



Key Biodiversity Areas: focussing the post-2020 biodiversity framework

Context

The post-2020 framework offers a critical once-in-a-decade opportunity to address the biodiversity crisis, building on the [2011-2020 Strategic Plan for Biodiversity](#) and its 20 Aichi Targets.

The [IPBES Global Assessment](#) reveals that, despite some important successes, biodiversity has continued to decline over the last decade; we face a nature crisis.

Here we highlight the role of Key Biodiversity Areas as an innovative approach to target and accelerate efforts to halt biodiversity loss, by focusing on those sites most crucial for sustaining global biodiversity. Key Biodiversity Areas offer a blueprint for effectively conserving and scaling up action for our planet's biodiversity.

[Key Biodiversity Areas](#) are sites contributing significantly to the global persistence of biodiversity. They are identified through national constituencies against a [global standard](#). No fewer than 16,000 Key Biodiversity Areas have already been documented in the [World Database on Key Biodiversity Areas](#), in terrestrial, freshwater, and marine biomes. Their effective conservation would significantly contribute to: the persistence of globally threatened and geographically restricted species and ecosystems; the most intact sites on the planet; important congregations of species; and sites that are irreplaceable. The identification process is not yet complete, with further effort in Key Biodiversity Area assessment necessary for many countries, taxa, and ecosystems. Governments can freely access information on Key Biodiversity Areas in the [World Database on Key Biodiversity Areas](#).

Key Biodiversity Areas should be effectively and equitably managed, sufficiently resourced and adequately safeguarded. Appropriate mechanisms for such management include protected areas or other effective area-based conservation measures.

Recommendations

Key Biodiversity Areas focus actions and increase impact of many potential elements and targets of a post-2020 biodiversity framework, including:

1. Ensuring that site-based conservation efforts, including the strengthening and expansion of networks of protected areas and other-effective area-based conservation measures, cover the most important sites for biodiversity.

In the context of a successor to Aichi 11, potential text to be included within a future target could be:

"...the value¹ of all key biodiversity areas is documented, conserved and restored²..."

¹ By "biodiversity value" we mean all biodiversity elements (genes, species or ecosystems for which a site has been identified as being of significance for the global persistence of biodiversity, which should be kept in favorable conservation status.

² Restoration is appropriate when some of the biodiversity value of a site has been lost since its identification as a Key Biodiversity Area.

Such language would complement – not exclude – the potential inclusion of other phrases into such a target. For example,

“...the value of sites of significance for biodiversity, including key biodiversity areas, is documented, conserved, and restored through protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures...”

or

“...the value of key biodiversity areas is documented, conserved and restored through effectively and equitably managed and well-connected networks of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures...”

2. Targeting actions to prevent extinctions, improve the status of threatened species, and halt and reverse species' population declines (the focus of Aichi Target 12).
3. Focusing site-based efforts to halt loss of natural habitats and conserve remaining intact ecosystems (the focus of Aichi Target 5).
4. Targeting efforts to control or eradicate invasive alien species, and preventing their introduction and establishment (the focus of Aichi Target 9).
5. Identifying locations where safeguarding and restoring ecosystem services (the focus of Aichi Target 14) can also contribute substantially to conservation of biodiversity.

Data on Key Biodiversity Areas can be used to track progress towards achievement of targets in the post-2020 biodiversity framework. Possible indicators include:

- [Coverage of Key Biodiversity Areas](#) by protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, which is already used as an indicator of progress towards Aichi Target 11, Sustainable Development Goal Targets 14.5, 15.1, and 15.4, and in the IPBES Regional and Global Assessments
- Proportion of Key Biodiversity Areas in favourable conservation status
- Percentage of species groups and ecosystem types for which Key Biodiversity Areas have been comprehensively identified.

Relevant disaggregations of these indicators could also be used to track progress towards other targets.

We recommend that Key Biodiversity Areas are identified across each country for multiple species groups and ecosystems, and integrated into National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and multi-sectoral marine, freshwater and terrestrial spatial plans, to contribute significantly to achieving the post-2020 biodiversity framework.

The Key Biodiversity Areas Programme includes a [Key Biodiversity Areas Community](#) (of hundreds of people involved in Key Biodiversity Area identification and conservation around the world) and a [Key Biodiversity Areas Partnership](#). These organisations stand ready to support governments and other stakeholders to identify and conserve Key Biodiversity Areas in the implementation of the post-2020 biodiversity framework, as an essential tool for both people and nature, meeting the objectives of the CBD, other MEAs, and the SDGs.

Submitted by the signatories to the Key Biodiversity Areas Partnership Agreement (<http://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/kba-partners>)