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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

41st meeting
Strasbourg, 30 November - 3 December 2021

**Developing a Vision and Strategic Plan
for the Bern Convention for the period to 2030**

SCOPING DOCUMENT

**For discussion by the Working Group at its 1st meeting,
23 March 2021**

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(Views expressed independently, and not on behalf of the Council of Europe or the Secretariat of the Bern Convention)

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1. Mandate for development of a Vision and Strategic Plan, and Working Group objectives

At its 39th meeting in December 2019, the Standing Committee considered a Draft Resolution on a vision for the Convention for the decade 2020-2030¹, supported by a review of the Convention's contribution to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi biodiversity targets². The Draft Resolution also proposed setting up a Working Group to draw up a Strategic Plan for the Convention for 2020-2030, which could elaborate the vision in the context of the expected adoption by Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity of a post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).

The Committee concluded that it would be more appropriate to consider the adoption of the vision at a later date once the GBF itself was adopted. The Secretariat was instructed to elaborate the proposal further, taking account of the GBF, and to present it to Parties prior to the 40th meeting of the Committee in 2020. That meeting would then decide on the establishment of a Working Group.

Subsequently however the Covid-19 pandemic delayed the expected adoption of the post-2020 Global Framework, and so the further development of the Bern Convention vision was also delayed. The Committee at its 40th meeting in November-December 2020 agreed to establish a Working Group with a mandate to work during 2021 on the development of a Vision and Strategic Plan for the Bern Convention for the period to 2030. In summary, the agreed Terms of Reference for the Working Group³ (appended to the Committee meeting report) define its work to assist the Committee as follows:

- to articulate a draft vision for the future of the Bern Convention and its role amongst other MEAs, defining the unique value that the Convention adds and can develop in the period to 2030;
- to draw up a draft long-term Strategic Plan to 2030, which could streamline the work of the Convention and give highest priority to components of its past Programmes of Work, which contribute to formulating and delivering responses at pan-European level to the main challenges facing biodiversity, as identified in the IPBES Global assessment of biodiversity and ecosystem services;

¹ Bern Convention Secretariat (2019a). Draft Resolution on a vision and role for the Bern Convention in the decade 2020-2030. Document T-PVS(2019)9 for the 39th meeting of the Standing Committee, Strasbourg, 3-6 December 2019.

² Bern Convention Secretariat (2019b). The Bern Convention's contribution to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi targets. Document T-PVS/Inf(2019)22 for the 39th meeting of the Standing Committee, Strasbourg, 3-6 December 2019.

³ Bern Convention Secretariat (2020a). Terms of Reference of a Working Group on a Vision for the Bern Convention for the period to 2030. Document T-PVS/Inf(2020)08rev for the 40th meeting of the Standing Committee, Strasbourg, 30 November - 4 December 2020.

- to define draft key operational targets and actions and identify potential partners for implementation;
- to consider as a source of inspiration the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030;
- to define the Strategic Plan of the Bern Convention in a way that its contribution to the Global Biodiversity Framework can be easily and objectively assessed;
- to take into account existing relevant instruments and initiatives at the national, European and international level, as well as thematic and action-oriented policy documents developed/co-developed, adopted and implemented by the Bern Convention, including the work by the Group of Experts on Protected Areas on a future Emerald Network post-2020 strategic plan;
- to consider the appropriate way to follow up on the conclusions and recommendations of the Review of the Plant Conservation Strategy;
- to consult with the Secretariat to obtain the information necessary on these processes;
- to endeavour to submit a draft vision and Strategic Plan to the Standing Committee for decision at its 41st meeting; and
- following adoption of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, to review and if necessary revise the proposed Bern Vision and Strategic Plan, in order to ensure its coherence with the GBF.

The Terms of Reference further indicate that the results of this work should help to:

- confirm and strengthen the unique value and effectiveness of the Bern Convention for the post-2020 decade and its contribution to the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework;
- reinforce strategic partnerships and appropriate synergies with all relevant treaties, organisations and initiatives at regional pan-European level; and
- increase the political profile of the Bern Convention, both inside and outside the Council of Europe at regional and international level, including by opening its scope to work on the interlinkages between environmental protection and human rights, within the limits of its mandate and objectives as set out in Articles 1 to 3 of the Convention.

2. Strategic orientations previously adopted under the Convention

Most of the world's biodiversity-related Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) nowadays have in place a Strategic Plan, adopted by the respective Parties of each MEA to frame their shared objectives and agreed priorities for a defined period. Approaches vary, although some basic common features (including statements of vision and/or mission) are shared by many of the plans. The Bern Convention has never had such a plan or statement, and so the present initiative is conceived as filling an important gap.

There have nevertheless, at various times, been texts and decisions that can be regarded as giving at least some expression of "strategic orientation" for the Bern Convention; and these might provide a logical starting point for considering what more should be developed now.

Although not formally adopted in these terms, the "main mission" of the Bern Convention has been described (by reference to the Convention text) as being "to ensure conservation of wild flora and fauna species and their habitats within its geographic scope, giving special attention to endangered and vulnerable species, including endangered and vulnerable migratory species"⁴.

⁴ Bern Convention Secretariat (2020a), *op cit*.

