

G20 Environment Ministers Communiqué

Annex

G20 Documents

1. Global Initiative on Reducing Land Degradation and Enhancing Conservation of Terrestrial Habitats
2. Global Coral Reef R&D Accelerator Platform

Other Documents

3. A Statement of the Presidency on the Republic of Turkey's Position

Annex 1: Global Initiative on Reducing Land Degradation and Enhancing Conservation of Terrestrial Habitats

An initiative launched by G20

Land degradation and the associated loss of natural terrestrial habitats are major drivers of environmental and natural resource depletion worldwide with significant impacts on terrestrial habitats, on biodiversity and its ecosystem services, including weather systems and the absorption of emissions in addition to causing significant socioeconomic impacts. Fortunately, land restoration and avoidance of habitat loss are often cost-effective solutions to address biodiversity loss and other key environmental challenges yielding high social and economic returns, and are closely connected to ecosystem restoration contributing to achieving SDG 15, and in particular its target 15.3. There are several existing initiatives that aim to address land degradation and habitat loss at the local, regional, and global levels. Despite this good work, the rate of land degradation and habitat loss continues to be alarming with significant human, environmental, economic and social consequences, highlighting the urgent need to support existing efforts to prevent land degradation and to restore land. In that regard, the land degradation and restoration assessment by IPBES points out that most of the UN Sustainable Development Goals cannot be achieved unless the causes of land degradation and habitat loss are addressed simultaneously.

This initiative, which is based on voluntary participation, aims to support existing efforts to prevent, halt, and reverse land degradation and habitat loss through sharing of knowledge and best practices on protecting, conserving, sustainably managing, restoring, and rehabilitating degraded land, and by showcasing and disseminating publicly available data and information on degraded lands and conservation/restoration efforts. The initiative will also contribute to capacity building and encourage greater private sector support and general public engagement in land restoration efforts. The initiative focuses on complementing and supporting existing efforts while striving to avoid any duplication of efforts. The Initiative will seek synergies with existing relevant initiatives including the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and the implementation of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

1. Overall Objective of the Initiative

The initiative seeks, on a voluntary basis and according to members' capacity, to enhance collaboration among G20 members and non-member countries to implement relevant SDG goals and related targets under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, by targeting three inter-related objectives:

- I. **Conserving land and halting habitat loss, fragmentation and land¹ degradation**, notably through sharing knowledge and best practices on conservation incentives, including strengthening physical and functional connectivity and quality of protected areas, enhancing land conservation, promoting sustainable land management practices, promoting active fire management and implementation of other policies and best practices to enhance land conservation and reduce land degradation.
- II. **Promoting integrated, sustainable, and resilient land and landscape management** through: nature-based solutions or ecosystem-based approaches; financing mechanisms; urban and land use planning processes at different levels and scales; stronger implementation of international agreements and local environmental governance and laws; the empowerment of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (including women, youth, and smallholders) in land management; secure land tenure, property and land-use rights in accordance with national legislation, as well as supporting sustainable land and water management policies and sustainable agricultural practices, including traditional practices, in order to maintain and enhance ecosystem functionality.
- III. **Restoring degraded land** through sustainable and locally or regionally appropriate reforestation, afforestation, natural regeneration/revegetation, restoration of ecosystem services, sustainable agricultural practices, and deployment of nature-based solutions or ecosystem-based approaches for biodiversity conservation, among others, in order to restore ecosystem functionality in a landscape context. This objective will seek to prevent transfer of degradation (i.e. avoid restoring one area to the detriment of another).

The initiative will also seek to enhance collaboration among G20 members and non-member countries, as appropriate, to support the implementation of current commitments for land protection, sustainable land management, and restoration, as well as seek additional voluntary commitments from participating countries to raise ambition in this respect and contribute to SDG 15, in particular target 15.3.

2. Initiative activities

- A. **Land conservation, sustainable management, and restoration website:** the initiative will establish a website that showcases publicly available information on degraded lands, national and international commitments on land conservation and restoration, best practices, and success stories on land restoration, progress-made, results achieved, and lessons learned. The website will serve as an information sharing hub to provide easier access to information on land degradation, conservation, sustainable management,

¹ Including, but not limited to, forests, rangelands, croplands, mangroves, peatlands, wetlands

and restoration and foster collaboration and broader engagement of various stakeholders in land conservation and restoration efforts. The information gathered by the website will be compiled from information and data shared on voluntary basis by participating countries and organizations and will cite attribution of information sources where possible.

