

IUBS Science Policy forum summary

Monitoring Framework- Alice C. Hughes

The Global Biodiversity Framework presents the most ambitious set of environmental targets that have ever been agreed upon, and are supported by a series selection of indicators as part of the global monitoring framework. Within the monitoring framework there are two sets of indicators, firstly the “binary indicators” which provide a series of quantitative measures of changes to detect the fulfilment of targets (which are still under discussion) and the more qualitative indicators including the “headline” indicators (expected to be measured in all countries), as well as component and complementary indicators. However whilst the targets were meant to be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Realistic, and Timebound), many are not, or only partially. Furthermore whilst each target (and sub-target) was meant to have an associated headline indicator, many do not, and even those with agreed upon headline indicators; there may be no methodology.

To try to deal with some of these issues the AHTEG (Adhoc technical expert group) was set the task of developing methods for agreed upon headline indicators which lacked a method, however this omitted targets which lacked headline indicators, as well as evaluating indicators which were not a good match for their target. An example of this is target 5 on wildlife trade, where the sole indicator focuses on Fishstocks, yet IPBES classifies over 50,000 wild species as being in trade, including a diversity of taxa, and most of which have no data to assess the dimensions and potential threat posed by trade. Whilst having an agreed-upon set of indicators allows the generation of interoperable data between nations, the gaps, and mismatches, as well of those where no data will be generated before 2030 (the majority of species, as these are monitored by the IUCN Red List of species, and assessments are only considered out of date when over ten years old) undermines the ability to track progress. Whilst the AHTEG has done a tremendous job in exploring methods and consolidating the monitoring framework, their mandate should be expanded to look at mismatches, and to help provide adequate and representative indicators across targets. Lastly, some of the most rigorous indicators were selected through dedicated work of task forces with parties to ensure they were both practical, and understood, whereas other good targets were dropped from headline status because they “were too complex”. Getting the best indicators for future targets required further work by scientists to ensure that parties understand and support targets, and collaborative work to ensure that we have the data we need to move forwards towards a more sustainable future.