The Standing Committee in 2000 adopted a Resolution on “the medium-term strategic development of the Convention”⁵, through which the Parties agreed, *inter alia*, to:

- be aware of the need to promote synergies within the organisation and avoid overlap of environment activities in order to make better use of resources;
- recognise that the Convention can increase its political profile at the regional and international level by opening up its scope to deal with biological diversity from the perspective of the sustainable use of its components;
- play a more active role in the implementation, at the regional level, of the Convention on Biological Diversity and adapt accordingly [their] tasks and responsibilities to such purpose, establishing appropriate synergies with the pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy and other relevant treaties, initiatives and organisations;
- become more active on areas where, as a result of conflict or accident, biological diversity is under threat, creating the necessary mechanisms for fast on-the-spot intervention and assistance;
- give the highest priority to the monitoring of the implementation of the provisions of the Convention, including the setting of standards and the appropriate assistance to Parties and observer states; reinforce such monitoring activities in a transparent way through reporting, regular follow up of [Standing Committee] recommendations, and efficient use of the “case file” procedure, promoting the use of on-the-spot appraisals as problem-solving and negotiation tools;
- adapt [their] programme of activities to better follow relevant issues in the agenda of the Convention on Biological Diversity, exploring [their] possible contribution in the fields of [their] competence on issues such as “wildlife diversity in agro-ecosystems”, while reinforcing [their] work on areas in which [they have] particular expertise, such as “conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity”, “bio-indicators and monitoring of biological diversity”, “invasive alien species” and “biological diversity in threatened ecosystems”;
- maintain, with the necessary adaptations, the activities of [the] specialised groups of experts looking for appropriate synergies and partnership with other relevant conventions, institutions - in particular EU and the European Environment Agency- and non-governmental organisations; [and] explore the out-sourcing, where appropriate, of such technical activities;
- continue, in the short term, to use the double system of Council of Europe funds and voluntary contributions for the financing of activities, while examining other possible solutions;
- organise more efficiently and cost-effectively [the Standing Committee’s] technical work which may include the establishment of an Advisory Scientific Committee that could provide technical and scientific assistance;
- instruct the Secretariat and the Bureau to look into the ways and means to implement this resolution, and to search for synergies with other Council of Europe programmes and initiatives in the field of Cultural and Natural Heritage and Sustainable Development.

In 1994 a joint international symposium affirmed in the Monaco Declaration that the Council of Europe has a fundamental role to play in the implementation at regional level of the principles and obligations adopted at global level, and that the objectives of the Bern Convention are largely in line with the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity and Agenda 21⁶.

⁵ Standing Committee of the Bern Convention (2000). The medium-term strategic development of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats. Resolution No. 7 (2000), adopted by the Standing Committee at its 20th meeting, Strasbourg, November – December 2000.

⁶ Council of Europe (1994). Monaco Declaration on the role of the Bern Convention in the implementation of worldwide international instruments for the protection of biodiversity. Adopted by the Intergovernmental Symposium on the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Bern Convention, Monaco, 26-28 September 1994.

In 2009, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Convention, the Standing Committee adopted a “Declaration on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in Europe: 2010 and beyond”⁷, which reaffirmed the critical role played by the Bern Convention in facilitating the coordinated implementation of global biodiversity obligations in Europe, including relevant parts of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on Migratory Species and related agreements and the Ramsar Convention; recognised the role of the Bern Convention in promoting coherence in biodiversity policies across the Pan-European region and the African countries involved; and urged Parties to use the Convention as a fundamental instrument for implementing the global post-2010 biodiversity targets.

Specifically in respect of plants, a European plant conservation strategy was launched in 2002 by the Council of Europe in conjunction with Planta Europa, as a regional response to the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation⁸. A review of this in 2007 led to a revised version for 2008-2014, later extended to 2020, which contained 41 targets linked to the Global Strategy⁹. A further review was considered by the Bern Convention Standing Committee in 2020 (in draft form, prior to publication in 2021), which noted a suggestion that follow-up of the conclusions and recommendations of the review could be addressed in 2021 within the work of the Working Group on the Vision and Strategic Plan.

Specifically in respect of Invasive Alien Species (IAS), the Standing Committee at its 23rd meeting in 2003 adopted Recommendation No.99 (2003) on the European Strategy on Invasive Alien Species, which defines eight strategies and numerous associated actions for addressing IAS¹⁰.

Specifically in respect of wild birds, the Bern Convention and the Convention on Migratory Species have jointly agreed a Strategic Plan for 2020-2030 on eradicating the illegal killing, taking and trade in wild birds¹¹, following a previous Action Plan on this subject¹²,

Other topic-related planning documents in the framework of the Convention at a more programmatic/operational level have included the Calendar for the implementation of the Emerald Network¹³, a proposed post-2020 work plan for the Emerald Network¹⁴, the Programme of work on climate change and biodiversity¹⁵, the Recommendation on nature-based solutions and management of

⁷ Standing Committee of the Bern Convention (2009). Declaration on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in Europe: 2010 and beyond. Adopted by the Standing Committee at its 29th meeting, Bern, 23-26 November 2009.

⁸ Planta Europa and the Council of Europe (2002). Saving the Plants of Europe; the European Plant Conservation Strategy. Plantlife International, London.

⁹ Planta Europa (2008). A Sustainable Future for Europe; the European Strategy for Plant Conservation 2008 - 2014. Plantlife International, Salisbury; and the Council of Europe, Strasbourg.

