



Taking the Bonn Challenge to Rio

Bonn Challenge forest landscape restoration commitments are a pathway for raising ambition for conserving biodiversity, combating land degradation and mitigating climate change

Purpose: The Bonn Challenge and the three Rio conventions all acknowledge the important contribution of forests and land to the achievement of their respective goals and objectives. Many forest and land-use solutions that contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation also combat desertification, land degradation, and conserve or restore biodiversity. This brief presents a snapshot of opportunities for integrated measures to increase restoration ambition and action and demonstrate impact in a complementary and mutually supporting manner.

Looking toward a post pandemic world

COVID-19 has put governments under pressure to prioritise urgent health and economic crises. Yet, the climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation emergencies continue to challenge the ability of the world’s ecological and socio-economic systems to recover sustainably.

Our heightened awareness of these crises presents a timely opportunity to alter policies and

align recovery measures and investments with ambitious national commitments towards a low emission and sustainable world for people and nature.

An effective and proven approach to reduce the risks of biodiversity loss, land degradation and climate change involves deploying smart and cost-effective nature-based solutions as such forest landscape restoration (FLR).

There is an urgent need for transformational change through

significantly raising ambition and recovery measures from the forest and land-use sector in line with national restoration commitments to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and Land Degradation Neutrality under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

Since 2011, 61 countries, 8 states/sub-national governments and 5 associations have taken up the Bonn Challenge – committing more than 210 million hectares to the world’s largest FLR initiative.

IUCN initiated an analysis of the objectives, targets or actions – aligned with the FLR approach, principles and intervention types – referenced in countries' Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) and Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) submissions. This briefing note presents initial findings.

An aggregated analysis of existing commitments to address climate change, biodiversity and land degradation				
National climate change, biodiversity and land degradation neutrality targets and/or actions aligned with FLR and the Bonn Challenge		UNFCC NDCs ¹	UNCCD LDN ²	CBD national targets ³
Total # of countries with targets		186	123	191
Total # of countries with targets analysed ⁴		166	90	153
Total # of countries with FLR aligned targets/actions		128	80	115

Summary of findings

165 countries have set FLR-aligned targets or actions across different Rio conventions, and 51 have specifically included FLR-aligned actions in their commitments under all three conventions.

The restoration of degraded ecosystems and reforestation are the most frequently cited theme across NDCs, LDN and national biodiversity targets.

This highlights the recognition of FLR as a viable nature-based solution with considerable potential for countries to strengthen the role of restoration in NDCs, post-2020 biodiversity plans and LDN target-setting processes through their Bonn Challenge commitments.

NDCs: Out of 166 NDCs, 128 have FLR-aligned quantitative and/or qualitative targets. If all countries were to incorporate

their voluntary Bonn Challenge targets into their 2020 NDCs, 205.78 million hectares of increased climate ambition could be generated from the forest and land sector. In addition, if all of those hectare commitments and associated FLR-aligned actions were translated to tons CO₂e, it would also significantly increase the accountable forest and land-based ambitions in NDCs.

LDN: Out of 90 countries who have already submitted their LDN targets, 80 of them have FLR-aligned targets and/or actions. If the 57 Bonn Challenge countries out of the 123 who have committed to setting LDN targets were to incorporate their voluntary Bonn Challenge restoration commitments, 190 million hectares of increased ambition for the achievement of the LDN goal could be generated.

CBD: 115 countries refer to FLR-aligned targets and/or actions within their national biodiversity targets under the CBD. If the 51 countries with Bonn Challenge commitments and national biodiversity targets related to restoration redefine their pathways to achieve the Global Vision 2050 for Biodiversity under the Global Biodiversity Framework,⁵ this would lead to approximately 148 million hectares of ambition and action for biodiversity conservation or restoration.

There are obvious synergies, linkages and complementarity between the Bonn Challenge voluntary commitments and the targets countries have set under NDCs, LDN targets and national biodiversity targets.

Nationally Determined Contributions (UNFCCC) – efforts by countries to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change

186 Parties have submitted their first NDCs. From the 166 NDCs analysed, 128 have quantitative and/or qualitative FLR-aligned targets. If qualitative targets are removed, only 49 NDCs have quantitative FLR-aligned targets for mitigation and/or adaptation.

Out of 166 NDCs analysed, 61 countries have made voluntary Bonn Challenge commitments.

From these 61 Bonn Challenge countries, 53 have quantitative and/or qualitative FLR-aligned targets under NDCs. Similarly, if qualitative targets are removed, only 27 NDCs from Bonn Challenge countries have quantitative FLR-aligned targets for mitigation and/or adaptation.

The full extent of Bonn Challenge commitments are not evident in country NDCs and there is obvious missed opportunity and lack of integration when comparing FLR commitments under the Bonn Challenge and NDCs. On the other hand, this also

provides impetus for raising restoration ambition for the next rounds of NDCs submissions through countries' existing Bonn Challenge commitments.

The majority of quantitative targets in NDCs are expressed in hectares, and a very limited number of countries provide targets in tCO₂. For example, there are approximately 57 million hectares (n=36) and 3.27 GtCO₂ (n=16) of unconditional and conditional targets under FLR-aligned activities across NDCs. When compared to Bonn Challenge countries' NDCs, there are about 25 million

hectares (n=20) and 3.102 GtCO₂ (n=8) of unconditional and conditional targets under FLR aligned activities. These targets represent a small portion of the total opportunity when compared to those voluntary pledges under the Bonn Challenge (54 million hectares;

n=20). Therefore, there remains the opportunity for countries to add quantitative elements to their targets in hectares or tons of carbon removal – not as new commitments but reflecting national commitments already made under the Bonn Challenge.

