



# EMBRACING AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO 30X30

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## Introduction

Climate change, overfishing, deforestation, and pollution are diverse forms of human-driven ecosystem degradation. Ironically, as these ecosystems deteriorate, their ability to provide food, absorb CO<sub>2</sub> and regulate the climate also diminishes, exacerbating the climate crisis. In the spirit to reverse this, in December 2022 in Montreal, 196 nations agreed to take urgent action to halt biodiversity loss, signing the historic Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). Foundational to the GBF is the 30x30 conservation target, which calls for the protection of *at least* 30 percent of land as well as coastal and marine areas by 2030.

This goal, embodied in Target 3 of the GBF, presents a formidable task for nations—with only 17% of land and 8% of oceans currently under some form of protection globally. Reaching the 30x30 target will require an all-hands-on deck strategy, and more importantly, pulling together public, private, and philanthropic resources, since the public sector simply does not have the means to do this alone.

Being an international treaty, it depends upon national governments to implement needed actions to fulfill the commitments, and to invest resources and align budgets. Government policies must then be designed to promote public and private investment aligned with the fulfillment of the 30x30 agenda and to create a nature-positive world. Likewise, national and subnational policies should, then, build on the collective momentum generated by the GBF, similar to the Paris Agreement, so that it trickles down to private sector, academia and communities.

## A New Benchmark with a Ticking Clock

The 30x30 target is considered a bold, yet achievable goal. The world's governments are on the clock for scaling up the protection of our lands and waters at an unprecedented rate. To achieve this, we [need to](#) nearly double our protection of terrestrial and inland water areas, while almost quadrupling the amount of coastal and marine areas currently under protection.

Parties must build on lessons learned from Target 3's predecessor, [Aichi Biodiversity Target 11](#), a goal established in 2010 that calls for the protection of at least 17% of terrestrial and inland waters, and 10% of coastal and marine areas by 2020. While countries since then have made headway in scaling up nature's protection, the UN [assessed](#) that Target 11 has only been "partially achieved." In addition, the level of protection varied greatly amongst protected areas, and many parties [fell short](#) when it came to prioritizing ecosystem interconnectivity and protecting biodiversity hotspots.



The world ultimately failed to fully achieve any of the 20 Aichi goals for 2020. With the GBF Framework considerably more ambitious than its predecessor, we cannot afford to make the same mistakes again—such as focusing on quantity over quality and failing to create effective roadmaps to help address each committed target. It is incumbent upon us to consider a more ambitious approach moving forward.

In an effort to operationalize the 30x30 agenda nationally, we have seen many parties to the GBF reaffirm their commitments in their respective National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs). In its 2023 submission, for instance, the European Union [affirmed](#) its commitment to the 30x30 goal in line with the GBF framework, acknowledging this would require an additional 4% of land and 19% of ocean bodies protected compared to today's figures. Similarly, in its NBSAP submitted earlier this year, China [also committed](#) to protecting and managing 30% of its terrestrial, inland water, coastal, and marine territories by 2030, with nature reserves totaling 18% of the country's land area today. No Latin American country to date has included such a target in their own action plans.



## Mangroves Take Root in Target 3

To reach the 30x30 targets, protecting mangrove forests is critical for all 117 countries that host them. Although mangrove ecosystems only cover 0.7% of the world's tropical forest area, they should be a priority in countries' NBSAPs. Mangrove ecosystems provide nesting grounds to multiple species and are rich in biodiversity, they provide important ecological services, and are highly efficient absorbing CO<sub>2</sub>—thus proving critical for climate change abatement.



The loss of just 1% of the remaining mangrove forests [would have](#) the same climate impact as the addition of 49 million cars on the road in the United States. Unfortunately, a recent [assessment](#) by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) declared that more than 50% of all mangrove ecosystems are at risk of collapse by mid-century. Here, Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) has an important role to play, as 11 out of the 25 countries holding 90% of the world's mangrove coverage lie within the region.

In line with this, we are already seeing the public, private, and philanthropic sectors scale up mangrove conservation and restoration. Nation states looking to make mangroves key to their conservation strategies can build on the growing international momentum through initiatives like the [Mangrove Breakthrough](#) to help meet international biodiversity targets.

The Mangrove Breakthrough was launched at COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, in collaboration with the Global Mangrove Alliance and the UN Climate High-Level Champions, to unlock US\$4 billion and protect 15 million hectares globally by 2030. The initiative directly supports the goals of the GBF 30x30 target.

## Marine Conservation, the High Seas Treaty, and Latin American Leadership

The 2023 United Nations [High Seas Treaty](#) (otherwise known as the BBNJ) is a first-of-its-kind, legally-binding marine biodiversity agreement that addresses areas beyond national jurisdiction. This groundbreaking agreement adopts a coordinated approach to create Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) on the high seas, laying a critical foundation for reaching the global community's 30x30 targets. To date, 90 parties [have signed](#) the treaty, yet only five have ratified it. The BBNJ is not only groundbreaking, but also a key piece of the puzzle to conserving our oceans, as 60% of them lie beyond national exclusive economic zones.



In LAC, countries are taking a leading role in marine conservation efforts, with Chile at the helm. From the five nations that have ratified the BBNJ, two are from this region—Belize and Chile, and the latter is spearheading the diplomatic engagements to rally other countries to do so. The largest country to date to have ratified the High Seas Treaty, Chile [established](#) in 2023 its first and largest MPA in Northern Chile with over 700 km<sup>2</sup> and [protecting](#) both marine species and local fishing communities. Furthermore, the Dominican Republic this year announced an expansion of its marine protected areas, becoming the first Caribbean nation to fulfill their 30x30 marine goal. In fact, six countries from LAC have already done so.

Given developing countries limited resources to spend on the protection of the environment, many LAC nations are working to create, strengthen, and expand existing marine reserves frequently in direct coordination with the private sector and unlocking capital through innovative finance mechanisms. Last year, Ecuador [announced](#) the largest-ever debt-for-nature swap through a US\$1.6 billion buyback to help finance conservation efforts in the Galapagos. [Belize did too](#) in 2021. After a heavy downturn of its tourism-based economy because of COVID-19, through this debt swap Belize reduced its national debt by 12%, freed more than US\$180 million for marine conservation, and committed to protecting 30% of its oceans by 2026.

## Aligning Private Sector Resources

Incentivizing private sector investments in conservation strategies and leveraging blended finance frameworks to build a nature-positive world will be key to meeting the 30x30 targets. It is the only way in which we can bridge the US\$700 billion biodiversity finance gap we currently face. With half of the world's US\$44 trillion in GDP [dependent](#) on nature to some extent, the private sector must be actively engaged in national and subnational strategies. Businesses mere existence hinges upon biodiversity.

Private investments should be in line with the goals set forth in the GBF, the BBNJ, the Paris Agreement, and other international treaties, and it is critical for governments to promote and regulate climate- and biodiversity-related disclosures in the private sector and to implement other instruments at their disposal, such as sustainable taxonomies, to do so. To channel private investments, governments need to implement regulatory frameworks for businesses that consider the scale and urgency of the biodiversity and climate crises.

Only through strong collaboration between the public, private, and philanthropic sectors can we mobilize the necessary capital needed to meet our ambitious international goals. Furthermore, government policies, programs, and fiscal incentives [could further drive](#) private sector conservation-focused investments and help break down barriers to investment in the sector.

## Taking the *Colectivo* to Cali

This year, my home country of Colombia will host COP16, the first Biodiversity COP since the adoption of the GBF. Nations and stakeholders from around the world will gather in Cali to advance the goals set forth in Montreal in 2022, with ambitious NBSAPs to meet the 2030 targets.

An integrative approach to 30x30 is important in the runup to this year's COP—as countries submit their NBSAPs—which will serve as their blueprints for meeting the GBF. Fortunately, we have the opportunity to build on the momentum generated in recent years not only by the GBF, but also by the High Seas Treaty, the Mangrove Breakthrough, and many other international biodiversity-focused initiatives. The tools to achieve our goals at the scale and speed necessary are at our disposal, but we must be willing to translate them into action.



## About the Author



Carlos Correa is a non-resident fellow of the Institute of the America's Environment and Climate Change Program.

From October 2020 to August 2022, Mr. Correa was Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development in Colombia. From this office, he has positioned the country as an international benchmark in the fight against climate change, positive biodiversity, as well as the protection of the oceans. As a result, he was appointed as Champion for Nature by the World Economic Forum.

He has been recognized by National Geographic for promoting the protection of 30% of marine and terrestrial areas globally before 2030, an action that Colombia fulfilled in 2022, eight years earlier; recently has been fellow of the Eisenhower Program and nominated as one of the 100 Latinos most committed to climate action 2022.

During his time in public administration, Carlos Eduardo Correa has shown how sustainable and resilient territories can be built. As mayor of Montería (2012-2015), he positioned it as a sustainable city and under that vision he turned the Sinú River into the axis of social, cultural and economic development.

## About the Institute of the Americas

The [Institute of the Americas](#) is a non-partisan, independent nonprofit organization whose mission is to be a catalyst for promoting economic development and integration, emphasizing the role of the private sector, as a means to improve the economic and social well-being of the people of the Americas.

The Institute's [Environment & Climate Change Program \(EC2\)](#) strives to catalyze climate leadership amongst the private sector and local/regional governments in the Americas to promote sustainable growth, tackle climate change and minimize environmental impacts in the region with the goal of protecting its rich marine and land-based natural capital.

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