

Western Balkans Biodiversity Strategic Plan 2030

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1. Introduction

The Western Balkans Biodiversity Strategic Plan 2030 (WB BSP) has been developed as a common regional framework to guide biodiversity conservation, ecosystem restoration, and the sustainable use of natural resources across the Western Balkans Six (WB6).

The WB BSP builds on the strong political commitment expressed by the leaders of the WB6 through the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (GAWB), endorsed under the Berlin Process, and further reaffirmed at the Second Annual Ministerial Meeting on the GAWB in Dubrovnik in October 2025. In the Dubrovnik Declaration, WB6 Ministers responsible for environment and nature conservation endorsed the Vision, Mission, and Strategic Goals of the WB BSP as a shared foundation for advancing a coherent regional approach to biodiversity conservation and for integrating nature into economic and sectoral policies.

This political endorsement reflects a shared recognition that biodiversity loss, ecosystem degradation, and climate change require coordinated and transformative responses across the region. It also confirms a collective commitment to align regional efforts with the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and the broader environmental acquis, including Chapter 27 on Environment and Climate Change, as part of the WB6 European integration pathway.

The WB BSP also strengthens regional contributions to global conservation by advancing Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) through ecosystem restoration, species protection, climate resilience, and improved governance and partnerships. It aligns closely with the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration by promoting large-scale, well-monitored restoration and coordinated regional action. It also supports the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), particularly targets on restoration, protected areas, species recovery, financing, and knowledge systems.

The WB BSP is guided by a common vision of a region where biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored, and sustainably used, contributing to resilient ecosystems, healthy societies, and a thriving green economy. Achieving this vision requires strengthened governance, coordinated regional action, and the integration of biodiversity considerations across sectors and levels of decision-making.

To support this ambition, the WB BSP sets out a shared mission to translate global and European biodiversity goals into coherent and coordinated actions across the WB6. It aims to strengthen institutional capacity, promote knowledge-based decision-making, and mobilise financial and technical resources to halt biodiversity loss and restore ecosystems across the region.

The WB BSP provides a structured framework built around five strategic goals, which together address the key dimensions of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in the WB6: expanding effective area-based conservation, restoring ecosystems, halting species loss, integrating biodiversity into sectoral policies, and strengthening governance, knowledge systems, and financing.

By combining political commitment with a clear strategic framework, the WB BSP supports the transition towards a more coordinated, effective, and accountable approach to biodiversity action in the WB6. It serves as a key instrument for advancing the implementation of the GAWB, strengthening regional cooperation, and contributing to a nature-positive and resilient future for the region.

2. Role and Added Value of the Western Balkans Six Biodiversity Strategic Plan

Each WB6 has developed biodiversity strategies and policy frameworks that guide conservation efforts and the sustainable use of natural resources. These frameworks define priorities, identify protected and conserved areas, and set out measures for biodiversity protection. At the same time, the region is progressively aligning its environmental policies with European standards as part of the EU accession process.

At the same time, WB6 are progressing at different stages in their alignment with the EU environmental acquis and in the implementation of biodiversity-related policies. A regional approach helps to ensure

that progress takes place in a coordinated and mutually reinforcing manner, supporting convergence towards shared standards while enabling exchange of experience, knowledge, and good practices across the region.

The WB BSP is not intended to duplicate or replace existing frameworks. Instead, it establishes a regional cooperation framework that complements efforts across WB6, focusing on areas where coordinated action can generate added value and more effective outcomes. Primary responsibility for the implementation of biodiversity policies and measures remains with the competent authorities in each WB6. The WB BSP supports these efforts by fostering coordination, promoting common approaches, and enabling joint actions where these provide clear benefits. In doing so, it strengthens the overall effectiveness of existing frameworks through improved regional alignment and cooperation.

Many biodiversity challenges in the region extend across ecological systems that span multiple parts of the WB6. Mountain ranges, river basins, forest landscapes, and coastal ecosystems form interconnected systems, while species populations depend on habitats distributed across the region. Pressures such as infrastructure development, hydropower expansion, land-use change, and climate impacts affect these systems at a broader scale. As a result, biodiversity cannot be effectively conserved through isolated actions, and coordinated approaches across WB6 are essential.

