



Target to ‘protect’ 30% of earth by 2030 – a disaster for people and bad for the planet.

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Survival International, Amnesty International, Minority Rights Group International (MRG) and Rainforest Foundation UK (RFUK) call on States to urgently reconsider their pledge to declare 30% of the planet as ‘Protected Areas’, set to be adopted at the 15th Conference of Parties (COP) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in December in Montreal. Without a serious overhaul, the so-called 30x30 target¹ will devastate the lives of Indigenous Peoples and will be hugely destructive for the livelihoods of other subsistence land-users, while diverting attention away from the real drivers of biodiversity and climate collapse.

In April 2021, [250 Indigenous organisations, NGOs and academics](#) came together to express concern over the proposed doubling of Protected Areas under the UN Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).² Protected Areas, which are the cornerstone of mainstream, western-led conservation efforts, have led to widespread evictions, hunger, ill-health and human rights violations, including killings, rapes and torture across Africa and Asia.

Many have subsequently expressed their concerns about the human cost of 30x30 and how expanding the Protected Area network could lead to many more human rights violations³ and other negative impacts on millions of people who are the least responsible for the biodiversity and climate crisis.

There has been much lip service about embedding human rights and land rights in the GBF and discussion about the role of ‘other effective area-based conservation measures’ (OECMs) in meeting the target. However, while OECMs allow for the inclusion of territories managed by Indigenous Peoples⁴, the likelihood is that exclusionary Protected Areas will make up the bulk of the target in the absence of much stronger protections for communities. Yet, if anything, recent revisions to the draft GBF appear to roll back these protections by

¹ Target 3 of the draft Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) proposes to commit states parties to the CBD to declaring at least 30% of the world’s land and sea masses as Protected Areas “and other effective area-based conservation measures”. See Report of the Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework on its third meeting (part II), CBD/WG2020/3/7, <https://www.cbd.int/conferences/post2020/wg2020-03/documents>

² <https://assets.survivalinternational.org/documents/1972/en-fr-es-it-de-200928.pdf>

³ See Policy Brief No. 1, Human rights-based approaches to conserving biodiversity: equitable, effective and imperative, UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment, David R. Boyd and Stephanie Keene, August 2021: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Environment/SREnvironment/policy-briefing-1.pdf>

⁴ This is not the same as simply including Indigenous territories in the 30% target. OECM’s require Indigenous people to meet a number of conditions, including proving a direct causal link between the overall objective and management of their area and long-term biodiversity conservation.

downgrading language on rights from being an integral part of the monitored target to mere 'guidance', relegated to a separate section.⁵

30x30 is also an arbitrary number that lacks robust scientific backing.⁶ There is little evidence that existing Protected Areas have successfully *protected* ecosystems and should therefore be expanded, and the target is being set without an assessment of their social impacts. The evidence is also clear that stopping ecological collapse will take much more than an enlarged global Protected Area network, with a much stronger focus needed on addressing the drivers of biodiversity loss, such as overconsumption. We note that other key parts of the GBF, such as Target 15, aimed at addressing these drivers, have been progressively weakened over successive draft texts.

Given that 80% of the world's biodiversity is found on Indigenous Peoples' lands, the evidence is clear that the best way to conserve ecosystems is to protect the rights of those who live in and depend on them.

We therefore believe that a fundamentally different approach is required for any conservation targets, which should:

1. Give priority to the recognition and protection of collective and customary land tenure systems of Indigenous Peoples, guaranteeing their rights to lands, resources, self-determination and to free, prior and informed consent, as required by international human rights agreements.
2. Recognise the rights of other subsistence land-users to be protected from forced evictions, to enjoy an adequate standard of living, and to be consulted on all decisions impacting their rights.
3. Focus on ensuring that all threatened species and ecosystems are adequately protected, rather than just increasing Protected Areas.
4. Adequately address the underlying drivers of biodiversity loss.

⁵ For example, in the text emanating from the Informal Group in October 2022:

<https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/dfeb/e742/b936c09eae9dd558c1310b5b/wg2020-05-02-en.pdf>

⁶ ["The 30x30 conservation pledge isn't backed by science" - warn human rights groups - Rainforest Foundation UK](#)