



# Missionary Society of St. Columban

## **Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework Statement & Policy Recommendations by the Missionary Society of St. Columban**

To the Co-chairs and Negotiators of the  
Third Open-ended Working Group on the Post 2020-Global Biodiversity Framework  
20 August 2021

Francis Ogwal and Basile van Havre, Co-Chairs  
Distinguished Negotiators,  
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Missionary Society of St. Columban is an international Catholic organization of priests and laypeople. For over one hundred years, we have worked alongside some of the world's most vulnerable populations to climate change and biodiversity loss, including indigenous communities in Chile and Peru, the Philippines, Myanmar, Taiwan, Fiji, and Pakistan. We have lived in coastal communities suffering from sea-level rise, in deserts where communities live with water scarcity, and in communities suffering from massive logging and deforestation.

We believe that all people are called to be in right relationship with all of life, which includes mutual care and respect for our interconnectedness. We know that COP15 is a critical opportunity for global leaders to take transformative action to help make this future a reality.

We offer the following policy recommendations to the First Draft of the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework (hereafter referred to as the "Framework") starting on page 2, which reflect the voices of the communities where we live and serve. We offer these recommendations hoping that the cry of the earth and the cries of the people will be heard in negotiations and that decisions will be made to bring our common home into greater health and well-being.

For a more complete description of our concerns, please see the full text starting on page 5.

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Peru ■ Philippines ■ Taiwan ■ United States

## Policy Recommendations to the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework by the Missionary Society of St. Columban

**National Accountability:** We are disturbed that all of the 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets from the 2011-2020 Strategic Plan for Biodiversity were unmet. It is imperative that strong and legally enforceable legislation is in place to ensure progress in protecting the natural environment and addressing emerging threats.

Original Text	Recommendations
<p><i>Section G, Target 14</i> ... ensuring that all activities and financial flows are aligned with biodiversity values.</p>	<p>We recommend amending to Target 14 the following: “aligned with biodiversity values <b>and that all biodiversity targets are legally enforceable in each jurisdiction.</b>”</p>

**Conservation:** Conserve, protect, and defend the land, sea, and their inhabitants is the daily work of millions of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Governments need to support and expand these efforts.

Original Text	Recommendations
<p><i>Section G, Target 3</i> Ensure that at least 30 percent globally of land areas and of sea areas ...</p>	<p>We recommend changing “at least 30 percent” to “<b>at least 50 percent of land areas and of sea areas not already managed by indigenous communities.</b>”</p>

**Production and Extraction:** Our extractivist economy disproportionately benefits the world’s wealthy minority, while most of the world’s people and the environment are left on the margins.

Original Text	Recommendations
<p><i>Section G, Target 8</i> Minimize the impact of climate change on biodiversity ...</p>	<p>We recommend amending to Target 8 the following: “minimize the impacts of climate change on biodiversity, <b>phase out global fossil fuel extraction by 2040 ...</b>”</p>
<p><i>Section G, Target 14</i> Fully integrate biodiversity values into policies, regulations, planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies, accounts, and assessments of environmental impacts at all levels of government and across all sectors of the economy, ensuring that all activities and financial flows are aligned with biodiversity values.</p>	<p>We recommend that Target 14 clearly outlines how governments and businesses will be held accountable to integrating biodiversity values into their decision making and projects.</p>

<p><i>Section G, Target 15</i> All businesses (public and private, large, medium and small) assess and report on their dependencies and impacts on biodiversity ...</p>	<p>We recommend amending to Target 15 the following: “report on their dependencies and impacts on biodiversity <b>and the impact on the local community’s ability to benefit from their local biodiversity ...</b>”</p>
<p><i>Section G, Target 9</i> ... protecting customary sustainable use by indigenous peoples and local communities.</p>	<p>We recommend amending to Target 9 the following: “and local communities, <b>and financing reparations to communities historically uprooted by extractive projects.</b>”</p>
<p><i>Section G, “2. Meeting people’s needs through sustainable use and benefit-sharing”</i></p>	<p>We recommend adding a Target that recognizes the reality that certain industries - like the fossil fuel industry - can never be managed sustainably in alignment with international biodiversity conservation goals and should be ended. This new Target should commit to providing financial and educational support that makes it possible for workers and communities who rely on these industries to transition to more sustainable ones.</p>

**Militarism:** Every year governments spend billions of dollars on the research, development, and implementation of more deadly and sophisticated ways of killing people and destroying the environment.

<b>Original Text</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
<p><i>Section G, “1.Reducing threats to biodiversity”</i></p>	<p>We recommend adding a Target that seeks to minimize the impact of military infrastructure on biodiversity, particularly sensitive and landmark ecosystems.</p>

**Enfranchising Indigenous Communities:** As a faith-based organization, we believe local voices and marginalized communities offer critical perspectives for developing greater protections for the planet, its people, and future generations. This is especially true of Indigenous Peoples and we endorse the full and effective participation of Indigenous communities in drafting and implementing the framework.

<b>Original Text</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
<p><i>“D. Theory of Change”</i></p>	<p>We recommend adding a subsection that states unequivocally the need to ensure equitable participation of Indigenous Peoples in the development, adoption, and governance of international agreements, based on inherent rights to their lands, territories and resources, in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People 2007.</p>

**Environmental Human Rights Defenders:** In our contemporary world, we recognize the growing number of eco-prophets who, because of their complete dedication to defending life, become eco-martyrs. The lives taken in the name of profit, extraction, consumption, and the accumulation of wealth cannot be simply defined as casualties of growth and development.

Original Text	Recommendations
<p><i>Section G, Target 21</i>            Ensure equitable and effective participation in decision-making related to biodiversity by indigenous peoples and local communities ...</p>	<p>We recommend amending to this Target the following: "biodiversity indigenous peoples, local communities, <b>and environmental human rights defenders...</b>"</p>
<p><i>Section K, Subsection 21.A</i>            ... including the associated knowledge, values and approaches used by indigenous peoples and local communities;</p>	<p>We recommend amending to this subsection the following: "used by indigenous peoples, local communities, <b>and environmental human rights defenders.</b>"</p>

**Forced Migration:** Everyday people are forced to migrate due to ecosystem degradation and the impacts of climate change, including Indigenous Peoples who rely on local environments for their livelihoods. In other situations where local sources of income are depleted due to environmental degradation, people are forced to move to urban areas where social conflicts increase, leading to violence and disintegration of solidarity networks.

Original Text	Recommendations
<p><i>Section G, "2. Meeting people's needs through"</i></p>	<p>We recommend adding a Target that affirms that people have the right to refugee and asylum status because of environmental factors and supports giving these populations access to this lifesaving protection.</p>

## **Full Statement on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework & COP15 by the Missionary Society of St. Columban**

COP15 comes at a critical time for global leaders to decide collectively for a better future for the planet and its people. It is imperative to halt the destruction of biodiversity and shape a vision and action plan to safeguard nature, build stronger, healthier and safer communities, and develop sustainable economies. The Missionary Society of St. Columban urges that the unparalleled depth and breadth of understanding about the status and trends of biodiversity assembled by scientists, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities in recent years is seized to inform this work moving forward. As an international Catholic organization, we are committed to engaging with our international partners on the agenda of COP15 in that it relates integrally to our mission.

### **About the Missionary Society of St Columban**

For over one hundred years, we as Catholic missionaries have left our homelands to live and work alongside people living in poverty and Indigenous communities around the world. Everyday we see close-up the devastating impacts of the loss of biodiversity, the collapse of ecosystems, and climate change on communities who contribute least to these problems and whose natural resources are exploited and destroyed for the benefit of others. Columbans are a voice for transformation by providing humanitarian assistance and accompanying communities in their struggle to care for the environment, protect their livelihoods, and participate fully in society. We support people who have been excluded in society to tell their own stories, and through education and advocacy, work for structural change to address the root causes of injustice. Our experience has taught us that an economic and social order that collaborates mutually with creation is necessary for the care and protection of all of life. Pope Francis addressed the United Nations on World Environment Day and the opening of the Decade for Ecosystem Restoration saying, "We cannot pretend to be healthy in a world that is sick...The wounds inflicted on our mother earth are wounds that also bleed in us."