¹⁰ Genovesi, P and Shine, C (2003). European Strategy on Invasive Alien Species. Document T-PVS (2003) 7 for the 23rd meeting of the Standing Committee for the Bern Convention, Strasbourg, 1-5 December 2003. Also re-published in 2011 as Nature and Environment series No. 161, Council of Europe, Strasbourg.

¹¹ Secretariats of the Bern Convention and the Convention on Migratory Species (2019). Rome Strategic Plan 2020-2030: Eradicating Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade in Wild Birds in Europe and the Mediterranean region. Document T-PVS(2019)3rev for the 39th meeting of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention, Strasbourg, 3-6 December 2019.

¹² Standing Committee of the Bern Convention (2013). The implementation of the Tunis Action Plan 2013-2020 for the eradication of illegal killing, trapping and trade of wild birds. Recommendation No. 164 (2013) adopted by the 33rd meeting of the Standing Committee, Strasbourg, December 2013.

¹³ Bern Convention Secretariat (2015). Revised Calendar for the implementation of the Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest 2011-2020. Document T-PVS/PA (2015) 16 for the 35th meeting of the Standing Committee, Strasbourg, 1-4 December 2015.

¹⁴ Opermanis, O and Roekaerts, M (2020). Evaluation of the 2011-2020 Emerald Network workplan [and] Proposal of a post-2020 workplan. Document T-PVS/PA(2020)04 rev for the 40th meeting of the Standing Committee, Strasbourg, 30 November - 4 December 2020.

¹⁵ Huntley, B (2015). Programme of work on climatic change and biodiversity conservation. Document T-PVS/Inf(2015)25 for the 35th meeting of the Standing Committee for the Bern Convention, Strasbourg, 1-4 December 2015.

At the EU level see also European Commission (2021). Forging a climate-resilient Europe - the new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change. EC Communication COM(2021)82 final, Brussels, 24 February 2021.

protected areas in the face of climate change¹⁶ the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons¹⁷, the Action Plan for the eradication of the Ruddy Duck in the Western Palearctic¹⁸, and a variety of other individual Species Action Plans for birds¹⁹. In addition to several thematic awareness raising campaigns, a strategic communications campaign is being developed for the Convention²⁰.

The Convention's work overall is framed by Programmes of Work adopted on a biennial basis by the Standing Committee and linked to the Council of Europe's budget cycle²¹. These programmes tend to follow a three-part structure of (i) monitoring of obligations, (ii) standard setting and (iii) assistance to Parties.

Options for a potential revised future way of working for the Convention were discussed at the 40th meeting of the Standing Committee in December 2020, in light of the challenges faced in securing sustainable levels of funding. The options included amending the Convention and/or establishing a special agreement on the fund for its implementation^{22,23}. The Committee agreed to pursue the latter, and to return to the question of a possible amendment to the Convention at its 41st meeting. These aspects are not addressed further in the present paper as they lie beyond its scope; but they will be relevant to bear in mind as background while a separate Intersessional Working Group on Financing continues its work during 2021, since the eventual results of that work could affect structures for governance and operation of the Convention.

Reference has already been made above to the review of the Convention's contribution to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, considered by the Standing Committee in 2019²⁴. This articulated the strategic correspondence between measures taken under the Bern Convention and the globally-adopted Aichi Biodiversity Targets, in line with previous affirmations of the importance of the Convention as a pan-European regional instrument for implementing many aspects of the global biodiversity agenda. While the review demonstrated the strength of this linkage, and showed an ability to assess progress with some aspects such as the conservation status of certain species and habitats, it expressed a general concern at the lack of any other effective outcome-oriented measures for assessing the Convention's impact at national level or its contribution to the achievement of global targets. It concluded with a suggestion that this issue should be addressed in the course of designing the Bern Convention's strategic priorities for the decade to 2030 and its contribution to the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

Finally, although consideration of a possible Resolution on a vision for the Bern Convention for the decade to 2030 was deferred until 2021, the draft of a text made available to Standing Committee 40 in 2020 included some suggested wording for a vision, as follows:

¹⁶ Standing Committee of the Bern Convention (2019). Nature-based solutions and management of protected areas in the face of climate change. Recommendation No. 206 (2019) adopted by the Standing Committee at its 39th meeting, Strasbourg, 3-6 December 2019.

¹⁷ World Sturgeon Conservation Society and WWF (2018). Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons. Document T-PVS/Inf(2018)6 for the 38th meeting of the Standing Committee for the Bern Convention, Strasbourg, 27-30 November 2018.

¹⁸ Standing Committee of the Bern Convention (2020). Action Plan for the eradication of the Ruddy Duck in the Western Palearctic, 2021–2025. Annex to Recommendation No.209 (2020) on the eradication of the Ruddy Duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) in the Western Palearctic by 2025. Adopted by the Standing Committee at its 40th meeting, Strasbourg, 30 November - 4 December 2020.

¹⁹ (Documents available at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/bern-convention/on-the-conservation-of-birds>).

²⁰ Bern Convention Secretariat (2020b). Voices of Nature: A campaign highlighting the Bern Convention's role in strengthening human rights and democracy through nature conservation.

²¹ For the most recent example see Bern Convention Secretariat (2019c). Programme of activities and budget of the Bern Convention 2020-2021. Document T-PVS(2019)18 for the 39th meeting of the Standing Committee Strasbourg, 3-6 December 2019. (Update for 2021 also provided to the Committee at its 40th meeting in document T-PVS(2020)07).