The BSP provides a framework to support such cooperation. It enables the identification of shared ecological corridors and priority conservation areas at the regional scale, supporting efforts to strengthen ecological connectivity and maintain viable ecosystems and species populations. The management of these areas and corridors remains the responsibility of competent authorities across the WB6, which may operate through a range of arrangements — from informal bilateral cooperation to formal intergovernmental agreements and dedicated interjurisdictional bodies. The BSP supports the identification of regional priorities that governments, donors and partners can address, drawing on technical guidance, capacity development, and targeted conservation investment.

Another important contribution of the WB BSP is to improve consistency in biodiversity monitoring and information sharing. While monitoring systems exist across the region, methodologies and data standards often differ, limiting the ability to assess trends and communicate progress in a coherent way. Through regional cooperation, the WB BSP supports the development of compatible approaches, improved data exchange, and shared biodiversity information systems, enabling more effective tracking of biodiversity status and progress.

The WB BSP also strengthens the coordination of biodiversity investments and project development. Conservation initiatives in the WB6 are frequently supported through external funding and implemented through separate initiatives. A regional perspective helps to identify common priorities, develop larger collaborative programmes, and improve coordination with international partners and donors. This can enhance the effectiveness and impact of investments, particularly for challenges that affect multiple WB6.

In addition, the WB BSP serves as a platform for cooperation, knowledge exchange, and capacity development. Through structured dialogue, peer learning, and joint initiatives, institutions across WB6 can share experience, develop common approaches, and strengthen their capacity to implement biodiversity policies and measures.

In practical terms, the WB BSP prioritises actions that clearly benefit from regional cooperation. These include initiatives that require coordinated planning and implementation across the WB6, actions that depend on shared standards or information systems, and activities where joint efforts can significantly strengthen outcomes. By focusing on these areas, the WB BSP provides a meaningful regional contribution to biodiversity conservation while reinforcing and complementing existing frameworks and implementation efforts across WB6.

3. Logic of the WB BSP

The WB BSP 2030 is built on a simple logic: the region must conserve its most important sites, ecosystems, and species, and transform the way key sectors operate. Also, the region must put in place strong enabling conditions that make implementation possible and sustainable. Otherwise, the region

will not halt biodiversity loss and support a nature-positive, climate-resilient development path. The WB BSP is structured in 5 goals:

- Goals 1-3 define what must be conserved, restored and sustainably managed;
- Goal 4 defines how sectoral decisions must change;
- Goal 5 defines enablers through governance, knowledge, finance, and capacity.

Goal 1 secures an effective, representative, and well-managed network of protected and conserved areas, including ecological corridors and strictly protected sites, as the spatial backbone for conservation in the region.

Goal 2 scales up restoration of degraded terrestrial, freshwater, coastal, and marine ecosystems, improving ecological integrity, connectivity, and resilience to climate change, both inside and beyond protected areas.

Goal 3 prevents extinctions and improves the conservation status of threatened, endemic, and flagship species by combining site-based measures with targeted species action, monitoring, and reduction of direct pressures such as illegal killing and overexploitation. Together, these three goals describe the core conservation outcomes the WB BSP seeks to achieve by 2030.

Goal 4 addresses how economic sectors and planning systems must change to make these outcomes durable. It aims to embed biodiversity and ecosystem services into policies, strategies, and investment decisions in agriculture, forestry, energy, water management, spatial planning, transport, tourism, and climate policies. This includes strengthening the use of tools such as spatial planning, Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), and promoting Nature-based Solutions (NbS) so that future infrastructure and land-use decisions avoid, minimise, and compensate impacts on key sites, ecosystems, and species. By doing so, Goal 4 tackles the underlying drivers of biodiversity loss and aligns development pathways with the conservation objectives set under Goals 1–3.

Goal 5 provides the enabling environment that allows all other goals to be implemented effectively and at scale. It strengthens governance arrangements at domestic and regional levels, including coordination mechanisms, participatory processes, and accountability frameworks. It supports development of shared data, monitoring, and information systems that underpin evidence-based decision-making and coherent reporting and enhances knowledge exchange and capacity development for institutions, experts, and stakeholders. At the same time, Goal 5 mobilises and aligns financial resources, creating the conditions for sustained investment in conservation, restoration, and nature-positive development. In combination, these enabling measures ensure that the region can plan, implement, track, and finance the actions required under Goals 1–4, turning political commitment into tangible, long-term biodiversity outcomes.

