



In 2022, the **IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL)** created the Plastic Pollution Task Force to provide insights and support to the Treaty negotiation process. The following is one of a series of ten targeted legal briefs that are part of the present IUCN Submission for the third Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.

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*These are updated briefings of the INC-1 and INC-1 submissions, please note, and are considered version 3 – for submission to INC-3 as annexes for Forms A and B from IUCN. Further information can be found on <https://www.iucn.org/incplastics> - or by searching <https://www.iucn.org/search?key=plastics>.*

**BRIEFING 9 of 10: Connections between IUCN’s Plastic Pollution Elimination Timeline and the GBF**

**IUCN WCEL BRIEFING FOR NEGOTIATORS  
International Legally Binding Instrument INC-3 Session  
Connections between IUCN’s Plastic Pollution Elimination Timeline and the GBF**

In December 2022, the Conference of the Parties (COP) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was held in Montreal and adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). The GBF represents the next phase of implementation methods for the CBD and associated Protocols and builds from the 2010 – 2022 Aichi Targets. Although non-binding international law, the Parties adopted the GBF to reflect many aspects of customary international law as well as accepted treaty requirements from the CBD and other treaty regimes such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Generally, the GBF is organized along parallel timelines of targets to be achieved by 2030 in order to implement established overarching goals by 2050. In this context, the most pressing timelines have been created for the targets which must be achieved by 2030. Within the GBF Targets for 2030 there are many connections with plastic pollution.

At its 2020 World Conservation Congress, IUCN’s Members adopted Resolution 7.019 on *Stopping the global plastic pollution crisis in marine environments by 2030*. To accomplish this goal, the Resolution asked the international community to reach a global agreement to combat marine plastic pollution, in order to:

- a. Ensure resource efficiency and circular economy through the elimination of unnecessary production and use of plastic, in particular single-use items, and through the promotion of innovation along the entire value chain, facilitating responsible



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- management of plastic waste and scrap and stopping leakage in nature and in the oceans;
- b. Promote responsible management of single-use plastic waste and scrap that prevents its leakage into the environment;
  - c. Invest in environmentally sound plastic waste collection and recycling and disposal systems, based on separate collection of plastic waste and recycling in the first instance, and other forms of recovery, prevention and alternatives to plastic, where recycling of environmentally sound plastic waste is not possible, considering all their impacts on the environment;
  - d. Introduce measures that take appropriate national actions for the prevention and significant reduction of discharges of plastic litter to the ocean, in partnership with relevant stakeholders;
  - e. Work with other international efforts, including the Alliance to End Plastic Waste, New Plastics Economy, Consumer Goods Forum Plastics Working Group and Basel Convention Plastic Waste Partnership, to improve knowledge of the sources of plastics and their impact on the environment, and particularly on biodiversity and human health;
  - f. Carry out public-awareness measures aimed at sustainable consumption and improved waste management; and
  - g. Mobilise technical and financial support to facilitate implementation of these actions.

To facilitate this and in recognition of the increasingly dire issue of plastic pollution, Resolution 7.019 designated 2030 as the target date.

Also at its 2020 World Conservation Congress, IUCN Members adopted Resolution 7.069, *Eliminate plastic pollution in protected areas*, with priority action on single-use plastic products, and urged State Members to act to implement this by 2025.

IUCN's proposed timeline of ending pollution from single use plastic by 2025 and ending all plastic pollution by 2030 reinforces these commitments and could be critical to the accomplishment of the GBF Targets by States and the international community as a whole. In the below discussion, this briefing highlights the ties between State accomplishment of a number GBF and the International Legally Binding Instrument (ILBI), emphasizing the need to use IUCN's robust timelines for ending plastic pollution as a tool for States to implement their commitments under the GBF.

## **GBF Targets**

GBF Target 7, addressing the reduction of pollution and negative pollution impacts by 2030, has arguably the most obvious connections to efforts to end plastic pollution, especially the statement in (c) that this is to be achieved by methods including “by preventing, reducing, and working towards eliminating plastic pollution.” Beyond this, however, ambitious targets for the Plastics Treaty such as those proposed by IUCN would assist in the accomplishment of many other GBF Targets.

By eliminating single use plastic pollution by 2025 and plastic pollution generally by 2030, the Plastics Treaty could support the terms of GBF Target 1, “Ensure that all areas are under participatory, integrated and biodiversity inclusive spatial planning and/or effective management processes addressing land- and sea-use change, to bring the loss of areas of high biodiversity importance, including ecosystems of high ecological integrity, close to zero by 2030, while respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities.” The intersections here focus on the scientifically established connections between plastic pollution and biodiversity loss on land as well as at sea. Reducing the flow of plastic pollution into these

ecosystems would represent a concrete step toward lowering the overall rates of biodiversity loss and ecosystem damage.