At all levels within the Catholic Church, Columbans contribute to realizing a vision for an integrated response to today's urgent environmental challenges, as articulated in Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical letter *Laudato Si': On Care for our Common Home*. The Pope's vision has received widespread attention and response from faith communities and civil sectors worldwide. Columbans are a participating organization in the Holy See's development and implementation of a global movement to bring *Laudato Si'* to life known as the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform, which will formally launch in October 2021. This plan invites Catholics and Catholic organizations to participate in a journey of transformation and concrete action towards living sustainably with creation. We believe that people everywhere care deeply about the natural environment and are very concerned that more needs to be done to preserve it.

Columbans work collaboratively in grassroots action worldwide to address biodiversity loss and its impacts on communities. For example, in the Philippines, Columbans work closely with the Indigenous People on the island of Mindanao. Through our network, we provide international support, research studies (such as the [Food or Mining? Report](#)), and provide platforms for Indigenous People to voice their opposition against deforestation and against extractive industries.

In Pakistan, which spans four of Earth's ten biomes (desert, temperate grassland, tropical seasonal forest, and mountain), Columbans are responding to the environmental crisis through community engagement, educational workshops, and environmental restoration events.

Pakistan is rich in biodiversity across its ecological regions, including the coastal mangrove forests of the Arabian Sea as well as some of the highest mountains in the world, where the western Himalayas, Hindu-Kush, and Karakoram ranges meet. However, that has been changing. Species are approaching critical stages of extinction due to over-exploitation and loss of natural habitat. Driving factors include rapid human population growth, increasing poverty forcing rural people to exploit biodiversity at unsustainable rates, deforestation, over-grazing, damage to the soil, desertification, and chemical pollution. Pakistan also faces enormous challenges from climate change. It is listed as the fifth most vulnerable country in the world during the period 1999-2018, according to Germanwatch Global Climate Risk Index 2020. During that period, Pakistan experienced 152 extreme weather events, leading directly to deaths and billions of dollars worth of economic loss.

The situation in the Philippines and Pakistan are only two of the many examples that inform the Missionary Society of St. Columban's commitment to protecting biodiversity.

### **Observations about the Intergovernmental Response to Biodiversity Loss**

Since the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, there has been an international agreement on the need to conserve biological diversity, sustainably use its resources, and share its benefits equitably across the globe. Despite agreed international obligations and the growth in scientific understanding, biodiversity loss and the degradation of ecosystems is escalating at an unprecedented rate and is a major threat to all life on Earth. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform's Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystems Services (IPBES 2019) Part C identified that despite some achievements, based on current trajectories, negative trends are projected to continue.

Columban Missionaries are disturbed that many of the 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets of the 2011-2020 Strategic Plan for Biodiversity were unmet, as identified in the Global Biodiversity Outlook 5 Report. These include the continued decline in biodiversity in land and seascapes used to provide and produce food, high rates of degradation in biodiversity-rich ecosystems, and species continuing to move towards extinction. Evidence in the reports must be reflected in the Framework, set to be adopted at COP15. The Framework must address the scale and urgency required to address root causes, reverse current trends, and conserve biodiversity. As the United Nations Summit on Biodiversity in New York 2020 affirmed, "halting biodiversity loss is a common goal of humanity." This goal is central for achieving progress in most of the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by all member states in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Covid-19 pandemic further illustrates the need to address imbalances in the relationship between the health of humans, animals, and ecosystems with multi-sector collaboration. There must be a global consensus about the economic recovery based on sustainable models to address inequities exacerbated by the pandemic and ensure there is no further exploitation of impoverished communities and nature.

