

Towards Peace with Nature: An Appraisal of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

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Abstract

This paper critically appraises the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). It argues that the Kunming-Montreal GBF is critical in reestablishing harmony between humanity and nature by fostering sound biodiversity conservation. The paper examines the need for sound biodiversity conservation. It also highlights the salient provisions of the Kunming-Montreal GBF and their role in fostering sound biodiversity conservation. The paper proposes approaches towards effectively implementing the Kunming-Montreal GBF towards making peace with nature through sound biodiversity conservation.

1.0 Introduction

The global community is facing worsening environmental threats including depletion of natural resources, environmental degradation, pollution, desertification, drought, freshwater scarcity, loss of biodiversity, and climate change¹. In light of the mounting environmental and climate crisis, it has been noted that humanity is waging a war with nature². Making peace with nature has therefore been identified as the defining task of the 21st century³. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) notes that it has become imperative to forge a new relationship between people and the planet in light of

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¹ United Nations General Assembly., 'Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.' 21 October 2015, A/RES/70/1., Available at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf> (Accessed on 23/10/2024)

² United Nations Climate Change., 'UN Secretary-General: "Making Peace with Nature is the Defining Task of the 21st century"' Available at <https://unfccc.int/news/un-secretary-general-making-peace-with-nature-is-the-defining-task-of-the-21st-century> (Accessed on 23/12/2024)

³ Ibid

mounting environmental, social, and economic challenges that are prevalent throughout the world⁴. This urgency is heightened by the growing triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution⁵. Making peace with nature therefore involves tackling key environmental challenges including climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution.

This paper critically appraises the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). It argues that the Kunming-Montreal GBF is critical in re-establishing harmony between humanity and nature by fostering sound biodiversity conservation. The paper examines the need for sound biodiversity conservation. It also highlights the salient provisions of the Kunming-Montreal GBF and their role in fostering sound biodiversity conservation. The paper proposes approaches towards effectively implementing the Kunming-Montreal GBF towards making peace with nature through sound biodiversity conservation.

2.0 Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Development

The *Convention on Biological Diversity*⁶ defines biological diversity (biodiversity) as the variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; including diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems⁷. Further, it has been noted that biodiversity comprises not only the world's species with their unique evolutionary histories, but also genetic variability within and among populations of species and the distribution of species across local habitats, ecosystems, landscapes, and

⁴ United Nations Environment Programme., 'The Triple Planetary Crisis: Forging a New Relationship Between People and the Earth' Available at https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/speech/triple-planetary-crisis-forging-new-relationship-between-people-and-earth?gad_source=1&gclid=EAIaIQobChMI5Jf4zjXihwMVr6KDBx2jcx22EAAYASAAEgIqsfD_BwE (Accessed on 23/12/2024)

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Convention on Biological Diversity 5 June 1992 (1760 U.N.T.S. 69)

⁷ Ibid, article 2

whole continents or oceans⁸. According to UNEP, biodiversity is the variety of life on Earth and the natural patterns it forms⁹.

Biodiversity plays a crucial role in fostering Sustainable Development. It has been identified as the bedrock of Sustainable Development¹⁰. Intact and functioning ecosystems are the habitats for human-beings, animals and plants¹¹. Biodiversity therefore forms the basis of existence of life on the planet¹². For example, biodiversity is crucial for human well-being since it underpins the provision of food, water, and energy; it mitigates and provides resilience to climate change; it supports human health, and provides jobs in key sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, and forestry among others¹³. Biodiversity is therefore vital for human well-being since it provides vital resources including food, air, and water which are necessary in supporting life on the planet¹⁴. It has been noted that human health and well-being depends upon biodiversity and ecosystem products and services (including availability of fresh water, food and fuel sources) which are necessary for good human health and productive livelihoods¹⁵.

