Quick guide to the
Aichi Biodiversity Targets
Habitat loss halved or reduced

By 2020, the rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests, is at least halved and where feasible brought close to zero, and degradation and fragmentation is significantly reduced.

Habitat loss, including degradation and fragmentation, is the most important cause of biodiversity loss globally. Natural habitats in most parts of the world continue to decline in extent and integrity, although there has been significant progress to reduce this trend in some regions and habitats. Reducing the rate of habitat loss, and eventually halting it, is essential to protect biodiversity and to maintain the ecosystem services vital to human wellbeing.

Explanation of the Target

This target refers to **all natural habitats, including forests**. The emphasis of this target should be on preventing the loss of high-biodiversity value habitats, such as primary forests, many wetlands and corral reefs, and of ecosystems where continued loss risks passing "tipping points" that could lead to large scale negative effects on human well-being.

Achieving this target requires that:

• The rate of loss of all natural habitats **is at least halved and where feasible brought close to zero** - Depending on the habitat being considered and national circumstances it may be possible to halt the loss of a given habitat. This would be particularly important in those cases where very little of a habitat remains and further loss would mean it would be completely lost, or cases where further loss would lead to a risk of crossing "tipping points". However for some habitats, in some countries, it will not be feasible to halt all loss by 2020 given other socio-economic needs. In these cases the aim should be to at least halve the rate of loss.

• **Degradation and fragmentation** of natural habitats is **significantly reduced** – The condition of natural habitats is important for biodiversity. Habitats which are highly degraded or fragmented are less likely to be able to support their full compliment of species or provide the same level of ecosystem services provided by intact habitats.

Implications for setting national targets

Globally most natural habitats are in state of decline. While economic, demographic and social pressures are likely to mean continued habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation, particularly due to land use change beyond 2020, the rate of change needs to be substantially reduced. Ultimately, there must be limits to the conversion or degradation of natural habitats.

For a variety of reasons it may be necessary to set different targets for different types of natural ecosystems. For some habitats there may be so little remaining that continued loss would risk a habitat disappearing all together. In these cases highly ambitious targets, such as completely halting habitat loss, may be warranted. Conversely for some relatively large and pristine ecosystems further loss, if limited and appropriately managed, may be considered acceptable from a variety of socio-economic and environmental reasons. In these cases a target of reducing habitat loss by 50% or more may be more appropriate. In addition, reducing the rate of habitat loss in some ecosystems will be easier than in others so while it may be possible to halt habitat loss in one type of habitat in others a more realistic target may be to reduce the rate of loss by a certain amount.

As a variety of habitats usually exist in a country, setting a target for each and every habitat type may not be realistic given the available resources. In such cases focusing on a few key habitats which are of, strategic, national, global or ecological significance may offer a way forward. The same would also apply to any targets set in relation to fragmentation or degradation. Ultimately any national targets which are set in relation to this target should be seen as a step towards ultimately halting the loss of natural habitats at a level where habitats are still able of supporting their full range of species and of providing ecosystem services.

Convention on Biological Diversity

UNEP

www.cbd.int/sp

Aichi Biodiversity Target 5

Guiding questions for setting national targets

What are the major habitats in the country? What are the areas of importance for biodiversity, ecosystem services and human wellbeing?

What is the condition of the natural habitats in the country? What is the size of the different habitats present? Which habitats are degraded? Which habitats are fragmented?

What are the current rates of loss for each habitat? Which habitats are decreasing the quickest? Which habitats are increasing? Which habitats have the least/most amount left? Does further loss of some habitats risk passing tipping points?

What are the main causes of habitat loss? What factors are driving or causing this loss? Which are the easiest to address?

What are the opportunities and constraints in reducing habitat loss, generally and by habitat? Consider potential ecological, economic, and social costs and benefits of reducing habitat loss in specific habitats. How may these justify higher or lower figures for a national target than for the global target?

Who are the stakeholders that may be affected by efforts to reduce habitat loss? How can they be involved and their needs addressed? What are the trade-offs to consider?

What additional resources (financial, human and technical) will be required to reach the national target that is set? How can additional funds be raised? What are possible funding sources?

Note that, given the particular national circumstances, national targets may be more specific and more precise than the global target. Further national targets should be ambitious but realistic and be supportive of the Strategic Plan by moving beyond business as usual.

Actions and milestones

Actions taken to achieve this target should be guided by the programmes of work on forest, marine and coastal, inland water and dry and sub-humid lands biodiversity and the Convention's work on sustainable use. There are a variety of ways the rate of habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation could be reduced depending on national circumstances and priorities. Reduction in the loss and degradation of natural habitats through land use change could be achieved through improvements in production efficiency and land use planning, and enhanced mechanisms for natural resource governance combined with greater enforcement of such policies. Further the greater recognition of the economic and social value of ecosystem services provided by natural habitats such as, catchment value (water provision), erosion control, the value of carbon sequestration by forests and wetlands, and other ecosystem services (such as denitrification by wetlands) provide contemporary incentives for reducing the net loss of these habitats, and reversing their decline. Taking a landscape-wide perspective to land use planning offers a useful way to integrate global level ecosystem services (e.g., climate change mitigation) with local level ones (e.g., biodiversity conservation, water supply and quality, timber and non-timber forest products).

Possible indicators

- Trends in proportion of degraded/threatened habitats
- Trends in extent of selected biomes, ecosystems and habitats
- Trends in condition and vulnerability of ecosystems
- Trends in fragmentation of natural habitats
- Population trends of habitat dependent species in each major habitat type

Resources

- Thematic programmes of work of the Convention on Biological Diversity - www.cbd.int/programmes/

United Nations Decade on Biodiversity