

Webinar on “Draft Guidelines for Planning and Monitoring Corporate Biodiversity Performance”

Summary – 28th September 2020

Context

Businesses are important non state actors in the delivery of the biodiversity conservation agenda. A number of initiatives have emerged that indicate that this role is now clearer and more recognized:

- Science based Targets Networks (<https://sciencebasedtargetsnetwork.org/>)
- Business for Nature (<https://www.businessfornature.org/>)

In order to credibly contribute to the Post-2020 GBF and global targets, **businesses will need to implement credible systems to measure their pressures and impacts on biodiversity.**

Businesses committed to taking action on biodiversity, whether to mitigate risks or attain net positive gains, increasingly need information on the state of biodiversity, the pressures on species and ecosystems, and the effectiveness of their responses, in order to plan and monitor their operations.

Measuring performance at the corporate level is also essential in order to effectively and efficiently manage the company's financial and human resources as well as the various risks, affecting biodiversity directly or indirectly.

Increasing regulations on non-financial disclosure are putting more pressure on businesses to identify credible indicators for their biodiversity performance that can be shared publicly.

A variety of business applications have been identified for the use of biodiversity indicators in business.

Reference:

The development and use of biodiversity indicators in business: an overview: <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2018-049-En.pdf>

Many companies strive for a unified picture of their biodiversity performance, especially if they are involved in multiple activities, sites, products or brands, with multiple raw materials and supply chains.

- How can data from so many different sites be aggregated into a meaningful measure of biodiversity performance at a corporate level? How can a unified picture of their biodiversity performance, especially if they are involved in multiple activities, sites, products or brands, with multiple raw materials and supply chains.
- “Biodiversity” can be measured in so many different ways: what dimensions to choose?
- How to account for the biodiversity performance associated to activities down a very long “value chain”?
- Rather than offering a set of “off-the-shelf” metrics, IUCN focuses on guiding the company through a series of planning steps to identify the key “biodiversity questions” that need to be answered.
- IUCN ensures that there is a link with other processes (especially GRI Biodiversity indicators and Science-based Targets for Biodiversity).

Draft Guidelines for Planning and Monitoring Corporate Biodiversity Performance

The International Union for Nature Conservation ([IUCN](https://www.iucn.org)) has issued for public comment the “Draft Guidelines for Planning and Monitoring Corporate Biodiversity Performance”.

The aim of the Guidelines is to support businesses taking action on biodiversity to mitigate risks or attain net positive gains. Experts from IUCN Business and Biodiversity Programme and Species Survival Commission Species Monitoring Specialist Group are developing the guide, working with numerous colleagues in the business and conservations sectors. Their aim is to address the increasing business sector need for information on the state

of biodiversity, the pressures on species and ecosystems linked to their operations, and the effectiveness of their responses, in order to plan and monitor their operations.

The draft Guidelines for planning and monitoring corporate biodiversity performance steer businesses through a series of simple, practical steps to plan biodiversity goals, choose and apply appropriate biodiversity indicators, and collect, present and analyze data in a way that facilitates results-based management and corporate biodiversity reporting. The Guidelines underline the importance of setting corporate biodiversity goals, since planning is a key prerequisite for monitoring. They also explain how, by choosing and using appropriate core indicators and building internal capacity and partnerships, companies can aggregate and use at the corporate level biodiversity data in a meaningful way.

The authors are particularly interested to learn:

- What are the areas that might need further clarification or further work later on?
- Which elements of the Guidelines would be easiest for your company to apply?
- Which elements would be hardest to follow and why?
- Do you have any advice for IUCN on how to make the Guidelines more useful to business?

Reference:

<https://www.iucn.org/news/business-and-biodiversity/202007/draft-guidelines-planning-and-monitoring-corporate-biodiversity-performance-issued-public-comment>

https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/content/documents/draft_guidelines_planning_and_monitoring_biodiversity_corporate_performance_30july.pdf

Q&A

Question: *In the process of developing the guidelines, have you thought about how to link the pressure assessment with business biodiversity dependencies?*

Answer: Generally, we are looking at pressures and people's benefits. You are right that it would be interesting to include the concept of dependency in terms of a company might also want to make sure that they keep track of specific elements of biodiversity being a species, or ecosystems, or a habitat, depending on whatever indicator they are finding in order to track out. Probably, we haven't put that enough accent on that and it's certainly something that we should include in the first stage, and then from the first stage onwards. That is a very good point that we need maybe we have to highlight not only the impact, but the benefit where benefits are for people so ecosystem services not necessarily, they could be for the companies as well, but I think you are right and we have to make more clear that we are also looking for benefits for the company.

