



COP25: Preparing 2020 by coordinating climate and biodiversity ambitions

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What will be the colour of COP25? It was announced as Blue COP by the Chilean Presidency. In Madrid, beyond marine ecosystems, all terrestrial and marine biodiversity should occupy a prominent place. Much more than a simple colouring, this COP should be a major step in identifying capacities for joint action on climate and biodiversity.

A science and policy priority

First, this COP should be marked by the awareness of all stakeholders that the objective of protecting biodiversity cannot be considered secondary to that of combating climate change. The scientific reports prepared over the past year by the IPCC ([Special Report 1.5°C](#), [Special Report on Land](#), [Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere](#)) and IPBES ([Global Assessment of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services](#)) each show from its specific angle the radical nature of the transformations involved in the objective of carbon neutrality and highlight the critical role of the land or ocean sector—and therefore ecosystems—in pursuing this objective, as well as in ensuring our ability to adapt. However, silos remain between the climate and biodiversity scientific communities: decarbonisation scenarios, for example, have so far been developed and discussed independently of their impact on biodiversity. However, by crossing these scientific reports—which is what the [IDDRI Study](#) published today does—it appears that certain decarbonisation scenarios proposed to achieve the 1.5°C objective involve significant risks for ecosystems and for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals, such as the one food security. On the other hand, the preservation of biodiversity cannot be envisaged without an ambitious fight against climate change, which is one of the main factors in its degradation. Climate ambition should therefore be redefined in this way: any ambitious decarbonisation trajectory must also be compatible with the protection of biodiversity and the achievement of food security.

Closely linked, objectively inseparable, climate and biodiversity have also been jointly brought to the same level of political priority by multiple impulses in recent months. At the [United Nations summit in New York](#) last September, in the absence of strong political leadership from the largest countries, the fire crisis in the Amazon and a number of countries that have increased their commitment to climate change, all relatively small countries, but for which biodiversity is an important issue, notably Chile, took centre stage. Although the Chilean presidency is weakened by the internal social crisis that has since been triggered, it will have had time to influence the preparatory work of COP 25, and Spain, which supports it by hosting the conference, is also Chile's partner in initiatives such as those aiming at linking the Ocean and Climate (see [Because the Ocean](#)). The pre-COP in Costa Rica in October, for its part, strongly emphasised the importance of linking ecosystem and climate protection. These Latin American countries thus underline that their socio-economic development trajectories are based on sectors dependent on natural capital: their decarbonisation cannot be reflected independently of their ambition in terms of biodiversity. For their part, the European Union and China, the two powers that everyone eagerly expects to announce increased greenhouse gas emission reduction targets before the crucial COP26 deadline in 2020, have also both become key driving forces in the renewal process of the global framework for biodiversity: France, by

adopting a [biodiversity charter](#), has put biodiversity high on its G7 presidency and will also host the [IUCN World Conservation Congress](#) in Marseille in coordination with the European Union in June 2020, four months before [COP15 of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity](#) in Kunming, China. And the [Beijing Call](#) signed by the Chinese and French presidents in early November once again underlines this dual commitment to climate and biodiversity.

We therefore have reached a stage in the understanding by all actors, as well as in the affirmation of political priorities. But what can this COP bring in terms of action, one year before the two major deadlines of 2020 in Kunming (COP15 on biodiversity) and Glasgow (COP26 on climate)?

What implementation of this priority?

First, since the emergence of the concept of nature-based solutions (NBS, solutions for adaptation and mitigation of climate change based on ecosystem protection), in the run-up to COP 21 in 2015, enormous scientific and technical work has been done to clarify what these solutions are, and to convince countries of the value of including them in the renewal by 2020 of their NDCs (nationally determined contributions) to increase their ambition. All this also requires a critical assessment of the potential risks to biodiversity of some of these interventions on natural environments, and to prioritise these different options: the Blue COP will thus provide an opportunity, for example, to present clear operational recommendations for selecting and including [solutions based on ocean ecosystems](#) in the NDCs, giving priority to interventions to protect these ecosystems (e. g. mangroves, underwater macroalgae forests) against all other forms of degradation (pollution, overexploitation, etc.).

At the national level, it is therefore a matter of including these nature-based solutions in both NDCs and national biodiversity strategies and plans. Above all, it will be necessary to ensure that these climate and biodiversity ambitions are translated into concrete transformation policies in key sectors, particularly those related to natural capital (agriculture and food, fisheries and aquaculture, in particular). Important initiatives by agri-food economic actors were announced in New York in September (e. g. [OP2B](#)): they do pose the challenges of the profound transformation of this sector head on if we take seriously both climate and biodiversity ambitions. They also highlight the importance of public standards and policies to guide these transformations.

At the international level, it will be necessary to successfully organise these transformations of development models in the different territories and economic sectors, in the service of a dual ambition for climate and biodiversity: to this end, the discussions at COP25 will provide the conceptual basis for a shared strategic work programme between the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the CBD on carbon neutrality and nature-based solutions. Such a programme would ensure the coherence of ambitions at national level, which is a prerequisite for their effective implementation. It could also be a politically important component to enable an ambitious international agreement on biodiversity in 2020, which is still subject to many uncertainties, by stabilising expectations of the impacts on biodiversity of different climate action scenarios.

Finally, while sectors, territories and countries highly dependent on ecosystems and natural capital seemed to be slow to enter the climate arena other than by highlighting their adaptation needs in the face of the effects of climate change, the political affirmation of the equal importance of biodiversity and climate could well push many of them, following in the footsteps of pioneers like Costa Rica, to play a pilot role in exploring the profound transformation of development models: given their dependence on natural capital, a change of trajectory towards this dual ambition is beginning to appear essential for their own economic viability.