Columbans commend the work of the Convention on Biological Diversity in setting goals, policies, and responsibilities for its members. As the ultimate authority of the Convention, it is critical that the Framework to be adopted at COP15 be ambitious and radically inclusive in its outlook, priorities, and commitments. We believe new ways of thinking about and valuing global relationships at all levels is fundamental to genuine dialogue and planning.

As a faith-based organization, we believe local voices and marginalized communities offer critical

perspectives for developing greater protections for the planet, its people, and future generations. Columbans endorse the recognition of gender equality, women's empowerment, and youth and gender-responsive approaches, and the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities as outlined in the Framework.

The following observations about the Framework reflect the voices of the communities where we live and serve. We offer them hoping that the cry of the earth and the cries of the people will be heard in negotiations and that decisions will be made to bring our common home into greater health and well-being.

### **Ambition of the Framework**

Columbans urge that the Framework sets strong targets for member states consistent with the goals proposed for the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) and other obligations under the Rio Conventions 1992 and the Paris Agreement of 2015. According to the most recent IPCC report of August 2021, "It is unequivocal that human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean and land. Widespread rapid changes in the atmosphere, ocean, cryosphere, and biosphere have occurred." There is an urgent need for greater global ambition and commitment towards cutting greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening adaptation and mitigation, and providing climate finance to limit climate change and protect biodiversity.

### **National Accountability**

Columbans advocate for ambitious national commitments to address key drivers of biodiversity loss. We highlight significant gaps in the implementation of national plans and action over the recent decade. Progress on Aichi Biodiversity Target 20 in identifying funding needs and gaps, developing national financial goals, and assessing biodiversity values were limited to only a few countries, according to the Global Biodiversity Outlook 5 Report. While Target 14 of the Framework states that by 2030 biodiversity values are to be integrated at all levels through policies, regulations, planning, and development processes, we urge that these be designated as national priorities. It is also imperative that strong and legally enforceable legislation is in place to ensure progress in protecting the natural environment and addressing emerging threats. Columbans are concerned that more substantial commitments are also needed to engage people at all levels of society with education and capacity building to support biodiversity protection.

### **Production and Extraction**

The IPBES 2019 Report (Part A) states that there "are trade-offs in the production and use of nature's contributions", including food, fiber, biofuel, and feed, often disenfranchising those who are already most vulnerable. These arrangements negatively impact poor communities' access to adequate nutrition and a healthy environment, including clean air and water. The IPBES 2019 Report (Part B) highlights that various factors, including global trade and increased consumption patterns, result in uneven distribution of economic benefits, often based on unequal power negotiations.

Based on our experience and the witness of our mission partners, Columbans see how the global economy can disproportionately benefit the world's wealthy minority while most of the world's people and the environment are left on the margins, increasing their dependence on foreign aid. Economic policies including bilateral trade negotiations must meet and implement specific labor and environmental standards to protect peoples and communities' rights to profits and benefits and safeguard the environment into the future. Columbans are concerned that in many cases, governments and corporations attempt to silence opposition to these injustices by criminalizing protest, putting the lives of local leaders at risk. We urge that tools and solutions are developed to

facilitate achievements in target areas identified as underpinning key drivers of biodiversity loss, such as production and consumption patterns, to safeguard the requirements of all nations and contribute to global peace and security.

The IPBES 2019 Report states that global goals relating to food, water, energy, human health and well-being, and mitigation of and adaptation to climate change can be achieved while conserving biodiversity. However, structural change is needed at all levels to achieve this global public good. This commitment should be a critical goal for the world's community in the Decade of Action for Sustainable Development (2020-2030).

Columbans are concerned about the impacts on poorer nations and Indigenous communities from extractive industries, including some climate change mitigation projects. The IPBES 2019 Report (Part D) identifies that "mainstreaming biodiversity and sustainability across all extractive and productive sectors" with "bold changes" is required to safeguard the global environment.