- B. Engagement of private sector and civil society:** the Initiative will engage the private sector to encourage it to support land restoration efforts and adopt sustainable land management practices. This activity will comprise an outreach/encouragement function to promote needed investments and provide information to link investors/contributors to interested initiatives. Similarly, with strong calls from society for urgent environmental action, the Initiative will encourage direct engagement of civil society, including by mobilizing the general public.
- C. Sharing knowledge and building capacity:** the initiative will support the exchange of know-how and capacity building between G20 members, non-member countries, and other partners and additional stakeholders, as well as support efforts to accelerate exchange of best practices to enhance land conservation and restoration efforts.

3. Initiative Implementation Framework

The initiative will be implemented through the Initiative Coordination Office (ICO) under oversight of the UNCCD. The ICO will receive guidance and strategic direction by the **Steering committee** consisting of all interested G20 members, the Secretariats of the UNCCD, FAO, UNEP, as well as non-member countries and other institutions that contribute to the work of the ICO.

The Initiative Coordination Office (ICO) will have dedicated full-time staff and an annual budget from which it will fund its core activities. The ICO will receive administrative and financial oversight from the UNCCD Secretariat as part of a formalized collaboration agreement. The ICO would undertake the following:

- Creating and administering the Land conservation, sustainable management, and restoration website;
- Managing the administrative budget allocated to the ICO;
- Showcasing existing knowledge-sharing products on reducing land degradation and organizing capacity building and knowledge sharing activities
- Preparing reporting on the Initiative for consideration and approval by the initiative Steering Committee and transmission to key stakeholders, such as the G20 and concerned IOs.

Reporting: an annual report will be submitted to the G20 members and published on the initiative website, containing information on progress on

national and international pledges based on publicly available information and data shared on a voluntary basis by participating countries and organizations, as well as on progress of the initiative activities listed in Section 2.

Financial considerations: Funding of the ICO budget will be provided on a voluntary basis by G20 members, non-member countries, and by other institutions. To support the launch of the initiative, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will provide a financial contribution sufficient to fund the initiative ICO budget for the first 10 years. Other G20 members are encouraged to contribute voluntarily as well.

4. Voluntary country pledges

To support the Initiative's overall objectives, G20 members and other non-member countries and stakeholders are invited to make, on a voluntary basis and according to members capacity, country pledges and commitments via the relevant forum / fora or other suitable means such as:

- Pledges to protect, conserve, sustainably manage, restore or rehabilitate degraded land
- Direct contributions, including to existing funds and initiatives aimed at land and ecosystem conservation, sustainable management, and restoration
- Capacity building contributions such as training for grass-roots projects and/or policy support for government officials
- Any other in-kind contribution

5. Next Steps

The Saudi Presidency proposes the following timeline for next steps on the Initiative:

- Following endorsement at the Environment Ministers Meeting, the Initiative will be submitted for Leaders' endorsement at the G20 Riyadh Summit on Nov. 21-22
- Implementation of the Initiative will start in 2021, in line with the launching of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration

Annex 2: Global Coral Reef R&D Accelerator Platform

An initiative launched by G20

The G20 is a major custodian of warm-water and cold-water coral reefs, with about half of the world's tropical reefs located in the Economic Exclusive Zones of G20 members. The G20 considers coral reefs to be amongst the most valuable ecosystems on earth, harbouring incredible biodiversity, supporting livelihoods, and providing economic opportunities for at least 500 million people across the world. However, they are also amongst the ecosystems most vulnerable to unsustainable human activity, which causes coral reef decline through pollution, direct destruction, and ocean warming and acidification. Thanks to their significant economic and scientific capabilities, G20 members can play a vital role in preventing the grim predictions of a catastrophic loss of coral reefs from being realized if the current rate of coral reef loss continues. The G20 therefore proposes the establishment of a voluntary Global Coral Reef R&D Accelerator Platform to accelerate scientific knowledge and technology development in support of coral reef survival, conservation, resilience, adaptation and restoration. The initiative is targeted at addressing the most important knowledge gaps and will be placed in an overarching program design framework.

This voluntary initiative encompasses both warm-water, tropical coral reefs, as well as those growing in deep, cold waters, which have also experienced losses and are also threatened by multiple human pressures.

1. Overall Objectives of the Initiative

The objective of this voluntary G20 initiative is to increase support for and complement existing national, regional, and international initiatives that are currently working on coral reef conservation, resilience, adaptation, and restoration. To achieve this objective, the G20 proposes the establishment of **a Platform focused on accelerating international research and development** to improve the survival, conservation, resilience, adaptation and restoration of both warm-water and deep, cold-water coral reefs.