²² Bern Convention Secretariat (2020c). Establishment of a Partial Agreement on the Fund for the implementation of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention). Document T-PVS/Inf(2020)03rev for the 40th meeting of the Standing Committee, Strasbourg, 30 November - 4 December 2020.

²³ Bern Convention Secretariat (2020d). Explanatory notes to the proposals of setting up a sustainable funding mechanism for the Bern Convention. Document T-PVS/Inf(2020)4 for the 40th meeting of the Standing Committee, Strasbourg, 30 November - 4 December 2020.

²⁴ Bern Convention Secretariat (2019b), *op cit*.

“Building on its 40-years-long experience and achievements, the Bern Convention continues to support its Contracting Parties in ensuring the conservation of wild flora and fauna species and their habitats within its unique geographic scope and to pro-actively support the concrete implementation, at the regional pan-European level, of the Global Biodiversity Framework by addressing the main challenges facing nature conservation today and in particular the direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss, in accordance with its mandate and in close cooperation with all other relevant treaties, organisations and initiatives”²⁵.

3. The purpose of a new Vision and Strategic Plan

For the Strategic Plan to be more than merely a descriptive reference work, there should be great clarity at the outset about its active purpose: what gap it is intended to fill, what would be lacking if it was not there, what change it is aiming to bring about, and how it will be used in a practical sense.

The draft Resolution considered by the Standing Committee in 2019, in wording now taken forward into the Terms of Reference for the Strategic Plan Working Group, referred to a *“need for a more strategic planning of the work of the Convention, in particular in a time of budget constraints and diminishing human and financial resources and in view of ensuring the appropriate synergies and partnerships are established with all relevant treaties, initiatives and organisations, in particular for the period 2021-2030 for which a new global biodiversity framework is going to be finalised”*. Otherwise nothing prescriptive about this has yet been agreed, and the Working Group itself may wish to make a clear statement about the purpose of the Vision and Plan.

Some possible elements that could be considered for this could include:

- Defining a clear “high level” ambition for what the Parties wish that the Convention should achieve (an end objective);
- Defining a direction of travel, and a “pathway of change” for getting from “here” to there”;
- Providing a guiding framework for programmes, activities and decision-making, including priorities for mobilising and allocating resources;
- Specifying the Convention’s contribution to wider (global) agendas on biodiversity conservation and climate change, and promoting synergies;
- Increasing consciousness of, and support for, the particular strengths, opportunities and added value of the Bern Convention and its implementation mechanisms (at “political” and other levels);
- Providing a formal basis for closer mutual reinforcement between the Council of Europe’s agendas on nature conservation, landscape, major hazards, cultural heritage, human rights and democracy;
- Providing a robust and stable set of specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound targets and indicators of success, backed by a commitment to adequate monitoring, reporting and evaluation of these.

It might be important to focus on the significance of the word “strategic”, and to ensure that there is a shared understanding of what this term suggests about the nature of the document to be developed. It could mean, for example:

- A very short/accessible summary statement of intentions, with the underpinning detail being held elsewhere;
- A high-level (“political”) document, rather than a technical/operational one;

²⁵ Bern Convention Secretariat (2019a), *op cit*.

- A proactive agenda for ultimate change, rather than a programme of reactive responses to proximate challenges;
- A plan that *leads* the development of policies, programmes and actions, rather than one that simply packages together those that have already been agreed.

The particular strengths and added value of the Bern Convention which might deserve special attention in the Plan could involve some or all of the following:

- Being a model of international cooperation and implementation of global agendas (including its contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals) at the pan-European (i.e. more than EU) regional scale;
- The body of standards and tailored guidance products developed over the years for assisting Parties;
- The special regime represented by the international coherence of the Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest;
- The special efforts made through topic-focused strategies on Invasive Alien Species, plants, and illegal wildlife killing, and through Action Plans for individual species or groups of species;
- The special regime of monitoring and follow-up represented by the system of Case Files and On-the Spot Appraisals;
- The opportunities for effective complementarity and synergy with other relevant multilateral agreements, organisations and processes;
- The strong and long-established working relationships with civil society organisations and NGOs;
- The opportunities to reflect the core values of the Council of Europe, and to interface with its agendas on landscape, major hazards, cultural heritage, human rights, democracy and quality of life.

➤ Possible questions for discussion

- Who is the Strategic Plan (mainly) for? Who is it communicating to?
- What should the Parties be able to do with the Plan that they cannot do effectively now?
- What will be different in 2030 as a direct consequence of having this Plan?
- How will the Plan be used?
- Where should the balance lie, between “stretching ambition” and “realistic achievability”?
- Where should the balance lie, between a “short high level political statement” and an “operational planning framework”?
- What is the purpose of the Vision?
- What other purposes should guide the development of the Plan?

4. Possible approaches to constructing the Vision and Strategic Plan

Several options could be considered for the overall approach to constructing the Vision and Strategic Plan. Some of these (there could be others) are described briefly below.

(a) Following the structure of the Convention itself

This could suggest a plan with sections such as:

- Rationale
- Overall objective
- Long-term conservation priorities
- The role of national policies and plans
- Conservation of habitats
- Protection of species
- Effective governance and administration of the Convention
- Expanding Convention membership.

