for Fishing, or TURF), which should be considered under Targets 1-3. Translation of the GBF for the fisheries sector can help encourage a broader set of actors to deliver against these spatial management objectives, thus ensuring equity of opportunities and safeguards for

³ <https://besjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/pan3.10403>

⁴ <https://www.icsf.net/resources/why-is-biodiversity-important-for-small-scale-fisheries/>

⁵ <https://www.fao.org/policy-support/tools-and-publications/resources-details/en/c/853709/>

formal and informal user rights, and consideration of a diversity of approaches in delivery of biodiversity conservation.

19. Within Target 2, the definition of ‘restoration’ needs further unpacking, to clearly characterise which forms of restoration are the focus of the target, and what components of an ecosystem can be reported under Target 2. Whether fish stock ‘rebuilding’, analogous to aquatic habitat improvement, be considered as a legitimate approach to restoring ecosystems may need consideration.

20. Within Target 3, greater clarity is needed on the type and level of activity that is considered acceptable within areas characterised as “marine protected areas” (MPAs), “other effective area-based conservation measures” (OECMS), or traditional territories, as Target 3 notes that sustainable use is permitted where it is fully consistent with conservation outcomes. For small-scale fisheries in particular, the expansion of MPAs as a conservation measure has posed some challenges, which are increasingly addressed through more participatory approaches and the delivery of conservation outcomes through a diverse range of spatial management approaches. Using a diversity of spatial management approaches has proven to be successful in achieving sustainable use and conservation objectives while supporting the livelihoods of coastal communities⁶.

21. Species-focused GBF targets aim at reducing extinction risk (Target 4), strengthening safety, legality and sustainability of use and trade of wild species (Target 5), and increase deterrence and mitigation of the impacts of invasive alien species (AIS, Target 6). The overlap both within and across these targets needs clarification and attention. For example, is movement of aquatic species to novel environments due to climate change considered a pathway for entry of non-native species? Answering such questions will help the fisheries sector understand where and how to report on progress against GBF targets.

22. The potential direct (e.g., Abandoned, Lost or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear, ALDFG) and indirect (e.g., use of fossil fuels that influence climate change) impacts on biodiversity by fisheries operations, offer an opportunity to implement actions that can strengthen the productivity and resilience of aquatic systems (e.g., Targets 7 and 8 on pollution and climate change). Due to the wide breadth of potential responses to these targets and the overlap of fisheries objectives with the work of other international initiatives (e.g., UNECE; MARPOL 73/78; UNFCCC), Members can look for cooperation and consistency with other relevant global control initiatives, where appropriate.

23. Policy and practices of fisheries and aquaculture can play a supporting role in delivery of GBF Target 7⁷ and partially Target 5⁸ to help eliminate plastic pollution. The United Nations Environment programme (UNEP) oversees an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) tasked to establish an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, a treaty projected to be in place by the end of 2024. As plastic pollution is predominantly coming from land-based sources, consideration of aquatic sector inputs will likely be just part of the treaty’s content and related action plan.

24. Target 9 and 13, related to the fair and equitable sharing of benefits that arise from use of biodiversity are examples of targets where new definitions, standards, and time-series data are needed to allow orderly measurement of GBF progress and its communication with respect to fisheries. Socio-economic studies on benefit sharing are also needed here, in particular to address existing power imbalances that negatively impact more vulnerable stakeholders, such as Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

25. ‘Biodiversity mainstreaming’, an integral programmatic work of CBD since the 13th Conference of Parties’ Cancun Declaration⁹, is only explicitly mentioned in Target 12 however all sectors that rely on use of biodiversity have a role in the delivery of progress across GBF targets so the fisheries sector

⁶ <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/details=cc3307en>.

⁷ To reduce risks and impacts of Pollution.

⁸ Use, harvesting and trade of wild species, potentially through innovation in design and deployment fishing gear

⁹ <https://www.cbd.int/cop/cop-13/hls/cancun%20declaration-en.pdf>

should still pay close attention to these. For example, targets 10 to 23 have objectives to strengthen sustainability and resilience of ecosystem services across business practices, including for fisheries.

26. Targets 16 and 17 relate to sustainable consumption and actions to increase biosafety. Actions on these targets from the fisheries sector are welcome, as the discussion on fisheries responsibility in progressing GBF targets needs to continue well beyond the point capture, to improve consideration of biodiversity across all steps in the value chain, including in processing of fisheries commodities, their transportation, and in promoting sustainable consumption and limiting of food waste.

27. Lastly, fishery tools and processes need to evolve and innovate over the next decade to improve the enabling conditions for delivery of the GBF package. Fisheries managers will need to invest in their establishment and implementation, and support technology transfer to Members needing capacity building, in order to engage effectively with GBF review processes over the lifetime of the CBD led initiative.