This WB BSP follows a clear and consistent logic across all strategic goals:

- **Each goal is first introduced through a rationale**, which summarises the key regional challenges, opportunities, and policy context from the Biodiversity Policy Analysis in the WB6 and drawing on the State of Nature assessment and relevant European and global frameworks.
- This is **followed by a set of regional targets**, which translate the overall goal into specific, measurable outcomes to be achieved by 2030.
- To enable tracking of progress, **each goal is supported by a concise set of indicators**, designed to be operational, comparable across WB6, and aligned with existing data systems and reporting obligations.
- Finally, the WB BSP is **complemented by a set of actions** (Annex), which provide a practical framework for implementation, focusing in particular on areas where regional cooperation, shared methodologies, and coordinated investments can deliver added value.

4. Role of RCC Secretariat and IUCN in the WB BSP

Governance

WB BSP governance is a collaborative framework for shaping, implementing, and reviewing the strategy across the WB6. It relies on coordinated dialogue, defined roles, monitoring, and financing to turn the strategy into an operational and durable regional mechanism.

RCC mandate under the GAWB is to facilitate steering of and to enable a well-informed decision-making process by ensuring and maintaining a platform for dialogue with the European Commission services, relevant regional organisations that have activities or mandates in relevant policy areas in the WB6 (such as the Energy Community Secretariat (EnCS), Transport Community Permanent Secretariat (TCPS), Standing Working Group on Regional Rural Development (SWG RRD), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), etc.), international financial institutions, various socio-economic partners, non-governmental organisations, academia and the scientific community.

In the context of the implementation and coordination of the WB BSP, the discussions will take place through regular and extraordinary meetings of the Regional Working Group (RWG) for the GAWB at the technical level, as provided for in the Note on governance. This dialogue should enable information exchange and support to WB6 authorities based on the alignment requirements, the most recent policy developments and other relevant processes without jeopardizing and interfering with regular agendas and mandates of other regional organisations.

In addition to a permanent dialogue at technical-level, annual Green Agenda ministerial meetings will review the progress achieved in the preceding year through monitoring and reporting mechanisms established by RCC and regional partners, endorse annual reports on the GAWB progress, and based on these elements and identified priorities, provide an implementation guideline for the upcoming year through joint statements.

The Protection of Nature and Biodiversity pillar, which provided for the WB BSP, is coordinated by IUCN Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ECARO), with the support of RCC within the WB Biodiversity Task Force (BDTF) as part of RWG GAWB structures. The RCC cooperates with regional organisations to enhance synchronised approach to the implementation across pillars, and address horizontal and cross-sectoral elements of the GAWB Action Plan 2025-2030.

Monitoring and Reporting

In terms of monitoring and reporting on the implementation progress, RCC coordinates with IUCN ECARO to produce the Annual Green Agenda Implementation Report (GARI). RCC ensures avoidance of double work and overlaps in reporting. Accuracy of the GARI is also validated in close consultation with WB6.

Visual representation of implementation progress is provided by RCC through the GAWB Observatory - a user-friendly web platform with all indicators grouped per policy areas, per WB6 or region as a whole. This platform will ensure that various groups of users, including policymakers, researchers, regional organisations, donors, citizens and many others, have access to a quick and user-friendly platform for better understanding and tracking the implementation status for GAWB regional documents, such as the WB BSP.

5. Goal 1: Ensure Effective, Equitable and Representative Area-based Conservation

Ensure that by 2030, at least 30% of terrestrial and marine areas in the WB6 are effectively conserved, with at least 10% under strict protection, prioritising areas of high biodiversity value and those critical for ecosystem functions and climate resilience.

Rationale

The WB6 are among the most biologically diverse regions in Europe, characterised by high levels of species richness, endemism, and ecosystem diversity. The region hosts a wide range of ecosystems, including mountain landscapes, forests, grasslands, wetlands, river systems, karst environments, and

coastal and marine habitats, which provide essential ecosystem services such as water regulation, climate mitigation, and livelihoods.

Despite this richness, biodiversity across the WB6 is increasingly under pressure. The regional biodiversity assessment highlights that habitat loss, ecosystem fragmentation, and unsustainable resource use continue to affect many ecosystems and species populations, particularly in river systems, forest landscapes, wetlands, and coastal areas. These pressures are driven by land-use change, infrastructure development, energy projects, unsustainable forestry and agriculture, pollution, and climate change.