(b) Following the typical main lines of the programmes of work under the Convention

This could suggest a plan with sections that would include (among others, probably):

- Obligations
 - Implementation of legal aspects
 - Resolution No. 8 (2012) on the conservation status of species and habitats
 - Monitoring of specific sites and populations
- Standards
 - Conservation of species
 - Conservation of natural habitats
- Assistance to Parties and coordination of the implementation of legal provisions and past Recommendations.

(c) With goals and targets corresponding to those in the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

The current draft of the GBF²⁶ contains the following goals and targets:

GOALS (for 2050, each with associated “milestones” for 2030):

- A. The area, connectivity and integrity of natural ecosystems increased by at least [X%] supporting healthy and resilient populations of all species while reducing the number of species that are threatened by [X%] and maintaining genetic diversity.
 - A.1 (By 2030) The area, connectivity and integrity of natural systems increased by at least [5%].
 - A.2 (By 2030) The number of species that are threatened is reduced by [X%] and the abundance of species has increased on average by [X%].
- B. Nature’s contributions to people have been valued, maintained or enhanced through conservation and sustainable use supporting global development agenda for the benefit of all people.

²⁶ Co-Chairs of the Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (2020). Update of the Zero Draft of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. Document CBD/POST2020/PREP/2/1. Convention on Biological Diversity, 17 August 2020.

- B.1 (By 2030) Nature contributes to the sustainable diets and food security, access to safe drinking water and resilience to natural disasters for at least [X%] million people.
- B.2 (By 2030) Nature is valued through green investments, ecosystem service valuation in national accounts, and public and private sector financial disclosures.
- C. The benefits, from the utilization of genetic resources are shared fairly and equitably.
 - C.1 (By 2030) Access and benefit-sharing mechanisms are established in all countries.
 - C.2 (By 2030) Benefits shared increased by [X%].
- D. Means of implementation are available to achieve all goals and targets in the framework.
 - D.1 By 2022, means to implement the framework for the period 2020 to 2030 are identified and committed.
 - D.2 By 2030, means to implement the framework for the period 2030 to 2040 are identified or committed.

TARGETS:

Reducing threats to biodiversity

1. By 2030, [50%] of land and sea areas globally are under spatial planning addressing land/sea use change, retaining most of the existing intact and wilderness areas, and allow to restore [X%] of degraded freshwater, marine and terrestrial natural ecosystems and connectivity among them.
2. By 2030, protect and conserve through well connected and effective system of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures at least 30 per cent of the planet with the focus on areas particularly important for biodiversity.
3. By 2030, ensure active management actions to enable wild species of fauna and flora recovery and conservation, and reduce human-wildlife conflict by [X%].
4. By 2030, ensure that the harvesting, trade and use of wild species of fauna and flora is legal, at sustainable levels and safe.
5. By 2030, manage, and where possible control, pathways for the introduction of invasive alien species, achieving [50%] reduction in the rate of new introductions, and control or eradicate invasive alien species to eliminate or reduce their impacts, including in at least [50%] of priority sites.
6. By 2030, reduce pollution from all sources, including reducing excess nutrients [by x%], biocides [by x%], plastic waste [by x%] to levels that are not harmful to biodiversity and ecosystem functions and human health.
7. By 2030, increase contributions to climate change mitigation adaption and disaster risk reduction from nature-based solutions and ecosystems based approaches, ensuring resilience and minimizing any negative impacts on biodiversity.

Meeting people's needs through sustainable use and benefit-sharing

8. By 2030, ensure benefits, including nutrition, food security, livelihoods, health and well-being, for people, especially for the most vulnerable through sustainable management of wild species of fauna and flora.
9. By 2030, support the productivity, sustainability and resilience of biodiversity in agricultural and other managed ecosystems through conservation and sustainable use of such ecosystems, reducing productivity gaps by at least [50%].
10. By 2030, ensure that, nature based solutions and ecosystem approach contribute to regulation of air quality, hazards and extreme events and quality and quantity of water for at least [XXX million] people.
11. By 2030, increase benefits from biodiversity and green/blue spaces for human health and well-being, including the proportion of people with access to such spaces by at least [100%], especially for urban dwellers.

12. By 2030, increase by [X] benefits shared for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity through ensuring access to and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge.

Tools and solutions for implementation and mainstreaming

13. By 2030, integrate biodiversity values into policies, regulations, planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts at all levels, ensuring that biodiversity values are mainstreamed across all sectors and integrated into assessments of environmental impacts.
14. By 2030, achieve reduction of at least [50%] in negative impacts on biodiversity by ensuring production practices and supply chains are sustainable.
15. By 2030, eliminate unsustainable consumption patterns, ensuring people everywhere understand and appreciate the value of biodiversity, and thus make responsible choices commensurate with 2050 biodiversity vision, taking into account individual and national cultural and socioeconomic conditions.
16. By 2030, establish and implement measures to prevent, manage or control potential adverse impacts of biotechnology on biodiversity and human health reducing these impacts by [X].
17. By 2030, redirect, repurpose, reform or eliminate incentives harmful for biodiversity, including [X] reduction in the most harmful subsidies, ensuring that incentives, including public and private economic and regulatory incentives, are either positive or neutral for biodiversity.
18. By 2030, increase by [X%] financial resources from all international and domestic sources, through new, additional and effective financial resources commensurate with the ambition of the goals and targets of the framework and implement the strategy for capacity-building and technology transfer and scientific cooperation to meet the needs for implementing the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.
19. By 2030, ensure that quality information, including traditional knowledge, is available to decision makers and public for the effective management of biodiversity through promoting awareness, education and research.
20. By 2030, ensure equitable participation in decision-making related to biodiversity and ensure rights over relevant resources of indigenous peoples and local communities, women and girls as well as youth, in accordance with national circumstances.