Biodiversity is therefore integral in Sustainable Development since it plays a crucial role in unlocking many Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including food security,

⁸ What is Biodiversity?., Available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK224405/> (Accessed on 24/12/2024)

⁹ United Nations Environment Programme., 'UNEP and Biodiversity' Available at <https://www.unep.org/unep-and-biodiversity#:~:text=Biological%20diversity%20is%20the%20variety,of%20human%20influence%20as%20well.> (Accessed on 24/12/2024)

¹⁰ Biodiversity- The Bedrock of Sustainable Development., Available at <https://www.bmz.de/en/issues/biodiversity/background#:~:text=Intact%20and%20functioning%20ecosystems%20are,of%20present%20and%20future%20generations> (Accessed on 24/12/2024)

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ibid

¹³ Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity., 'Biodiversity is Essential for Sustainable Development and Human Well-Being' Available at Available at <https://www.cbd.int/article/biodiversityforSDGs> (Accessed on 24/12/2024)

¹⁴ Buttke, D., Allen, D., & Higgins, C., 'Benefits of Biodiversity to Human Health and Well-being' Available at https://www.nps.gov/articles/parksciencev31-n1_buttke_etal-htm.htm (Accessed on 24/12/2024)

¹⁵ World Health Organization., 'Biodiversity and Health' Available at <https://www.who.int/newsroom/fact-sheets/detail/biodiversity-andhealth#:~:text=Biodiversity%20loss%20can%20have%20significant,cause%20or%20exacerbate%20politics%20conflict> (Accessed on 24/12/2024)

poverty eradication, good health and well-being, access to energy, and decent work and economic growth¹⁶. Further, biodiversity also plays a crucial role in combating climate change¹⁷. For instance, ecosystems such as forests, peatlands, farmlands, and oceans and the biodiversity they contain act as natural carbon sinks, providing nature-based solutions to climate change. It has been estimated that nearly one-third of the greenhouse gas emissions reductions needed in the coming years could be achieved by improving nature's ability to absorb emissions¹⁸. Therefore, conserving natural terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems and restoring degraded ecosystems (including their genetic and species diversity) is essential in confronting climate change since these ecosystems play a key role in the global carbon cycle and in adapting to climate change, while also providing a wide range of ecosystem products and services that are essential for human health and well-being and the achievement of the SDGs¹⁹.

Despite the crucial role that biodiversity plays in promoting Sustainable Development, it has been noted that human actions currently threaten more species with global extinction than ever before²⁰. It is estimated that around one million species already face extinction, many within decades, unless urgent action is taken to reduce the intensity of drivers of biodiversity loss²¹. UNEP notes that the world is currently losing species at a rate much greater than at any other time in recorded human history with nearly one million species being threatened with extinction²². The world is facing an alarming rate of biodiversity

¹⁶ Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity., 'Biodiversity is Essential for Sustainable Development and Human Well-Being' Op Cit

¹⁷ United Nations., 'Biodiversity - Our Strongest Natural Defense Against Climate Change' Available at <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/climate-issues/biodiversity> (Accessed on 24/12/2024)

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity., 'Climate Change and Biodiversity' Available at <https://www.cbd.int/climate/intro.shtml> (Accessed on 24/12/2024)

²⁰ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction., 'Biodiversity Loss' Available at <https://www.undrr.org/understanding-disaster-risk/terminology/hips/en0008#:~:text=Biodiversity%20loss%20refers%20to%20the,global%20extinctions%20to%20population%20extinctions%2C> (Accessed on 24/12/2024)

²¹ Ibid

²² United Nations Environment Programme., 'Biodiversity: Our Solutions are in Nature' Available at <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/biodiversity-our-solutions-are-nature> (Accessed on 24/12/2024)

loss which is fueled by factors such as habitat loss, illegal trade in wildlife, invasive alien species, changes in land and sea use, climate change, pollution, and overexploitation of natural resources²³. The global loss of biodiversity impedes Sustainable Development since it impacts ecosystem services including food, clean water, and medicine therefore threatening the survival of life on the planet²⁴. In light of these challenges, it is imperative to enhance the conservation of biodiversity. It has been pointed out that without urgent and effective measures to conserve biodiversity and use its components in a sustainable manner, the Sustainable Development agenda will not be achievable²⁵.

The *Convention on Biological Diversity*²⁶ seeks to achieve sound conservation of biodiversity for Sustainable Development. In order to achieve this goal, the Convention aims to foster the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources²⁷. *United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*²⁸ also sets out the need for sound conservation of biodiversity for Sustainable Development. Under the Agenda, SDG 15 seeks to inter alia halt the loss of biodiversity for Sustainable Development²⁹. It urges countries to take urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity, and protect and prevent the

²³ United Nations Environment Programme., 'Five Drivers of the Nature Crisis' Available at <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/five-drivers-nature-crisis#:~:text=The%20Kunming%2DMontreal%20Global%20Biodiversity%20Framework,-The%20planet%20is&text=One%20million%20species%20are%20threatened,reverse%20nature%20loss%20by%202030> (Accessed on 24/12/2024)