These challenges are reflected in the following key findings:

[Text box 1.1] – Protected area coverage and representativeness remain insufficient

While protected area coverage has increased in recent years, it remains uneven across the WB6 and does not adequately represent the full range of ecosystems. Many areas of high biodiversity value, including freshwater systems, grasslands, and marine ecosystems, remain underrepresented or outside formal protection.

[Text box 1.2] – Ecological connectivity is limited across the region

Many ecosystems and species populations extend across the WB6, but conservation planning and management remain largely fragmented. Ecological corridors and shared conservation landscapes are insufficiently identified and managed, limiting the resilience of ecosystems and the long-term viability of species populations.

[Text box 1.3] – Management effectiveness of conserved areas remains constrained

Many protected and conserved areas face common challenges, including limited staffing, insufficient and unstable financing, outdated management plans, and weak monitoring systems. These constraints reduce their ability to deliver effective biodiversity conservation outcomes.

While the region contains numerous internationally recognised biodiversity sites, such as Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs), Emerald Network sites, World Heritage sites, Ramsar wetlands, and other internationally designated areas, these designations do not always translate into effective protection or management on the ground. This creates a gap between biodiversity recognition and conservation outcomes.

At the same time, biodiversity challenges in the WB6 often extend across administrative boundaries and require coordinated regional responses. Ecosystems, river basins, and species populations span multiple jurisdictions, while pressures such as infrastructure development, energy projects, and climate change operate at a regional scale.

The WB BSP therefore provides a regional cooperation framework that complements existing strategies across WB6 by focusing on actions that benefit from joint planning, shared methodologies, and coordinated implementation. In particular, it supports:

- expansion and improved representativeness of protected and conserved areas;
- strengthening of ecological connectivity across WB6;
- improvement of management effectiveness and governance;
- recognition and integration of Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs);
- coordinated monitoring, reporting, and investment for biodiversity conservation.

By strengthening regional cooperation and aligning conservation efforts across WB6, this Strategic Goal aims to establish a coherent, resilient, and effectively managed network of protected and conserved areas, capable of safeguarding biodiversity while supporting sustainable development and alignment with European environmental standards.

Achieving these outcomes will depend not only on effective conservation measures but also on strengthened governance, knowledge systems, and financing, as addressed under Strategic Goal 5.

Regional Targets (2030)

To translate the above considerations into measurable outcomes, Strategic Goal 1 is supported by the following regional targets.

Target 1.1 – Expanded and representative conservation coverage

By 2030, at least **30% of terrestrial and marine areas across WB6** are effectively conserved through protected areas and recognised OECMs, based on a harmonised regional accounting approach and minimum quality standards. Expansion of conserved areas prioritises:

- ecosystems of high biodiversity value, including underrepresented ecosystems such as freshwater, grasslands, and marine systems;
- areas important for ecological connectivity and ecosystem services;
- areas of special importance for genetic monitoring and conservation;
- ecosystems identified as particularly vulnerable to climate change through a screening.

Target 1.2 – Strengthened strict protection

By 2030, at least **10% of terrestrial and marine areas across WB6** are under recognised strict protection, focusing on ecosystems of high ecological integrity and biodiversity importance.

A regional equivalence framework enables alignment of different protection regimes across WB6 under a common definition of strict protection.

Target 1.3 – Strengthened ecological connectivity and regional cooperation

By 2030, ecological connectivity across WB6 is strengthened through a coordinated regional portfolio of priority ecological corridors and shared conservation areas considering the conservation of genetic resources.

A defined set of priority conservation landscapes and corridors is supported by operational cooperation arrangements, including shared objectives and coordinated monitoring.

Target 1.4 – Improved management effectiveness of conserved areas

By 2030:

- at least **70% of the conserved area network** is covered by up-to-date management plans aligned with agreed minimum standards
- at least **50% of the conserved area network** has undergone at least one management effectiveness evaluation using recognised methodologies.

Indicators

This indicator package for Strategic Goal 1 combines outcomes (coverage and strict protection) with quality proxies (representativeness, connectivity, and management effectiveness). It reuses established datasets and methods, minimises reporting burden for each of the WB6, and prioritises regional public goods through harmonised accounting and a comparable annual WB6 synthesis. Reporting roles: domestic-level data are technically consolidated through BDTF and synthesised by the IUCN.