(d) With objectives corresponding to those in the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030

The EU Biodiversity Strategy²⁷ contains the following objectives (beginning at number 2: the section numbered 1 gives background on the need for urgent action):

2.1 A coherent network of protected areas

1. Legally protect a minimum of 30% of the EU's land area and 30% of the EU's sea area and integrate ecological corridors, as part of a true Trans-European Nature Network.
2. Strictly protect at least a third of the EU's protected areas, including all remaining EU primary and old-growth forests.
3. Effectively manage all protected areas, defining clear conservation objectives and measures, and monitoring them appropriately.

2.2 An EU Nature Restoration Plan: restoring ecosystems across land and sea

2.2.1 Strengthening the EU legal framework for nature restoration

- Legally binding EU nature restoration targets to be proposed in 2021, subject to an impact assessment. By 2030, significant areas of degraded and carbon-rich ecosystems

²⁷ European Commission (2020). EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030: "Bringing nature back into our lives". EC Communication COM(2020) 380 final, Brussels, 20 May 2020.

are restored; habitats and species show no deterioration in conservation trends and status; and at least 30% reach favourable conservation status or at least show a positive trend.

2.2.2 Bringing nature back to agricultural land

- The decline in pollinators is reversed.
- The risk and use of chemical pesticides is reduced by 50% and the use of more hazardous pesticides is reduced by 50%.
- At least 10% of agricultural area is under high-diversity landscape features.
- At least 25% of agricultural land is under organic farming management, and the uptake of agro-ecological practices is significantly increased.

2.2.3 Addressing land take and restoring soil ecosystems

- Significant progress has been made in the remediation of contaminated soil sites.

2.2.4 Increasing the quantity of forests and improving their health and resilience

- Three billion new trees are planted in the EU, in full respect of ecological principles.

2.2.5 Win-win solutions for energy generation

2.2.6 Restoring the good environmental status of marine ecosystems

- The negative impacts on sensitive species and habitats, including on the seabed through fishing and extraction activities, are substantially reduced to achieve good environmental status.
- The by-catch of species is eliminated or reduced to a level that allows species recovery and conservation.

2.2.7 Restoring freshwater ecosystems

- At least 25,000 km of free-flowing rivers are restored.

2.2.8 Greening urban and peri-urban areas

- Cities with at least 20,000 inhabitants have an ambitious Urban Greening Plan.
- No chemical pesticides are used in sensitive areas such as EU urban green areas.

2.2.9 Reducing pollution

- The losses of nutrients from fertilisers are reduced by 50%, resulting in the reduction of the use of fertilisers by at least 20%.

2.2.10 Addressing invasive alien species

- There is a 50% reduction in the number of Red List species threatened by invasive alien species.

(e) Divided into two parts, separating a “high level statement” from the rest

Mention has already been made above of this possibility, wherein a very short/accessible summary “vision” document could function as a standalone high-level “political” statement of intended outcomes; with the underpinning strategic framework of targets, enabling measures and methods for assessing progress (etc.) being detailed separately in an annex, or in an accompanying second document.

In addition, of course, whatever approach is taken to the Plan, its “strategic” lead can cascade through to additional action plans, work programmes and similar frameworks that elaborate its implementation in greater “operational” detail.

➤ **Possible questions for discussion**

- Which (if any) of the approaches described above are particularly appealing?
- Are there any other approaches to the *overall construction* of the Bern Convention Plan that should be considered?
- What lessons have been learned from the experiences of other Strategic Plans about effective/less effective approaches to the overall structure?
- Should there be a limit on the number of pages? If so, what should it be?

5. Potential elements for inclusion in a first draft

The following is a list (a-k) of possible elements that could form sections of an eventual first draft of the Strategic Plan. They may not necessarily all need to feature, and not necessarily in the order given here; and there may be others that should be added. The suggestions here at this stage therefore simply provide a menu of possibilities for stimulating discussion.

(a) About the Bern Convention

Some brief factual information about the Convention could be given here. This could also be a section in which to identify the distinctive niche the Bern Convention occupies, the specific added value it contributes, and its situation in relation to (for example) the wider role of the Council of Europe and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

(b) Purpose of the Vision and Strategic Plan

It would be valuable to include at the start a clear statement of the purpose of the document, and how (and by whom) it is expected to be used. (See the suggestions on this in section 3 of the present document above).

(c) Context: the need for urgent and intensified action; and the opportunity

The *external* context for the Plan could include some summary statements (drawn e.g. from IPBES assessments, the Global Biodiversity Outlook, etc.) about global trends in biodiversity and the state of crisis to which the Vision and Plan are aiming to respond. This could be related to statements about the fundamental importance of biodiversity to human survival and well-being. The main drivers of change could be identified, including links to climate change.