2. Platform Scope

The Global Coral Reef R&D Accelerator Platform aims to accelerate global R&D and associated capacity to support efforts to reverse the projected losses of coral reefs by focusing on the following areas:

- a. Establishing a coordinating mechanism to connect existing national, regional, and international R&D programs, as well as international panels and the diverse expertise of G20 members, learn from their efforts and diversity of R&D approaches, realize potential synergies, and identify and

- pursue R&D priorities to enhance resilience and conservation of coral reefs globally.
- b. Supporting a gender-balanced, transdisciplinary global community of scientists, technologists and innovators to develop scalable end-to-end solutions contributing to the objectives.
 - c. Seeking opportunities for engagement of the Platform with the R&D capacity of the private sector to collaborate toward coral reef conservation, resilience and restoration.
 - d. Facilitate access to and sharing information from a network of field, research and testing facilities across participating institutions.
 - e. Providing advanced R&D training and access to cutting edge research facilities and infrastructure in a gender-balanced way to scientists from developing and least developed countries to complement ongoing capacity-building efforts.
 - f. Developing and sharing scientific tools to assess the social and ecological costs and benefits of scalable applications based on proof of concept and pilot projects.
 - g. Delivering novel science and technology approaches, tested in pilot scale, to address specific needs and gaps as articulated by relevant stakeholders. Findings will be proactively communicated to ICRI and UNEP and to implementing mechanisms and initiatives, such as those funded by the Global Fund for Coral Reefs.

3. Platform Activities

Through its activities, the Platform will contribute to enhance the cooperation among the G20 members as well as non-member countries on coral reef conservation, protection and restoration and thus to the achievement of the relevant goals and targets under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, thereby also supporting the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030), the UN Decade of Ocean Science (2021-2030), and the implementation of the United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 4/13 on sustainable coral reef management.

The Platform's main activity will be the resourcing, management, and execution of a coordinated, collaborative, and targeted global R&D program, guided by scientific needs and supported by voluntary contributions from G20 members and non-member countries. The R&D program will focus on achieving specified and agreed goals, drawing together multidisciplinary scientists, engineers, and technologists to collaboratively identify, design, and deliver innovative, practical, and sustainable solutions under a comprehensive systems end-to-end approach to enhance coral reef survival, conservation, resilience, adaptation and restoration. These solutions should then be communicated to initiatives such as ICRI for further utilization and translation into conservation and restoration actions across the world by existing national

and international implementation efforts (e.g. UNEP, the Global Fund for Coral Reefs, Reef Resilience Network, the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security – CTI-CFF and others).

The Platform will support scientific projects, selected through global, targeted calls for proposals and reviewed by a Scientific and Advisory Committee (see below). The selection process will follow best practice, streamlined procedures for preparation and selection. These projects will include:

- a) Research projects delivered through a coordinated, collaborative and targeted global program of research and development activities
- b) Proof-of-concept and Pilot projects to translate research outcomes into scalable applications, ready to be taken up by ICRI, UNEP and others, and funded at scale by the Global Fund for Coral Reefs or other initiatives that support conservation action, including by the private sector.

Projects will be open to scientists from all nations of the world. However, the research projects work must be conducted in participating institutions (see below).

The Platform will also organize a series of workshops and other events, where possible integrated with existing ones to increase participation and cost effectiveness, as well as an annual conference to report on progress where countries and organizations exchange experiences and views.

4. Membership and operating model

Participating Institutions: The Global Coral Reef R&D Accelerator Platform will consist of institutions, private sector actors, foundations, research programs and NGOs with research programs or activities aligned with those of the Platform. Participating institutions are encouraged to contribute to the Platform by facilitating knowledge sharing and collaboration and/or by providing access to their infrastructure (e.g. instrumentation, field stations, advanced facilities) and research results as an in-kind contribution to the Platform.

Platform Central Node: The Platform's Central Node (see below) will be based at King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST). The proposed location will allow the Platform to leverage KAUST's infrastructure to support R&D globally, while providing access to cutting-edge infrastructure and expertise in coral reefs, sequencing capabilities, advanced sensor technology and benefit from its access to the Red Sea, the Arabian Gulf, and its corals.