Question: *What are you willing to hear from companies interested in reviewing the draft?*

Answer: Any comment in terms on the structure, the tone, the level of detail, if we are missing any important concept would be very valuable.

Also, if any company has examples like if you have been through implementing something like this, it would be great. What we have seen for example with Nespresso and Boskalis, but specially Nespresso in our attempt to set up the system for them basically they were already very advanced. We are retrofitting the process because they have already done a pretty good analysis of what their impact where, they had already agreed on their scope of influence, and somehow, they had already agreed on what are their high-level goals. We kind of retrofitting the first two stages and provided more inputs on the third one which is really trying to figure out a set of indicators that really fits their goals. It is not a generic indicator, but a specific indicator that can also be aggregated. That is the part that we have focused the most.

What we are most interested in hearing from companies is to know how much of this is really used. We hope that they are using this a lot, because our objective wasn't to re-invent anything from scratch but use existing systems such as plan-do check models that companies are familiar with to know how are they using that approach in a way that we can help you create a corporate performance monitoring system.

Comment: There is an increasing number of indicator systems that can be used with this model and of course we also have to think on how to report and disclose all this information because. You mentioned the GRI system, but this system only takes into consideration societal materiality and it does not include anything regarding financial materiality, which is important to companies in terms of knowing how to address financial risk related to biodiversity or pressures on biodiversity. I think this Guidelines will shed light on these aspects that can help companies to improve their reporting, disclosure and management systems.

Question: *I have found the document very lengthy and complex in terms of the use of language, which makes it difficult to follow.*

Answer: This is like this simply because at the end of the day, if we want to reach the level to say something about the state of biodiversity, we will need data. We went back and forward to try to find out how to make it simpler but there is a limit to make it still relevant. There will be opportunities to use global data, and we talk about them in the guidelines at short level to identify priorities and explain how to access data global bases that generally are accessible, for example, through IBAT, but there are a lot other data bases that can provide general information. The assumption is also that at site level there will be able to generate information about specific species, habitats, ecosystem services and that means in order to set up the systems that specialists will be needed, because it is not a metric such as greenhouse gas equivalent for climate change, there will be a lot of specificities that will be relevant if companies are operating in different biomes, in deep sea, or in coastal environment, which are very different. For example, we were working with Boskalis in The Netherlands all the way to the Indonesia, and both environments are very different, so there will be needed to put some specialists at work, at least at the beginning to set it up. That goes with the problem because we are talking about biodiversity. A good database to start from is IBAT that gives information about presence in the proximity to protected areas and species, and also in terms of species if there are pressures in relation to species, if there are key biodiversity areas. This is a good starting point. To dive deeper you also have The Red List which you can access to IBAT will give you information about what are the specific species that are threaten in that area, or region and also Ocean Data Viewer and a number of other can give you information about what are specific biodiversity characteristics.

References:

IBAT https://www.ibat-alliance.org/sample-downloads?tab=reports&anchor_id=resource-header

The Red List: <https://www.iucnredlist.org/>

Data Ocean Viewer: <https://data.unep-wcmc.org/>

Question: *In case a company is interested in applying to participate in the pilot phase to implement the Guidelines, what steps should it follow?*

Answer: What we are now looking at is putting together a set of activities that will make sense and cost-effective for companies. IUCN goal would be to mainstream these Guidelines, so we are creating a phase to promote the use of the guidelines and give visibility to companies that are using them. We all learn from the use of the Guidelines and maybe and this is a test, if we put together a good number of companies of the same sector, maybe we could create even common goals and therefore indicators at a sector level. So is a theory that we would like to test. The structure that we are thinking is to create a coalition of companies that will participate in a number of activities and have access to experts in different expertise that are relevant in terms of marine issues, terrestrial different contexts, etc., to be able to generate as specific as possible reports for the companies. All companies participating will receive a specific report to their structure and their operations and at the same time they will be contributing to lessons learnt and peer-to-peer learning. At the moment we are looking to put together a group of around 20 companies to have enough critical mass to be able to have the experts in a way that we create economies of scales with experts in different areas that can contribute to different companies, but also enough diversity in terms of sectors and maturity in implementing this.