IV. LOOKING FORWARD: FAO'S SUPPORT TO GBF IMPLEMENTATION

28. As highlighted in COFI 35 working paper on 'Mainstreaming biodiversity in fisheries and aquaculture'¹⁰, the 'FAO Strategy on mainstreaming biodiversity across agriculture sectors' inputs and updates articulated in the draft 2024-2027 'Action Plan' (Annex 1), this section provides an update on biodiversity mainstreaming for the period 2024-2025, which includes amongst other tasks, the following:

- i. Articulate and communicate reports by fisheries stakeholders to Members, the CBD community and civil society on fisheries policy and practices that support delivery of the GBF, as well as associated opportunities and challenges of biodiversity mainstreaming in fisheries;
- ii. Support to Members in defining their prioritisation of GBF goals, targets, and indicators considered of particular interest for fisheries research, management, and communication. This will take the form of documenting 'fisheries place in the GBF' through broad consultation and assisting Members in including actions to mainstream biodiversity in fisheries management plans, where appropriate;
- iii. As CBD parties are transitioning their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) to plan out implementation strategies that align to national interest and objectives of the GBF, FAO will publish a systematic examination of past practices in NBSAP formulation, to communicate opportunities and challenges of including management of aquatic food production in the content of NBSAPs for the GBF;
- iv. Within the on-going CBD process of defining indicators of relevance for fisheries¹¹, FAO will: i) assist in facilitating the design of new indicators as requested by Members; ii) promote the use of measures that are conceptually clear, well aligned with the intent of the target, with associated clear methodologies, standards and data requirements to enable regular reporting by countries on progress;
- v. FAO will expand its support to small-scale fisheries actors in their role as resources stewards that conserve and sustainable use aquatic biodiversity, in line with the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines).

¹⁰ <https://www.fao.org/3/nj466en/nj466en.pdf>

¹¹ [CBD/COP/DEC/15/5](https://www.cbd.int/doc/2015/05/CBD-COP-DEC-15-5.pdf)

Annex 1. Selected core action areas, key actions and key deliverables of particular relevance to fisheries in the Draft 2024–27 Action Plan for the Implementation of the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors

Core action areas	Key actions	Key deliverables	Tentative delivery dates	References to decisions	PPA	SDG
OUTCOME 1: Support provided to Members, at their request, to enhance their capacity to mainstream biodiversity						
Support countries in the development and implementation of normative and standard-setting instruments related to biodiversity	Support countries and regional mechanisms in the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) process	Regional Fishery Body Secretariats' Network (RSN), secretaries of regional fishery bodies and related fisheries arrangements coordinated with respect to the BBNJ process, and guidance on the progress of the negotiations shared widely BBNJ projects and programmes financed by the GEF and implemented by FAO	Ongoing	COFI 35 NFI/R1391 (para. 17.h)	BE3	2.5, 14.4, 15.1, 15.3, 15.4, 15.6
	Support countries in the strengthening of legal frameworks that enable the sustainable use of biodiversity, taking into account, as appropriate, the objectives of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) (e.g. the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora [CITES] and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals [CMS]), national commitments to Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT), and international trade requirements	Countries supported in the strengthening of legal frameworks that enable sustainable forest management and timber production for poverty alleviation Countries supported in the strengthening of legal frameworks that enable legal and sustainable trade in aquatic foods and commodities under CITES trade provisions, including with regard to criteria for the characterization of marine species as threatened with extinction	2027	COFI 35 NFI/R1391 (para. 17.g) CITES E19-Dec (Paras 19.5c; 19.62f; 19.136b; 19.223c & d);	BE3	2.5, 14.4, 15.1, 15.3, 15.4, 15.6
Support countries in the collection, analysis and use of biodiversity-related information in decision-making	Collect, analyse and disseminate data and information to monitor the status of biodiversity at all levels, including gender-disaggregated data, as appropriate	FISHSTAT, FAOSTAT, EMPRES-i and other relevant databases regularly updated Biodiversity integrated into geospatial and biophysical data dimensions and planning documents for the Hand-in-Hand Initiative	Ongoing	2021–23 Action Plan; CL 171/4	BE3, BL1	2.5, 14.4, 15.1, 15.3, 15.4, 15.6 2.3, 5.4, 5.a, 5.c
Support capacity development and resource mobilization in biodiversity mainstreaming	Support countries in the development of capacities to develop coherent policy and legal frameworks that integrate biodiversity within and across sectors	Members supported in the development and implementation of national plans of action to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing	Ongoing	C 2021/23 (para. 11.j)	BE3, BP2	2.5, 14.4, 15.1, 15.3, 15.4, 15.6 2.1, 2.2, 14.2, 14.4, 14.6, 14.7, 14.b, 14.c