Similar connections can be made to the terms of GBF Target 2, “Ensure that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of areas of degraded terrestrial, inland water, and marine and coastal ecosystems are under effective restoration, in order to enhance biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, ecological integrity and connectivity,” and the portions of GBF Target 3 addressing the use of management techniques and protected area status for marine and coastal biodiversity. By ending single use plastic pollution first, followed rapidly by ending plastic pollution generally, the Treaty would necessarily reduce the amount of pollution to threaten the integrity of biodiversity in these areas, helping to facilitate the ways in which Targets 2 and 3 could be accomplished and the burdens placed on States in the process. Incorporating these timelines into the Plastics Treaty could also advance many related aspects of GBF Target 11, “restore, maintain and enhance nature’s contributions to people, including ecosystem functions and services, such as the regulation of air, water and climate, soil health, pollination and reduction of disease risk, as well as protection from natural hazards and disasters, through nature-based solutions and/or ecosystem-based approaches for the benefit of all people and nature.”

Science continues to demonstrate the existential threat to posed by plastic pollution to all species, including the most vulnerable, and to the ecosystems that are essential to their survival, such as spawning grounds and beach hatching grounds. Against this background, the timelines for ending plastic pollution proposed by IUCN could advance GBF Target 4 as it seeks to reduce the threats to species on the verge of extinction as well as those identified as being at risk and those in the process of recovery.

GBF Target 8, “Minimize the impact of climate change and ocean acidification on biodiversity and increase its resilience through mitigation, adaptation, and disaster risk reduction actions, including through nature-based solutions and/or ecosystem-based approaches, while minimizing negative and fostering positive impacts of climate action on biodiversity,” raises another aspect of connection to plastic pollution. At their core, plastics are based on fossil fuels, and efforts to eliminate plastic pollution will potentially result in the reduction of emissions from fossil fuels as a result. This connection can be advanced through the inclusion of circular economy provisions in the ILBI as well.

The focus of GBF Target 10 is to “ensure that areas under agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries and forestry are managed sustainably, in particular through the sustainable use of biodiversity,” and includes aspects relating to food security. An ambitious timeline for ending plastic pollution by 2030 would facilitate Target 10 given the connections between fisheries and forestry-related plastic pollution, including single use fishing gear and the practice of abandoned or ghost-gear. Further, a timeline such as that proposed by IUCN would facilitate Target 10 by reducing the amount of plastics which can enter the food system through plastic waste.

Given the prevalence of plastic pollution in urban areas, especially in large urban areas, GBF Target 12 could also benefit from an ILBI with ambitious timelines for ending plastic pollution such as those proposed by IUCN. Target 12 provides that, by 2030, States commit to “significantly increase the area and quality, and connectivity of, access to, and benefits from green and blue spaces in urban and densely populated areas sustainably, by mainstreaming the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and ensure biodiversity-inclusive urban planning, enhancing native biodiversity, ecological connectivity and integrity, and improving human health and well-being and connection to nature, and contributing to inclusive and sustainable urbanization and to the provision of ecosystem functions and services.”

As has been highlighted by IUCN, plastic pollution is inherently connected to biodiversity, and the inclusion of this nexus is critical for the ILBI as well as for laws, rules and policies relating to these areas at the national level. Recognition of this and inclusion of an ambitious timeline for eliminating plastic pollution would thus further the terms of GBF Target 14, to “Ensure the full integration of biodiversity and its multiple values into policies, regulations, planning and development processes, poverty eradication strategies, strategic environmental assessments, environmental impact assessments and, as appropriate, national accounting, within and across all levels of government and across all sectors, in particular those with significant impacts on biodiversity, progressively aligning all relevant public and private activities, and fiscal and financial flows with the goals and targets of this framework.” Relatedly, GBF Target 15 addresses the role of the private sector in achieving the GBF as a whole, stressing the need for monitoring and reporting that includes business and private sector actions to assist in biodiversity-related measures. Accomplishing this could be tied in part to private sector requirements and measures relating to ending plastic pollution, especially if this is done on an ambitious timeline which will require robust action from the private and public sectors.

GBF Target 16, addressing sustainable consumption and consumer choices, could be advanced by using the proposed IUCN timeline since the elimination of single use plastic pollution and plastic pollution overall would necessitate a shift to more sustainable consumption practices. This would also advance the elements of Target 16 related to the reduction of waste.

In connection with trade issues, GBF Target 18 provides for measures to “identify by 2025, and eliminate, phase out or reform incentives, including subsidies, harmful for biodiversity, in a proportionate, just, fair, effective and equitable way, while substantially and progressively reducing them by at least \$500 billion per year by 2030, starting with the most harmful incentives, and scale up positive incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.” Including the elimination of single use plastic pollution by 2025 in the Plastics Treaty could allow States and the international community to take significant steps toward this and could ensure that subsidies and other reforms are implemented in a coordinated manner that is also in accord with WTO law.

In terms of reporting and monitoring, the GBF provides for the use of global means of analysis, as well as national reporting procedures and national biodiversity strategies and action plans.<sup>1</sup> As a part of this, efforts have been taken to identify early indicators that can be used for these reporting systems, several of which could also be reflective of the impacts of an ambitious Plastics Treaty timeline for ending plastic pollution. These indicators include air quality and pollution emissions, those relating to forest health and quality, those relating to water and marine health and quality, fishing practices that would relate to abandoned ad ghost gear, life cycle regulations, and trade and financial measures.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> GBF sect J.

<sup>2</sup> Monitoring framework for the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, CBD/COP/DEC/15/5 (19 December 2022). IUCN WCEL Briefings for Negotiators for INC-3 (Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution)