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Abridged Opening Statement of the Global Youth Biodiversity Network

Global Youth Biodiversity Network

We would like to take a moment of silence for Ghanimat Azhdari, a young indigenous woman scientist and environmental human rights activist from the Qashqai peoples of Iran who was among the victims of the Ukrainian Airlines flight that was mistakenly shot down over Iran last month. A true force of nature, Ghanimat was a fierce, brave and bold young woman, inspiring, generous, warm and with a huge heart. These are the characteristics that we all need right now to make this a truly transformative path for change. Let's take inspiration from her and courageously embark on this journey.

Dear delegates, where do we go from zero? There is a strong focus on numbers in the current zero draft, and we believe that important issues might have been overshadowed by the numbers there. Here are some numbers that should matter even more:

We need to clearly reflect the **3 objectives of the convention** at the goal level in a balanced way, which means conserving the integrity of our life support system, sustainable use for the whole of society, and equity in a broader sense of ensuring that no one is left behind.

IPBES lists **4 underlying drivers** of biodiversity loss underpinned by **2 things**: values and behaviors. If we do not address these, we will find ourselves in the same place in 2030, in 2050. We need a standalone target on transformative education that puts us on a path to reconnect with nature and restore our sense of responsibility to Mother Earth.

The zero draft lists **8 enabling conditions**--all extremely crucial to the success of any targets we develop. But how do we ensure these are being implemented when there is no mechanism to monitor them?

The framework needs a clearer recognition of principles, such as the precautionary principle, polluter pays principles, common but differentiated responsibilities and intergenerational equity, to guide our actions.

It was assessed that we need **120 billion USD** to implement the Strategic Plan. Yet, we spend 261 billion on agricultural subsidies *annually* and 1,753 billion on military expenditure. We need to increase finances for biodiversity and reform subsidies.

50% of the world's population are aged under 30: youth and children. We need to make sure they are at the table in decisions about their present and future, and actively establish mechanisms to ensure this. We point out the glaring absence of youth and children indicators in the monitoring framework.

A quarter of the global land area is traditionally owned, managed, used or occupied by indigenous peoples and local communities, containing a significant proportion of biodiversity. We need a target that appropriately recognizes IPLC rights to their collective lands, territories, and resources and their self-determined systems of governance, knowledge and practices.

In 2019 alone, **121 environmental defenders** were reported killed--and many more harassed, criminalized, and threatened because they protect biodiversity and their territories. It is our responsibility to ensure that biodiversity's guardians are able to work in a safe and enabling environment, free from threat, restriction, and insecurity.

Women and girls make up **half of the world**. Half the world that has been made vulnerable by oppressive systems and face increased risk to biodiversity loss; and whose crucial contributions to biodiversity are being made invisible. Gender considerations need to be present all throughout the framework as target components and in the monitoring and financial mechanisms.

Importantly, we must never forget what is **incalculable**: Biodiversity cannot be measured by one dimension. It is the very system that supports our life and our well-being, and nurtures our culture and beliefs. We should boldly take on the challenge of taking into account all its layers and complexities.

Finally, One - We have one planet. Countless futures. Eight months. Let's make it count.

Subsidizing extinction?

Jessica Dempsey, Tara Martins, Rashid Sumalia
Excerpt from recent article in the journal Conservation Letters (open access)

In a time of empty pockets for nature, or what we might call biodiversity conservation's perennial austerity problem, it is hard to stomach the annual numbers: \$4.7 trillion globally for fossil fuel subsidies, or 6.3 percent of global GDP, in 2015 (Coady et al. 2019, US dollars).

The Canadian government is ponying up \$3.4 billion dollars to subsidize an uneconomic pipeline expansion that steamrolls through Indigenous opposition and increases risks to endangered killer whales. Add to this Australia's estimated 3 billion in mining subsidies, China's \$18 billion nitrogen fertilizer subsidy, and Japan's \$2.2 billion contribution to over-fishing (Grudnoff 2013; Li et al. 2013; Sumaila et al. 2019).

These are just a few of the incentives governments have created in pursuit of economic development and expanded employment opportunities, incentives that *may* negatively impact biodiversity. We say "may" because the effect of these incentives on biodiversity is not straightforward: more research is necessary. As governments negotiate a new strategic plan for the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), there is an urgent need to study the effects such subsidies have on biodiversity. We call for "subsidy accountability" as a necessary foundation to advance transformative economic change as called for by IPBES (2019).

Definitions and international agendas for action

What is a harmful subsidy? Drawing from the OECD, the CBD defines them as "government action that confers an advantage to consumers or producers ... but in doing so, discriminates against sound environmental practices" (CBD 2018, 5). But they include broader, less obviously economic laws and policies around resource use, say requirements to 'use it or lose it' when it comes to forestry licenses or ineffective policies that tacitly allow overfishing and illegal fishing.

While action and inaction on fossil fuel subsidies are well known, few are aware that in 2010, 193 governments agreed to identify, eliminate and reform subsidies leading

to biodiversity loss (Aichi Target 3). Yet, a 2018 assessment of the Aichi targets found only 19 countries making progress. Success stories include the reduction of subsidies for chemical fertilizers in Bangladesh and France and elimination of subsidies for wetland draining in Denmark. Few countries are identifying negative incentives systematically: only 7 countries report undertaking studies to identify them (CBD 2018).

Aichi target 3 also calls for the creation of positive incentive measures; in the same assessment, half of reporting countries claimed to be using mechanisms such as green taxes, payments for ecosystem services, and conservation banking. There are success stories along these lines, including programs that link US farmer subsidies to soil and wetland conservation practices (Claassen et al 2017).

But what is the relative scale of positive vs. harmful subsidies? Again, more research is needed. McFarland et al. (2015) calculated that Brazil spent \$158 million trying to stop deforestation while spending \$14 billion subsidizing activities linked to deforestation; Indonesia spent \$165 million vs \$27 billion. Likewise in fisheries, subsidies promoting sustainable fisheries amount to approximately \$10 billion whereas harmful subsidies linked to over-fishing were \$22 billion in 2018 (Sumaila et al. 2019). These positive subsidies are teeny tiny minnows swimming up Victoria Falls, dwarfed by subsidies driving land use change and biodiversity loss.

Read the rest at <https://conbio.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/conl.12705>

Just imagine what we could do for biodiversity and justice if some of these subsidies were redirected...

Do's and Dont's

5. Do address the direct drivers that were identified by the IPBES global assessment report. Set up work and coordination programs about these aspects of the direct drivers that correspond to or impact on the realm of the CBD. The most powerful drivers are industrial-scale fisheries and intensive agriculture. The CBD has the competence and the responsibility to regulate the biodiversity impacts of these sectors, and propose biodiversity consistent ways to do so.

6. Address the impacts on biodiversity and equity of resource extraction and production of commodities across country boundaries and regions and along supply chains, the so-called telecoupled impacts. Reflect them in national reports. Set up legislation that reduces and ultimately eliminates these adverse impacts.

Make sure every country both contributes and receives their fair share. Those countries with an excessive historical and *per capita* environmental footprint shall reduce it to fair levels for everybody.

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