

## **Road to Kunming: Protecting Biodiversity for and by the People**

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### **Abstract:**

Climate change and biodiversity are inextricably linked with each other. The international community regards the meeting COP15 as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to address the global biodiversity loss. COP15 is an opportunity for China to showcase its efforts in biodiversity conservation. The biggest expected outcome of COP15 is the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. The theme of “Ecological Civilization: Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth” is in line with the trend of global sustainable development. The way to protect biodiversity also needs innovation.

### **Key words:**

CBD COP15, Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, biodiversity, conservation, innovation

Zhou Jinfeng, Road to Kunming: Protecting Biodiversity for and by the People, Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development, Vol.1 No.1. December 2021, ISSN2749-9065

When it comes to capturing public attention and becoming a political and economic agenda, biodiversity protection receives significantly less attention than climate change . The United Nations Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) issued a clear warning in 2019 that natural resources are being depleted at an unprecedented rate, resulting in severe consequences for human well-being and the extinction of millions of species.

Climate change and biodiversity are inextricably linked with each other, because the loss of biodiversity not only reduces the earth’s self-rehabilitation ability, but also severely suppresses human adaptation capacity to climate change. Some governments, intergovernmental agencies, and other action leaders and stakeholders, continue to look at the problems in isolation and treat biodiversity and climate change as separate issues.

As is well known, the Chinese government has made unremitting endeavor to mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19 since 2020 by actively participating in global biodiversity governance, and steadily advancing the preparations for the CBD COP15. Chinese President Xi Jinping elaborated on the concept of “A community of Shared Future for Mankind” at the United Nations Summit on Biodiversity and the Climate Change Summit, and sincerely invited representatives from all over the world to gather in Kunming to explore ways to protect biodiversity.

Now, the first part of COP15 has completed the deliberation of all other agendas except for the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. The Framework, which serves as the blueprint for global biodiversity conservation over the next decade, will be reviewed and announced at the second part of COP15 in the first half of next year.

The international community regards the meeting as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to address the global biodiversity loss. In COP15, Chinese government clearly conveys the will to cooperate with the international community, stressing its unswerving commitment to the world. The official CBD COP15 website is a bridge built by the Chinese government for the public to understand and get involved in the conference, and actively participate in biodiversity conservation

COP15 is an opportunity for China to showcase its efforts in biodiversity conservation, both through the "Ecological Civilization" vision, the "Ecological Red Line" system, and the Belt and Road Initiative. When China applied to host CBD COP15, it initially chose Beijing as the host city, but later changed to Kunming. Such decision makes sense from a biodiversity perspective. Kunming is the capital city of Yunnan province, which is a subtropical province in southwest China, as well as the most biodiversity abundant province in China. Covering an area of 4.1 per cent of China's land territory, Yunnan has all the ecosystems except ocean and desert, and its species take up nearly half or more than half of the country's total figure, while the protected animal species account for 72.5 per cent of the country's figure.

What are the expected outcomes of COP15? The biggest outcome is the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. This is a new plan to save all life on Earth. The world needs practical and effective action plans and goals to realize the Convention on Biological Diversity's overall goal of "Living in Harmony with Nature" by 2050.

We need to pay special attention to biodiversity conservation if we want to achieve the global goals. Up to now many countries in the world are not doing a good job judging from the result of achieving the Aichi Targets. China can, and has already set an example in this area. At this key time node in 2021, China will continue to deepen the construction of ecological civilization, adhere to the ecological priority, green development, abide by the existing biodiversity protection related policies and regulations, improve the ecological redline construction, strictly control the development and utilization of important ecological space and ecological resources, fix ecosystem protection and restoration into the national long-term development plan and update China's biodiversity protection strategy and action plan, to provide strong support for the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The theme of "Ecological Civilization: Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth" is in line with the trend of global sustainable development, expresses the desire for

people from all over the world to jointly build a shared community with all life on the earth together, and reflects the global significance of Xi Jinping's Thought on Ecological Civilization. It plays a crucial role in strengthening the international community's political will to protect biodiversity, achieving sustainable utilization and sharing biodiversity interests, which in all will help realize the vision of "living in harmony with nature."

Despite all countries' efforts, we feel that the current approaches such as Nature-based Solutions (NbS), as well as the existing mobilization of funding and resources, are insufficient to stem the fast loss of biodiversity. Hence, China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation came up with a revolutionary idea called Biodiversity Conservation in Our Neighborhood (BCON).

What is "BCON"? We have set forth comprehensive ideas about its purpose, key application areas and the role it can play. Traditional biodiversity conservation is conducted primarily in remote mountains, natural wilderness, and nature reserves. While such conservation is critical, reality suggests that these efforts are far from enough to reverse the global trend of rapid biodiversity loss. Due to the expansion of human habitation, it is important to study how to effectively protect the biodiversity in densely populated areas. BCON aims to promote effective conservation of biodiversity in areas where human activities are intensive, to balance conservation and development, to synergize sustainable livelihoods and biodiversity conservation. Within our range of life, if we cannot fully protect nature, at least we can reduce the interference with nature and wildlife.

The way to protect biodiversity also needs innovation. For example, ethnic minority communities have a long history, unique cultural and ecological environment. Protecting biodiversity in ethnic minority areas needs to consider the protection of traditional ethnic culture as well. This is essential to support sustainable development, maintain biologically important landscape and ecosystems, and protect genetic diversity for future generations. Obviously, we cannot separate these minority communities in traditional ways just for the purpose of protection. Based on this idea, China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation has innovated new forms of protection, namely the "CCAfa" (Community Conservation Area)

system, which aims to establish an effective mechanism for public to participate in biodiversity protection and protect the unique systems of different ecosystems, species, genes and natural landscapes. Conservation areas are divided into natural conservation areas and cultural conservation areas. Nature sites are for the endangered animals and plants that need to be protected due to human activities and environmental changes. Cultural sites are for the protection of landscapes, buildings and villages with outstanding cultural and historical value. The system also encourages and supports the active participation of volunteers, NGOs, and local communities. This way, all types of protection objects, including culture of ethnic

minority groups, can be quickly and effectively protected.

There is no doubt that neither BCON, or CCAfa, or any other protection can work effectively without the participation of the people. The earth is facing the sixth biological mass extinction. Biodiversity is lost at an unprecedented rate. Climate change caused by human activity has brought in a variety of disasters, including drought and flooding. The transformation process from primitive civilization, agricultural civilization to industrial civilization has promoted the progress and prosperity of human society, while at the same time it also brings all the serious problems mentioned above. We urgently need to step into the stage of ecological civilization, where man and nature can live in harmony. We all know that any individual's ability is limited, and only through the efforts of the whole society can we act more effectively and achieve our goals.