### **Militarism**

Increasingly, countries and communities are in conflict due to competing access to natural resources, and for decades hostilities have been occurring in areas rich in biodiversity. The global demand for fossil fuels is an example of how military responses can be driven by competition for access to natural resources. Diminished access to resources exacerbates the vulnerability of countless communities around the world. The environmentally driven conflicts often cross boundaries of ethnic and religious divide, leading to more intense violence and war. As natural resources, many of which are not replaceable, continue to be depleted, the backdrop is set for further conflicts and war.

### **Enfranchising Indigenous Communities**

The IPBES 2019 Report (Part B20) states that nature is declining less rapidly in land and seascapes managed by Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and environmental human rights defenders. Those management methods established over generations support the conservation of biodiversity. The President of the General Assembly's summary on the United Nations Summit on Biodiversity 2020 stated, "Indigenous Peoples must play a central role in (the) conceptualization and implementation" of the Framework. Columbans are deeply concerned that the knowledge, innovations, and practices of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and environmental human rights defenders are not integrated into the implementation of the Convention by way of their full and effective participation. This failure is reflected in the unmet Aichi target 18 of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. We recommend that "D. Theory of Change" of the Framework states unequivocally the need to ensure equitable participation of Indigenous Peoples in the development, adoption, and governance of international agreements, based on inherent rights to their lands, territories and resources, in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People 2007.

### **Forced Migration**

Columbans raise concerns about people forced to migrate due to ecosystem degradation and the impacts of climate change, including Indigenous Peoples who rely on local environments for their livelihoods. In other situations where local sources of income are depleted due to environmental degradation, people are forced to move to urban areas where social conflicts increase, leading to violence and disintegration of solidarity networks. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Earth Day report 2021, states: 'The climate emergency is the defining crisis of our time, and displacement is one of its most devastating consequences. Entire populations are already suffering the impacts, but vulnerable people living in some of the most fragile and

conflict-affected countries are disproportionately affected. Refugees, internally displaced people (IDPs), and stateless persons are on the frontlines of the climate emergency. Many live in climate “hotspots” where they typically lack the resources to adapt to an increasingly inhospitable environment.’ These are issues of grave concern for the whole international community.

The Framework does not recognize that biodiversity loss and ecological degradation generally forces vulnerable populations to migrate elsewhere. We recommend that the Framework affirms that people have the right to refugee and asylum status because of environmental factors and supports giving these populations access to this lifesaving protection.

### **Concluding Comments & Summary**

As we know from all available evidence, protecting biodiversity from ongoing destruction is the shared responsibility of the global community. The Framework will launch a decade of action; let this be shaped with a vision and plan to meet the challenges and opportunities we face with courage and hopefulness.

#### *Ambitious Commitments are Needed*

- The framework must explicitly include language and actions that represent the scale and urgency required to address root causes, reverse current trends, and conserve biodiversity.
- National commitments must address key drivers of biodiversity loss such as production and consumption patterns, to safeguard the requirements of all nations and contribute to global peace and security.

#### *Commitment to Transparency and Enforcement of Policies*

- Strong and legally enforceable legislation is needed to ensure progress in protecting the natural environment and addressing emerging threats.
- Strong environmental and human rights due diligence is needed in supply chains.
- Stringent independent assessment and monitoring of all projects is needed to minimize impacts.
- Transparent decision-making that involves community consultation and participation of all peoples to include Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and environmental human rights defenders.

#### *Ensure Participation is Embraced from All Levels of Society*

- Substantial commitment is needed to engage people at all levels of society with education and capacity building to support biodiversity protection.
- Structural change is needed at all levels to achieve global public good goals relating to food, water, energy, human health and well-being, and mitigation of and adaptation to climate change while conserving biodiversity.

#### *Protecting Communities*

- Increased commitment to phasing out the extraction and burning of fossil fuels to limit global warming, a key driver of biodiversity loss.
- A commitment to just transition for communities involved in unsustainable extractive industries such as communities uprooted by mining projects.
- A redirection of profits towards communities uprooted by mining projects and the restoration of land.
- There must be a global consensus about the economic recovery based on sustainable models to address inequities exacerbated by the pandemic and ensure there is no further exploitation of impoverished communities and nature.