

Thirty Years after Rio:

Berlin Declaration for the Convention on Biological Diversity 2022

We need more nature – nationally and internationally!

Sustainable and nature-based solutions for the joint protection of climate and biodiversity are possible

Thirty years after the signing of the first International Convention on the Protection of Biological Diversity (Earth Summit) on May 22, 1992, the loss of this unique diversity continues unabated. The decline in biodiversity and increasing global warming are the greatest and most pressing challenges for the future of humankind. Nothing less than our very existence is at stake. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15), currently scheduled for the end of August, offers the historic opportunity for an urgently needed trend reversal in favor of stronger climate and biodiversity protection. Germany will play a prominent role in this process due to its G7 presidency. Science is ready to develop solutions together.

An historic opportunity to reverse the trend

Without rapid, deep, and widespread action, we risk losing a million species and experiencing a 3°C increase in average global temperature over the next few decades. We therefore need clear priorities now to protect and actively manage nature to secure our own future. The scientific facts are on the table. They are unequivocal. For example, the current rate of extinction exceeds the natural loss of species by up to 100 times. Two concrete examples: From 1970 to 2012, global populations of large, well-known freshwater species – such as river dolphins, sturgeons, and crocodiles – declined by 88 percent; as a result, 24 of the world's 26 sturgeon species are threatened with extinction. The annual global economic loss due to the current species extinction is estimated at around 4 trillion US dollars. And despite the immense threat, there is still a lack of awareness, of the courage to act, and of effective implementation by politics, business, and society.

The 1st Earth Summit took place 30 years ago in Rio de Janeiro in the spring of 1992. The 15th World Summit on Nature (Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, CBD COP 15) in late summer 2022, presumably in Kunming (China), must set ambitious, concrete, and verifiable targets for the global protection of biological diversity – not least to achieve the climate protection goals. At the same time, the fundamental societal transformation in how we deal with our natural life-supporting resources must be accelerated.

A central solution approach: dare to allow for more nature

Nature-based solutions (NbS) are inspired by nature. When properly planned and implemented, nature-based solutions are cost-effective and offer multiple benefits for nature, the climate, and humans, e.g., through the expansion of nature reserves or the restoration of peatlands, but also through “green roofs” in cities. They can make an important contribution to climate protection: nature-based solutions are necessary to quickly curb at least one-third of carbon emissions at lower costs and to strengthen natural carbon stores worldwide, thereby still achieving the Paris climate targets by 2030. After all, without protecting natural ecosystems and restoring degraded ones, it will be virtually impossible to keep global warming below 2°C. However, nature-based solutions can only be fully effective if emissions from fossil fuels are drastically reduced at the same time. The focus here is on the 1.5°C target.

Responsibility and opportunity for Germany

Germany bears a great responsibility and has considerable potential to make decisive contributions now toward overcoming the twin crises of declining biodiversity and increasing global warming. To this end, science, business, society, and politics must cooperate much more closely internationally, nationally, and regionally than they have in the past in order to implement the following points:

1. Germany's G7 presidency must be used to ensure that the member states now back up the commitments they made last year "to increase financial contributions to NbS by 2025, maximize synergies between climate and biodiversity financing, and promote financing that has joint benefits for climate and nature" with concrete, ambitious pledges. In doing so, Germany must document its own responsibility to the global South – including through the "substantial" increase already agreed upon in the coalition agreement from the current level of approximately 800 million Euros to at least two billion Euros annually for the time being. In the medium term, 8 billion Euros per year are required.
2. At the Convention on Biological Diversity, Germany must urgently advocate the effective protection of 30 percent of the world's land and marine areas by 2030 and the renaturation of an additional 20 percent. A clear prioritization of the sustainable protection of the most species- and carbon-rich areas on Earth is essential in this regard.
3. Germany supports closer cooperation nationally and internationally between politics, science, business, society, and philanthropic organizations regarding climate and species protection, including through the following measures:
 - The international *Legacy Landscape Fund*, launched by Germany at the end of 2020, is a very powerful instrument for the sustainable protection of the most species- and carbon-rich areas on Earth. It accomplishes this with the close involvement of indigenous peoples and local communities, upholding their full rights. One billion Euros in additional private funds can be mobilized globally if two billion Euros of public funds are invested. Instead of the current seven, up to 100 major protected areas could be permanently safeguarded worldwide for future generations.
 - Germany is committed to ensuring that supply chains are designed in such a way that they do not lead to further destruction of nature in the countries from which the imported products originate. At the same time, with a view to the sustainable use of natural resources, social balance and justice must be promoted throughout the world.
4. To finance such measures, the nearly 67 billion Euros in annual environmentally harmful subsidies in Germany in the areas of transport, energy, agriculture, and construction, around 90 percent of which are classified as harmful to the climate, could be radically reduced or redesigned to be compatible with nature. The aim should be to use public funds in such a way that they have a positive impact on both nature conservation and climate protection.
5. Germany promotes the establishment of a joint IPBES-IPCC working group, building on the first Joint Report on Biodiversity and Climate in 2021. This working group shall develop the strategic framework for the global and national implementation of nature-based solutions, in particular the targets for protected areas and renaturation.

These fields of action will challenge the institutional capabilities, financial and product markets, and technological competencies of Germany and the global community, but at the same time they will strengthen them significantly and sustainably. Germany can contribute a great deal in this regard.

No country is better positioned for this, and no task is more urgent.