	Support countries in the development of capacity to identify potential other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) in agricultural sectors, including fisheries and forestry	Practical FAO-led guidance on OECMs provided and a consultative process for their global implementation developed Support provided for the recognition of OECMs within the scope of the GEF8 Indo-Malaya Critical Forest Biome Integrated Programme	2027	COFI 35 NFI/R1391 (para. 17.c) APFC/2023/6	BE3	2.5, 14.4, 15.1, 15.3, 15.4, 15.6
	Support countries in building capacity for monitoring sustainable biodiversity management, including ecosystem approaches	Tools such as the following for monitoring the sustainable management of biodiversity, including ecosystem approaches, developed and adopted: - Livestock Environmental Assessment and Performance Framework for Ecosystem Restoration Monitoring (FERM) - International Code of Conduct for the Sustainable Use and Management of Fertilizers - Sustainable soil management - Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries - Abandoned, lost and otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) and solid pollution especially plastic litter - Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear - Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture - Sustainable hunting management based on field testing in SWM Programme pilot countries	Ongoing	C 2021/21 (paras. 13–14), C 2019/REP (para. 49.b), COFI 35 NFI/R1391 (para. 17j), COFI:AQ NFIAP/R1414 (paras. 22–32)	BE3	2.5, 14.4, 15.1, 15.3, 15.4, 15.6
Improve the sharing and uptake by countries of knowledge, technologies and good practices relevant to biodiversity mainstreaming	Support the sustainable utilization of fisheries resources, including through an ecosystem approach to fisheries management and aquaculture	As part of the newly established COFI Subcommittee on Fisheries Management, technical and policy support for the conservation and sustainable use of fisheries resources strengthened by improving Members' capacity to understand the status of global fish stocks and to implement ecosystem and precautionary approaches Programme established to build capacity and support the implementation of the Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture	Ongoing 2025–2027	COFI 35 NFI/R1391 (paras. 11d; 12c; appen G [1]) COFI:AQ NFIAP/R1414 (paras. 22–32)	BE3, BP2	2.5, 14.4, 15.1, 15.3, 15.4, 15.6 2.1, 2.2, 14.2, 14.4, 14.6, 14.7, 14.b, 14.c
OUTCOME 3: Role of biodiversity and its ecosystem services for food security and nutrition globally recognized						
Facilitate partnerships that support biodiversity mainstreaming between governments, development partners, civil society, the private sector, as well as Indigenous Peoples and local communities	Expand the work of relevant partnerships (e.g. the UN Environment Management Group, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management, the Mountain Partnership, the Global Soil Partnership, and the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils) to increase the recognition of the role of biodiversity for food security and nutrition	In line with the request from COFI, support provided to marine and inland regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs), regional fisheries advisory boards (RFABs) and other regional initiatives in mainstreaming biodiversity in the conservation and sustainable use of aquatic resources Contributions provided to the Biodiversity Liaison Group of the Convention on Biological Diversity (IPPC, ITPGRFA) Workplan 2023–2025 in support of promoting sustainable use and conservation of wildlife prepared by the Collaborative	Ongoing 2023–2025	COFI 35 NFI/R1391 (para. 17a,i) C 2021/23 (para. 17.i)	BE3, BN1, BN2	2.5, 14.4, 15.1, 15.3, 15.4, 15.6 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 12.8, 14.b

		Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management (CPW) implemented				
	Support countries in their efforts to avoid the negative impacts of agriculture and food systems on biodiversity by promoting sustainable practices	Countries assisted to eliminate practices and public policies that are harmful to biodiversity, with due observance of multilaterally agreed biodiversity targets, in order to minimize or avoid negative impacts on biodiversity and enhance its conservation and sustainable use, taking national contexts and priorities into account, and in line with WTO rules and other relevant international obligations	Ongoing	COFI 35 NFI/R1391 (para. 17b)	BE3, BP1	2.5, 14.4, 15.1, 15.3, 15.4, 15.6, 2.3, 2.4, 6.4, 15.2
Raise awareness on the role of biodiversity and its ecosystem services for food security and nutrition in relevant fora	Engage in and co-lead the UN Decades on Nutrition, Ocean Science, Family Farming, Water, and Ecosystem Restoration, support the commemoration of the international years of Camelids (2024) and of Rangelands and Pastoralists (2026), support the commemoration of the international/world days on pulses, wetlands, wildlife, forests, water, bees, biological diversity, environment, desertification and drought, mangrove ecosystems, awareness on food loss and waste, soil, mountains and plant health, and advocate for the mainstreaming of biodiversity and the role of biodiversity and its ecosystem services for food security and nutrition into these initiatives	Annual campaigns and decades relevant to biodiversity held	Ongoing	Relevant UNGA Resolutions on official observances	BE3, BN1, BN2, BN4	2.5, 14.4, 15.1, 15.3, 15.4, 15.6, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 12.8, 14.b, 2.1, 2.2, 12.3