²⁴ United Nations Climate Change., 'What is the Triple Planetary Crisis?' Available at <https://unfccc.int/news/what-is-the-triple-planetary-crisis#:~:text=The%20triple%20planetary%20crisis%20refers,change%2C%20pollution%20and%20biodiversity%20loss> (Accessed on 24/12/2024)

²⁵ Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity., 'Biodiversity is Essential for Sustainable Development and Human Well-Being' Op Cit

²⁶ The Convention on Biological Diversity, 5 June 1992 (1760 U.N.T.S. 69)

²⁷ Ibid, article 1

²⁸ United Nations General Assembly., 'Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.' 21 October 2015, A/RES/70/1., Available at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf> (Accessed on 24/12/2024)

²⁹ Ibid

extinction of threatened species³⁰. Conserving biodiversity is therefore vital for Sustainable Development.

The *Kunming-Montreal GBF*³¹ was adopted in order to enhance efforts towards conserving biodiversity for Sustainable Development.

3.0 The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework- Promises and Challenges

The Kunming-Montreal GBF was adopted at the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The GBF was adopted in the wake of the continued loss of biodiversity and the threat that this challenge poses to nature and human well-being³². It notes that biodiversity is fundamental to human well-being, a healthy planet, and economic prosperity for all people, including for living well in balance and in harmony with nature³³. The GBF correctly points out that humanity depends on biodiversity for food, medicine, energy, clean air and water, security from natural disasters as well as recreation and cultural inspiration, and it supports all systems of life on the planet³⁴. The GBF aims to halt and reverse biodiversity loss and ensure sustainable use of biodiversity towards meeting the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity and enhancing the role of biodiversity in Sustainable Development³⁵.

In order to foster sound biodiversity conservation, the Kunming-Montreal GBF recognises the contributions and rights of indigenous peoples and local communities in biodiversity conservation efforts³⁶. It acknowledges the important roles and contributions of indigenous peoples and local communities as custodians of biodiversity and as

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Convention on Biological Diversity., 'Decision Adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity: 15/4. Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework' Available at <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-15/cop-15-dec-04-en.pdf> (Accessed on 24/12/2024)

³² Ibid

³³ Ibid

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Ibid

partners in its conservation, restoration and sustainable use³⁷. As a result, the GBF seeks to ensure that the rights, knowledge, including traditional knowledge associated with biodiversity, innovations, worldviews, values and practices of indigenous peoples and local communities are respected, and documented and preserved with their free, prior and informed consent for sound biodiversity conservation³⁸. It also seeks to foster a whole-of-society approach towards biodiversity conservation that relies on action and cooperation by all levels of government and by all actors of society towards sound biodiversity conservation³⁹. Further, the GBF requires its implementation to be in accordance with national circumstances, priorities and capabilities⁴⁰.

The Kunming-Montreal GBF also recognises the role of human rights in biodiversity conservation⁴¹. It requires all states to follow a human rights-based approach towards biodiversity conservation respecting, protecting, promoting and fulfilling human rights including the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment⁴². Further, the GBF requires all countries to ensure gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, and reduce inequalities in order to achieve effective conservation of biodiversity⁴³. It also embraces the role of science and innovation in biodiversity conservation⁴⁴. In order to achieve this goal, the Kunming-Montreal GBF stipulates that its implementation shall be based on scientific evidence and traditional knowledge and practices, recognizing the role of science, technology and innovation in biodiversity conservation efforts⁴⁵. The GBF also embraces the role of the young and future generations in biodiversity conservation. It requires its implementation to be guided by the principle of *intergenerational equity* which aims to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future

³⁷ Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, Op Cit

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ Ibid

generations to meet their own needs by ensuring meaningful participation of younger generations in decision-making processes at all levels⁴⁶.