Although the Plan needs to take a long view (to 2030) and should not over-emphasise immediate issues such as the Covid-19 pandemic, it may be appropriate to allude to this by making some mention of the link between biodiversity loss and zoonoses.

The scale of response required should probably be articulated, in similar terms to those used in the draft post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and the EU Biodiversity Strategy, by referring for example to the need for an “urgent” and “transformative” escalation of efforts to halt and reverse the loss and degradation of biodiversity and natural systems, and highlighting the magnitude of the costs to society of inadequate action.

The Plan's context also includes its being a specific contribution to the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, the EU Strategy, the UN Sustainable Development Goals; and efforts for synergy among biodiversity-related Multilateral Environmental Agreements in general.

Positive emphasis could be given to the opportunity represented by “nature-based solutions” for combating climate change²⁸, promoting human health, managing floods, drought and fires, and securing food, water and energy.

It could also be relevant to emphasise the importance of international cooperation, stable frameworks of norms and standards, effective and adaptive mechanisms for monitoring, assessment and accountability, and the need for governments, civil society and businesses to work together (all of which the Bern Convention is positioned to address).

The *internal* context for the Plan would include all decided priorities for the development of the Convention over the decade to 2030; the pressures and possibilities that influence its direction of travel; and the other mechanisms (i.e. in addition to the Strategic Plan) for topic-based strategic planning, activity programming and progress-monitoring etc. that exist.

The internal context also includes all relevant experiences, lessons learnt and recommendations emerging from existing planning and programming processes to date, within the framework of the Convention. The Standing Committee has already suggested for example that the Strategic Plan Working Group should give attention to following up the conclusions of the 2020 review of the European Plant Conservation Strategy (see section 2 of the present document above). (In summary, those conclusions were as follows):

- Updating of some policies could be considered.
- Threatened species require additional measures.
- Protected areas will continue to play a key role in plant conservation.
- There is an urgent need for habitat restoration and green infrastructure beyond protected areas.
- Inadequate compliance and implementation are reasons for policy failure.
- Lack of sectoral integration is a key reason for policy failure.
- All sectors need to recognise their links to biodiversity and mitigate impacts.
- Data gaps hinder the delivery of plant conservation targets and research needs remain.
- Civil society, volunteers and new technologies provide huge potential for plant conservation.
- Good monitoring data will be needed to facilitate adaptive management.
- European botanic gardens make a key contribution to plant conservation globally, and their expertise could be used more broadly.
- Better resourcing for plant conservation measures is essential.
- Transformational change is needed to conserve biodiversity.
- Transformation change requires public support.

(d) Statement of Mission and Vision

The decision to develop a Strategic Plan includes a decision to adopt with it a statement of “vision”, and one possible text for this was suggested in 2019²⁹. Strategic Plans sometimes also describe a “mission”, and one characterisation of this for the Bern Convention has also been articulated in earlier documents, as described in section 2 above³⁰.

The precise distinction between a “mission” and a “vision” varies somewhat in different contexts, and the Working Group may wish to consider what would be most useful to include in the new Strategic Plan.

²⁸ See for example Standing Committee of the Bern Convention (2019), *op cit.*

²⁹ Bern Convention Secretariat (2019a), *op cit.*

³⁰ Bern Convention Secretariat (2020a), *op cit.*

(e) The pathway for change

Goals and targets (see (f) below) should describe the desired end state to be achieved for particular issues by the year 2030 as a result of actions mandated in the context of the Plan. The relationship between those actions and the end result can be variously referred to as the “causal pathway”, the “chain of causation” or the “theory of change”, which are all ways of explaining *why* and *how* a given action should lead to a shift from the “baseline condition” (status in 2021) to the desired outcome (status in 2030).

The Plan could include some general statements of the principles and assumptions on which it is based, in this respect. This could for example touch on the role of international standards in “levelling up” performance; the role of policy in leading practice (and resource allocations); the relationship between public opinion and political will; the need to “mainstream” biodiversity conservation agendas across other policy sectors; the importance of evidence-led approaches using the best available science; the cumulative effects of transnational action; the role of incentives (including economic) and feedback loops in influencing behaviour-change; the importance of participatory, equitable and transparent approaches in maintaining public confidence and support; the interplay between Bern Convention contributions and other contributions; and/or other factors.

(f) Specific goals and targets

This might be expected to be the main substantive section of the Plan, and the main focus for detailed discussion within the Working Group. Parties and other stakeholders are likely to want the objectives stated in the plan to cover all the issues that are perceived to be important, but at the same time to be a compactly-packaged, easily communicable and “graspable” “manifesto” style agenda for practical action. Balancing these two desires may have its challenges.

Depending on what view is taken about the relationship of the Plan to other existing (or soon to exist) schemes of goals and targets (as outlined in section 4 above), the content of this section of the Bern Convention Plan might be substantially shaped by one or more of those other schemes.

Within the Bern Convention Plan itself, however, it will be important to ensure a kind of internal coherence of its hierarchical logic, such that achievement of all of the targets should automatically amount to achievement of all of the goals to which they relate; and achievement of all of the goals should in turn amount to achievement of the “vision”.

An additional element of the approach taken in the draft post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework may be worth considering here too, whereby each goal is supplemented by “milestones” that define the progress to be expected at an intermediate stage.

