

A Wyss Academy Call to Action

One year into Kunming-Montreal – translating the Global Biodiversity Framework into sustainable, just and transformative practice



Land Systems and Sustainability Transformations researchers Madlaina Michelotti & Phokham Latthachack tasting fresh rice in Laos as part of a research project field trip, Nov 2023.
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A year has passed since the adoption of the “Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)”. With its 23 targets, the international community finally acknowledged the essential importance of biodiversity for human life and gave itself a normative frame of reference for the identification of measures to conserve and restore the world’s biodiversity.

The urgency of its implementation has become even more evident in the past months, as:

- The global food system is accelerating biodiversity loss;
- Overfishing and pollution further threaten the oceans, and
- The human footprint on Earth is still pressing the ecosystems.

It is all the more crucial that the Global Biodiversity Framework is implemented swiftly and effectively – and that this is based on the principle of justice for those people inevitably affected by the necessary measures.

Over the past months, the Wyss Academy for Nature has engaged in a reflection process to assess how best to contribute to an effective and just implementation of the GBF, drawing on its knowledge of the interrelationship between biodiversity conservation, human well-being and the sustainable use of natural resources. This process involved external stakeholders from academia and civil society, as well as from the Wyss Academy regional hubs in South America, East Africa, Southeast Asia and Central Europe.

A new social contract with nature – as the prerequisite for a mind-shift that yields true transformative action and enduring change

The Wyss Academy for Nature shares the same understanding as the Global Biodiversity Framework: that biodiversity is fundamental to human well-being. However, the text of the GBF does little to emphasize that the decline of our natural environment, such as biodiversity loss and the degradation of natural resources, inevitably leads to the deterioration of people’s livelihoods. Diversity – both of species, and within human communities – is an indispensable ingredient for socio-economic and environmental progress. However, measures to conserve and restore biodiversity will from time to time require tradeoffs between the targets of the GBF and the interests of individual groups of people. This is inevitable.

The GBF does not give answers on how to deal with such tradeoffs. In order to meet this challenge, we strongly believe that biodiversity should be mainstreamed within human society as a universally recognized value. And there must be a recognition – as pointed out within the joint declaration of COP presidents of 3rd November

2023 – that the challenges faced in the areas of biodiversity, land degradation and climate change must be tackled with a unified approach. The restoration and sustainable use of natural resources must be based on a shared vision, and propagated by a whole-of-governance and integrative spatial-planning approach. Its legitimacy must be strengthened by coherence with other conventions, agreements, and concepts – in particular the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement and the concept of Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC). Ultimately, this approach should translate into what we call a ‘new social contract with nature’: a society-wide consensus that will encourage the mind-shift necessary for transformative action and change.

A new social contract with nature, as understood by the Wyss Academy for Nature, means that people from all parts of society increasingly understand that reconfiguring our relationship with nature is a necessary survival strategy for humanity – and that immediate action is needed. The Wyss Academy has committed itself to actively supporting such a new social contract.

Creating coalitions for change – to ensure a just, effective and sustainable implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework

The Wyss Academy for Nature welcomes the Global Biodiversity Framework’s emphasis on integrating “biodiversity and its multiple values” into policy, development, and decision-making processes aimed at cooperation and pursued synergies among policy, business, and civil actors – across all societal, geographic and governance levels.

We are working within various geographic and thematic areas, as we

try to contribute to the transformation we are calling for. Some of the stories of our current collaboration with partners include:

- The Multi-Purpose Corridor Initiative in Kenya: To address historically grown adverse impact on the integrity of ecosystems and well-being of local communities, we strive to establish six multi-purpose corridors across three counties with an aim to support trans-boundary wildlife and livestock movements, while simultaneously promoting sustainable economic development.
- Ongoing efforts in Madre de Dios, within the Peruvian Amazon region, to counter deforestation and address poverty within local communities. Through the establishment of sustainable tourism activities, as well as value networks for non-timber forest products (NTFP), we hope to develop sustainable pathways for both human well-being and conservation, by employing a transformative and systemic innovation approach
- A project in the Canton of Bern, Switzerland: Where we support the development of a methodology that can be used to anticipate potential negative land use outcomes of biodiversity-related policy interventions, based on past strategic biodiversity plans and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

The Wyss Academy for Nature is present in four global regions that offer scientific evidence and knowledge of the systems that require change. We wish to act as honest brokers within various partnerships that we are establishing to address the conflicts that are at the source of every transformation. We are confident that this will lead to novel solutions and bring urgent change to these systems.

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Special thanks go to the members of our Roundtable:

- Prof. Dr. Christian Kull, Institute of Geography and Sustainability, University of Lausanne, Switzerland
- Friedrich Wulf, Head, International Biodiversity Policy, Pro Natura, Switzerland
- Dr. Van Hai Nguyen, Postdoctoral Researcher, Transformational Research, Integrative Biodiversity Conservation Science, Wyss Academy for Nature at the University of Bern, Switzerland

About the Wyss Academy for Nature

The Wyss Academy for Nature at the University of Bern is a place of innovation, where research, business, policymakers and communities come together to co-design solutions for sustainable futures. The Wyss Academy’s mission is to turn scientific knowledge into action. Combining ambitious, innovative goals with a transformative approach, it was founded to develop innovative long-term pathways that strengthen and reconcile biodiversity conservation, human well-being and the sustainable use of natural resources in a variety of landscapes throughout the world. We co-design and implement concrete projects across a swathe of regions and countries. This global structure facilitates the replication of successes and learning. [The Wyss Academy for Nature](#) currently operates Hubs in Central Europe (Bern, Switzerland), Southeast Asia, East Africa and South America.