At the heart of the Kunming-Montreal GBF are four global goals that are vital in ensuring effective conservation of biodiversity now and in the future. The first goal seeks to ensure that the integrity, connectivity and resilience of all ecosystems are maintained, enhanced, or restored, substantially increasing the area of natural ecosystems by 2050⁴⁷. The second goal aims to ensure that biodiversity is sustainably used and managed at all levels and that nature's contributions to people, including ecosystem functions and services, are valued, maintained and enhanced, with those currently in decline being restored, supporting the achievement of Sustainable Development for the benefit of both present and future generations⁴⁸. The third goal is towards ensuring that the monetary and non-monetary benefits from the utilization of genetic resources are shared fairly and equitably, including, as appropriate with indigenous peoples and local communities while ensuring that traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources is appropriately protected, thereby contributing to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, in accordance with internationally agreed access and benefit-sharing instruments⁴⁹. Fourthly, the GBF aims to ensure that means of implementation, including financial resources, capacity-building, technical and scientific cooperation, and access to and transfer of technology are secured and equitably accessible to all parties, especially developing country parties⁵⁰.

The Kunming-Montreal GBF is thus vital in ensuring sound conservation of biodiversity. It sets out global targets halting and reversing biodiversity loss, meeting the needs of all people through sustainable use and benefit-sharing in respect of biodiversity, and

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, Op Cit

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ Ibid

mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into national policies, planning and development processes⁵¹. At the core of the Kunming-Montreal GBF are twenty three targets and four overarching goals, aiming to halt biodiversity loss, promote ecosystem restoration, ensure sustainable use of natural resources, and enhance the equitable sharing of benefits from biodiversity among all persons especially for indigenous peoples and local communities⁵². The GBF further embraces diverse value systems and adopts a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach, integrating gender equality, human rights, intergenerational equity, and the connections between biodiversity and health⁵³. Further, it recognizes the role of all countries towards meeting its targets and requires each country to make contributions in line with its specific national conditions, priorities, and capacities⁵⁴.

The Kunming-Montreal GBF has been described as a transformative document that is key towards ensuring peace and harmony between humanity and nature⁵⁵. The GBF is key in catalyzing, enabling, and galvanizing urgent and transformative action to halt and reverse biodiversity loss⁵⁶. It has been noted that the goals and targets of the GBF are designed to work as an integrated whole, reflecting the same principle of indivisibility embodied in the SDGs⁵⁷.

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, Op Cit

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ United Nations Environment Programme., 'Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework' Available at <https://www.unep.org/resources/kunming-montreal-global-biodiversity-framework#:~:text=Four%20overarching%20goals%20to%20be,of%20%24700%20billion%20per%20year> (Accessed on 24/12/2024)

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ Wildlife Conservation Society Canada., 'Connecting Canada's 2030 Nature Strategy to the Global Biodiversity Framework' Available at <https://wcscanada.org/newsroom/stories/the-goals-and-targets-of-the-kunming-montreal-biodiversity-framework-kmgbf/#:~:text=Target%207%3A%20Reduce%20pollution%20risks,least%20half%20including%20through%20more> (Accessed on 24/12/2024)

It has been noted that the Kunming-Montreal GBF is vital in achieving the international vision of ‘nature positive’⁵⁸. The concept of nature positive is a global goal to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030 and achieve full recovery by 2050⁵⁹. This concept recognizes the value of nature, places it on the path to recovery and seeks to transform the world to one where people, economies and nature thrive⁶⁰. Achieving the ideal of nature positive is therefore vital in ensuring peace between humanity and nature. The Kunming-Montreal GBF is fundamental towards achieving a nature positive world by halting and reversing biodiversity loss towards ensuring the health of both nature and humanity⁶¹.

The Kunming-Montreal GBF is thus vital in the quest towards peace with nature. It sets out the need for urgent and transformative action with the aim of halting global biodiversity loss and restoring biodiversity by 2030 with the ultimate goal of living in harmony with nature by 2050⁶². In addition to halting biodiversity loss, the GBF also focuses on securing nature’s services for humans, equitably sharing the benefits of biodiversity use, and the financing needed to meet the targets⁶³.

Despite the global community adopting the Kunming-Montreal GBF, it has been noted that the drivers of biodiversity loss are worsening and biodiversity continues to decline

⁵⁸ Nature Positive: A Summit and a Stand Off., Available at <https://www.edo.org.au/2024/11/04/nature-positive-a-summit-and-a-stand-off/#:~:text=Nature%20positive%20means%20halting%20and,achieving%20full%20recovery%20by%202050> (Accessed on 24/12/2024)

⁵⁹ Climate Champions., ‘Nature Positive for Climate Action’ Available at <https://climatechampions.unfccc.int/system/nature-positive-for-climate-action/> (Accessed on 24/12/2024)