Planted forests and woodlots, silviculture, assisted regeneration and agroforestry are the predominant FLR activities in countries' NDCs. Planted forests and woodlots, for example present 52 million hectares across 74 NDCs.

Land Degradation Neutrality (UNCCD) – targets and measures by countries to stabilise or increase the amount and quality of land resources necessary to support ecosystem functions and services, and enhance food security

123 countries have committed to set LDN targets. This analysis only covers the 90 countries that have already submitted LDN targets, of which 80 have FLR-aligned targets and/or actions.

The majority of countries (n=58)

have expressed their LDN FLR-aligned targets and/or actions in a hectare figure (or sq km), while others used percentage of area. Out of 90 countries with LDN targets, 45 have Bonn Challenge commitments (142 million hectares). In addition, of 33 countries that are in the process of setting their LDN targets, 12 have voluntary Bonn Challenge commitments (47 million hectares).

In total, 57 countries (out of 123 countries setting LDN targets) have voluntary commitments for restoration under the

Bonn Challenge using an area-based metric (a total of 190 million hectares). These Bonn Challenge commitments expressed in hectares, and the types of FLR activities they propose, offer opportunities for LDN achievement and could be integrated into the LDN target setting processes.

Reforestation/afforestation, improved forest management, watershed management, and the improvement of agricultural lands through agroforestry, are the predominant FLR-aligned activities.

National biodiversity targets (CBD) – that contribute to the implementation of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (5, 15)

To date 191 Parties have developed at least one National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAPs). The national targets (or equivalent) presented in this analysis were taken from the NBSAPs, *fifth national reports* or other submissions that contribute to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (ABT). This rapid analysis only covered the 153 countries with national targets related to ABT 5 and ABT 15; of which 115 have referred to FLR-aligned targets and/or actions.

The restoration of degraded ecosystems is the predominant FLR-aligned activity in countries' national targets. 42 out of 115 countries have expressed their FLR-aligned targets and/or actions as “restoration of at least 15% of degraded ecosystems.” About 25 countries expressed their FLR-aligned targets and/or actions in reference to area (increase in percentage concerning forests) or type of actions. However, due to the lack of standardisation in the use of indicators, these type of targets are difficult to operationalise without knowing how this percentage would be measured.

Out of 153 countries analysed, 51 have voluntary restoration commitments to the Bonn Challenge (147 million hectares). Of the 115 countries with FLR-aligned targets and/or actions, 43 have voluntary commitments to the Bonn Challenge. Yet, the voluntary restoration commitments under the Bonn Challenge are generally more ambitious than the countries' national targets on restoration under the CBD.

Improved forests, natural regeneration or other ecosystem restoration are the predominant FLR-aligned activities.

Reflections

This initial analysis provides insight into how well the Bonn Challenge voluntary commitments and targets under NDCs, LDN, and CBD are aligned, specifically to demonstrate opportunities to increase country ambition and restoration impact under the Bonn Challenge and all

three Rio conventions. The analysis is intended to create new opportunities to catalyse investments and synergies, ensuring these processes are not institutionally isolated or in competition for limited public and private funds.

As the processes of updating and/or enhancing NDCs, setting LDN targets, and defining the

Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework move forward, countries have an opportunity to capitalise on their existing and new restoration commitments and quantifiable actions to realise the potential of FLR-aligned actions to address the goals of the conventions and the Bonn Challenge in a complementary and mutually supportive manner.

- If the 61 Bonn Challenge countries with intentions to enhance ambition or action in 2020 NDCs incorporate their pledges, that would equate to 205.78 million hectares for climate change mitigation.
- If the 57 Bonn Challenge countries setting LDN targets incorporate their pledges, that would equate to 190 million hectares of increased ambition for combating land degradation.
- If the 51 Bonn Challenge countries with plans to refine their biodiversity targets incorporate their pledges, it would equate to 148 million hectares of increased ambition for biodiversity conservation or restoration.

RESTORE OUR FUTURE



BONN CHALLENGE

Through sharing this rapid and on-going assessment on opportunities to increase restoration impact across the Rio conventions, we are calling for more countries to raise ambition and embrace recovery measures from the forest and land-use sector in line with national restoration commitments under the Bonn Challenge.

Integrating this ambition across Rio conventions could leverage climate, land degradation and biodiversity funding to close the financing gaps in restoration; and it can help align sectoral policies and investments while achieving broader uptake by stakeholders.



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 INFOFLR

¹ UNFCCC. NDCs. <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/NDCStaging/Pages/All.aspx>

² UNCCD. LDN. <https://knowledge.unccd.int/home/country-information/countries-with-voluntary-ldn-targets>

³ CBD. NBSAPs. <https://www.cbd.int/nbsap/targets/>

⁴ Note: the data under UNFCCC were analysed as per NDCs available as of October 2018; the data under UNCCD were analysed per LDN targets available under the country profiles as of August 2020; the data under CBD were analysed per National Targets (or equivalent) related to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets 5, 15 available under the country profiles received from the NBSAPs since COP-10, fifth national reports or from documents submitted separately as of August 2020.

⁵ Currently under discussion and expected to be adopted in May 2021 at CBD COP15