Another key challenge to be confronted in this section is to have clarity in the distinction between objectives that are defined in terms of *processes* or *activities* (sometimes referred to as “means” objectives) and those that are, by contrast, defined in terms of *outcomes* (sometimes referred to as “ends” objectives). Ideally, the Plan, to be truly “strategic”, should lean mainly towards the latter.

The other principle that should underpin the definition of targets in the Plan is that they should conform to the “SMART” standard - meaning that they should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.

(g) Monitoring and evaluation

The Plan should contain within itself (or as an integral annex) its own regime for monitoring and evaluation of all the objectives (goals, milestones, targets etc.) it defines. This would typically define, for each objective, a summary of the baseline or reference condition (and/or a source reference where the baseline is defined); one or more indicators (which should be “SMART”, as described in (f) above);

the actual metrics by means of which each indicator would be measured; the means of verification to be used for gathering data on the specified metrics; and any intermediate “milestone” stages that are also to be assessed.

Monitoring and evaluation is an activity in its own right, which may need capacity and resources dedicating to it. This is fundamental to being able to judge whether or not the Plan has done what it set out to do; and a failure to provide adequately for this could undermine the investment made in the rest of the process.

The specification of processes for reviewing progress could lie outside the Plan itself; but in one form or another, the Parties/the Standing Committee will want to have a system of assurance that the Plan is achieving the impact it was designed to achieve. The monitoring & evaluation regime should therefore be constructed in such a way as to satisfy this need; meaning that as well as being able to assess progress towards any individual objective, the difference being made *by the Plan as a whole* should also be capable of being assessed. In addition to being able to assess progress, these processes should be able to define adjustments and new actions (“course corrections”) that may be required to address delays, shortcomings and evolving circumstances that become apparent during the life of the Plan.

(h) Ownership and responsibilities for implementation

The Strategic Plan will be an international framework, but its realisation will depend on “cascading” (also) into national and sub-national operating contexts. The expected steps by which it will achieve “ownership” at these levels, and the allocation (in general terms) of responsibility for implementing its various provisions, will need to be made clear. Contracting Party governments obviously have a primary responsibility, but reference has been made earlier in this document to the integral part that is likely to be played by others (such as non-governmental organisations, scientific institutions and private sector interests), and the nature of partnership working with these others could also be explained.

(i) Relationship to action plans and other instruments for implementation

Section 2 of this document above has already mentioned several other strategic planning instruments that exist within the framework of the Bern Convention, and the new Strategic Plan will need to articulate with these in a coherent way (potentially even by integrating/superseding some of them).

In the case of well-developed programmes such as the Emerald Network, there is a strong case for such a programme to have its own standalone strategic planning document, with its own specific targets and progress indicators³¹. There will however need to be a seamless relationship between any such topic-based strategies and the strategy for the Convention as a whole.

(j) Promoting awareness and use of the Plan

Once adopted, the Plan may merit a dedicated communications and outreach effort to ensure there is sufficient awareness of its existence and value, and to promote its practical uptake and use. This may need different tactics for covering each of the potential “political”, “technical” and “popular” target audiences³².

(k) Capacity and resources

Some considerations may be worth including here on issues such as the mobilisation of resources for implementing the Plan; the development of new or strengthened capacity where this is needed; the generation, management and sharing of knowledge; and cooperation on matters of science, technology and innovation. All of these could/should be addressed both within countries and between countries.

³¹ A proposal for this is already in development - see Opermanis and Roekaerts (2020), *op cit*.

³² See Bern Convention Secretariat (2020b) *op cit* for an example of current efforts in this direction.

➤ Possible questions for discussion

- Which elements (either those described above, or others that may be suggested) should be included in a first draft of the Strategic Plan?
- Are there any strong views about the sequence in which the chosen elements should be presented in the draft?
- Are there any strong views about the relative length/detail of the different elements to be included?
- What is the preferred approach to inclusion of a “vision” and/or “mission”?
- Are there specific suggestions at this stage about goals and targets? What *must* be included as a goal or target?
- Are there specific suggestions at this stage about any other elements of the content of the Plan?

6. Taking the process forward

The possibilities outlined in this document are a starting-point for discussion, and it will be for the Working Group to narrow down its preferred approach and determine the way forward. A timetable for bringing a worked-up draft of the Vision and Strategic Plan to the Bureau, and ultimately the Standing Committee for consideration and possible adoption, will be presented in a separate document. There may be different timing scenarios to be anticipated according to the eventual confirmation of dates for COP15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, when it is expected that the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework will be adopted – in other words whether that occurs before or after the date of the Bern Convention Standing Committee’s 41st meeting on 30 November – 3 December 2021.

In the meantime, consultative input through the Working Group on the developing draft will be important to ensure that a balanced range of perspectives is taken into account. In due course, wider “ownership” of the Plan among Contracting Parties, other governments, other partners and stakeholders will be vital to ensure that it has the requisite political and public support, that it is used in practice, and that it continues to have momentum as a “living document”. Provisions for this could usefully be discussed in parallel with the development of the text.

➤ Possible questions for discussion

- Are there any other milestones that need adding to the timetable of steps for preparing the Strategic Plan?
- What working practices does the Working Group wish to adopt for making input to the process after the present meeting?
- What steps should be taken in due course to ensure appropriate political support for the Plan?
- What steps should be taken in due course to ensure effective synergies/complementarities with other Conventions and related frameworks?