⁶⁰ Nature Positive Initiative., ‘A Global Goal for Nature’ Available at <https://www.naturepositive.org/> (Accessed on 24/12/2024)

⁶¹ World Wildlife Fund., ‘Nature in Crisis- A WWF Briefing for Policymakers’ Available at https://wwflac.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/policy_lpr.pdf (Accessed on 24/12/2024)

⁶² International Union for Conservation of Nature., ‘The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework: what will happen at COP16?’ Available at <https://www.iucn.nl/en/blog/the-kunming-montreal-global-biodiversity-framework-what-will-happen-at-cop16/#:~:text=The%20KM%2DGBF%20contains%2023,harmony%20with%20nature%20by%202050> (Accessed on 24/12/2024)

⁶³ Ibid

all over the world⁶⁴. Further, it has been noted that progress towards achieving the targets set out in the GBF has been variable⁶⁵. It has been pointed out that a few targets under the GBF have seen focused and collaborative action, but many of the more general and some quantifiable targets appear to have made little progress and lack coordinated institutional support. On this basis, it is imperative to accelerate implementation of the Kunming-Montreal GBF towards peace with nature⁶⁶.

4.0 Conclusion

Achieving peace with nature has become an urgent global priority in light of mounting environmental problems including the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution⁶⁷. These challenges are a key threat to sustainability and threaten the well-being of both current and future generations⁶⁸. As a result, making peace with nature has been identified as the defining task of the 21st century⁶⁹. At the core of this ideal is tackling the interlinked challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution.

The Kunming-Montreal GBF is a key instrument towards peace with nature. It sets out twenty three targets and four overarching goals, aiming to halt biodiversity loss, promote ecosystem restoration, ensure sustainable use of natural resources, and enhance the equitable sharing of benefits from biodiversity among all persons especially for indigenous peoples and local communities⁷⁰. The GBF is a transformative document that

⁶⁴ International Union for Conservation of Nature., 'Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework' Available at <https://iucn.org/resources/issues-brief/kunming-montreal-global-biodiversity-framework#:~:text=The%20GBF%20must%20be%20implemented,USD%20200%20billion%20per%20year> (Accessed on 24/12/2024)

⁶⁵ Institute for European Environmental Policy., 'Progress on implementing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework' Available at <https://ieep.eu/publications/progress-on-implementing-the-kunming-montreal-global-biodiversity-framework/> (Accessed on 24/12/2024)

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ United Nations Environment Programme., 'The Triple Planetary Crisis: Forging a New Relationship Between People and the Earth' Op Cit

⁶⁸ Ibid

⁶⁹ United Nations Climate Change., 'UN Secretary-General: "Making Peace with Nature is the Defining Task of the 21st century" Op Cit

⁷⁰ Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, Op Cit

is key towards ensuring peace and harmony between humanity and nature by securing a nature-positive future⁷¹. It is therefore vital to accelerate implementation of the Kunming-Montreal GBF towards peace with nature. This involves actions ranging from restoring degraded ecosystems globally, sustainable management and utilisation of land, inland water, marine and coastal ecosystems, reducing species extinction and risks from pesticides and pollution, as well as the sustainable management of wild species and of areas under agriculture, fisheries and forestry as envisaged under the GBF⁷². Reducing the threat of invasive alien species is also vital in tackling their impact on biodiversity and ecosystems⁷³. Capacity building including through resource mobilisation, and technical and scientific cooperation is also key in ensuring effective implementation of the Kunming-Montreal GBF towards sound biodiversity conservation⁷⁴. The Kunming-Montreal GBF also urges all countries to embrace a whole-of-society approach towards sound biodiversity conservation⁷⁵. It is therefore vital to foster the participation of all sectors of the society including the government, private sector, women, the youth, indigenous peoples and local communities for sound biodiversity conservation⁷⁶.

The Kunming-Montreal GBF is a landmark document towards peace with nature. Accelerating action across sectors and society toward the realization of the goals and targets of the Kunming-GBF is therefore an urgent priority in addressing the key drivers of biodiversity loss towards a nature positive future. It is therefore crucial to implement the Kunming-Montreal GBF towards peace with nature.

⁷¹ World Wildlife Fund., 'Nature in Crisis- A WWF Briefing for Policymakers'

⁷² Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, Op Cit

⁷³ Ibid

⁷⁴ Ibid

⁷⁵ Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, Op Cit

⁷⁶ Ibid

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