Financial considerations: It is envisioned that the Platform will be funded by voluntary contributions by G20 members, non-member countries, and private

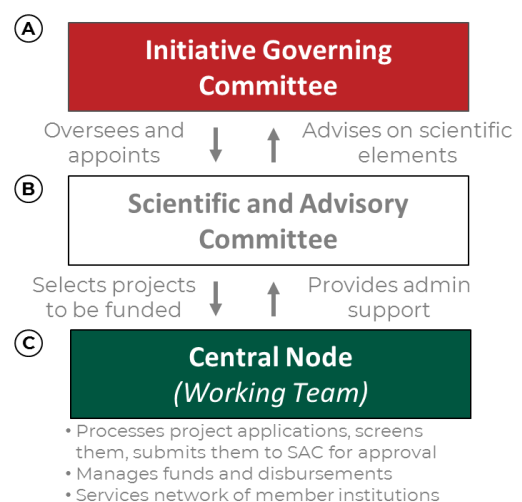
sector actors. A Scientific and Advisory Committee will advise on the allocation of this budget among programs and projects, which will be approved by an Initiative Governing Committee (details in next section). However, the goal is for at least 90% of the budget to be allocated directly to Research and Proof-of-concept and Pilot projects, with the remainder allocated to organization of workshops and conferences, communication and outreach. To support the launch of the Platform, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will provide the amount of USD \$10 million per year for the first 10 years, along with in kind contributions to strengthen the platform. Other G20 members and non-member countries are encouraged to contribute voluntarily as well.

Administrative costs: KAUST is prepared to provide all the administration functions to be executed by the Platform’s Central Node at no cost to the Platform on request of the G20 Saudi Presidency, thereby representing an in-kind contribution from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Platform.

5. Initiative Implementation Framework

The Saudi Presidency will convene a temporary **Founding Committee** constituted of representatives appointed on a voluntary basis by G20 members to officially establish the Platform and detail its mandate and initial governance. The G20 may also decide to invite other non-member countries and institutions to the Platform establishment discussions as advisors to the **Founding Committee**. After official founding of the Platform, a permanent governance structure will be established, and the Founding Committee will dissolve itself. This permanent governance structure will consist of the following elements:

1. **An Initiative Governing Committee** composed of participating members who will oversee the Global Coral Reef R&D Accelerator Platform and will approve strategic plans, operating procedures, rules and procedures of the research programs (including project and participating institution eligibility criteria, conflict of interest rules, and review procedures), annual budgets, accreditation of participating institutions, and will approve fund allocations to research projects recommended by the Scientific and Advisory Committee.



2. **A Scientific and Advisory Committee** composed of scientists, practitioners and policy experts from leading organizations and

representatives from major ongoing research, conservation, restoration and adaptation initiatives, including academic institutions, scientific societies, and relevant international organizations that will assist the Initiative Governing Committee in its functions by developing and updating the strategic direction of research, designing and directing the R&D program, overseeing the scientific peer review of projects, and making recommendations on the research projects to be funded, which would then have to be approved by the Initiative Governing Committee.

3. **A Central Node** to administer the overall Platform, supporting the Initiative Governing Committee and the Scientific and Advisory Committee, including calls for projects and submissions, mechanics of the peer-review process, managing funds, grant agreements, collection of project reports and outcomes, and servicing the network of participating institutions.

Additional details on the governance, including decision-making processes, project funding rules, and eligibility criteria for participating institutions and projects, will be discussed and finalized by members of the **Founding Committee** during the Platform establishment phase (see next section).

Project and program evaluation: Project performance will be monitored, and the results of the overall Platform program will be reviewed by the Scientific and Advisory Committee, which will deliver its evaluation and recommendations to the Initiative Governing Committee. In addition, the Platform and the research program will also be subject to independent evaluation, with results of the assessment being reported to the Initiative Governing Committee.

6. Options for Participation

G20 members and non-member countries can participate in the Platform programs on a voluntary basis through various avenues such as:

- Providing voluntary financial contributions to support the Platform R&D programs
- Providing In-kind non-financial contributions
- Encouraging their scientific institutions to join the Platform
- Submitting requests for funding for research projects
- Participating in the Platform's research, knowledge-sharing or capacity building activities
- Participating in coordinated calls for project proposals among programs participating in the Platform

7. Next Steps

G20 members on a voluntary basis will appoint representatives to join the Founding Committee and begin the Platform establishment phase (Phase I).

The preparation work for Phase I will be mainly carried out by the Saudi Presidency and proposed to the Founding Committee, which will meet with the intention to finalizing the establishment of the Platform as soon as possible as depicted in the diagram below.