G1-I1 Protected and conserved area coverage (30%)

Data: Domestic-level Geographic Information System (GIS) datasets on protected areas and recognised OECMs, consolidated using World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA) and The World Database on Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (WDOECM) datasets.

Counting rules: Percentage of total WB6 terrestrial/inland water area and coastal/marine area covered by protected areas and recognised OECMs, with overlaps removed using a harmonised regional GIS methodology.

Baseline/targets: Baseline established for 2026 following adoption of a common accounting framework = 22,000 km², approximately 11% of the WB6 land area. Target 2030: ≥30% coverage across WB6.

G1-I2 Strict protection coverage (10%) – *Data*: Domestic-level zoning and legal designation datasets, aligned through a WB6 strict protection equivalence framework; WDPA attributes used as interim proxy where needed. *Counting rules*: Percentage of WB6 area meeting agreed strict protection criteria, calculated as a subset of G1-I1 using a harmonised equivalence framework. *Baseline/targets*: Baseline established in 2026 following adoption of equivalence criteria. Target 2030: $\geq 10\%$ of WB6 area under strict protection.

G1-I3 KBA and Natura 2000 coverage – *Data*: World Database of Key Biodiversity Areas (WDKBA) overlaid with WDPA and WDOECM datasets and WB6 data on proposed Natura 2000 sites. *Counting rules*: Mean percentage of each KBA covered by protected areas and recognised OECMs, calculated using a fixed dataset version and consistent methodology across WB6; area and percentage of proposed Natura 2000 sites. *Baseline/targets*: Baseline established for 2026 using agreed datasets. Target 2030: increasing trend in coverage across WB6.

G1-I4 Connectivity (ConneCons) – *Data*: Modelled connectivity metrics (e.g. ConneCons) derived from WDPA/WDOECM datasets using agreed regional parameters. *Counting rules*: Connectivity index (ConneCons or equivalent) calculated for the WB6 protected and conserved area network using a fixed methodology and parameter set. *Baseline/targets*: Baseline established for 2026. Target 2030: measurable improvement in connectivity index across WB6.

G1-I5 Management effectiveness — *Data*: Domestic-level management effectiveness assessments. *Counting rules*: Area-weighted percentage of protected and conserved areas with at least one verified management effectiveness assessment conducted during the reporting period. *Baseline/targets*: Baseline established for 2026. Target 2030: $\geq 50\%$ of conserved area network assessed for management effectiveness, with an increasing trend over time.

6. Goal 2: Restore and Enhance Ecosystem Integrity and Resilience

By 2030, initiate large-scale ecosystem restoration across the WB6, ensuring that at least 20% of degraded terrestrial, inland water, marine, and coastal ecosystems are undergoing effective restoration, in line with opportunity assessments on domestic and regional level.

Rationale

Ecosystems across the WB6, including rivers, wetlands, forests, grasslands, and coastal and marine systems, are undergoing widespread and intensifying degradation. Key drivers include unsustainable use of natural resources, illegal activities (such as logging, poaching, and unregulated construction), harmful land-use changes, infrastructure development, pollution, invasive species, and climate change. These pressures fragment habitats, reduce ecological integrity, and undermine the capacity of ecosystems to support biodiversity and human well-being.

Addressing this requires a dual focus on prevention and restoration. Avoiding unsustainable practices in agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and other land- and resource-use sectors is essential to halt further decline. Restoration with NbS offers opportunities to integrate biodiversity and ecosystem consideration into development pathways, delivering benefits both for nature and people.

In designing and implementing ecosystem restoration and sustainable land management measures, the WB6 shall also take into account their commitments and targets under the three Rio Conventions. In this context, the Kunming–Montreal GBF, particularly Target 2, shall present a central policy for scaling up restoration, complemented by the EU Nature Restoration Regulations as a key regional driver. At the same time, attention should also be given to Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN), as promoted under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), ensuring that efforts to restore and enhance ecosystem integrity and resilience are coherent with broader objectives to avoid, reduce, and reverse land degradation (LDN hierarchy).

[Text box 2.1] – Ecosystem degradation is widespread across key ecosystems

Many ecosystems across WB6 show signs of degradation due to hydropower development, land-use change, pollution, unsustainable forestry and agricultural practices, and abandonment of traditional land use. Freshwater ecosystems, wetlands, and grasslands are particularly affected, with significant impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem services.

[Text box 2.2] – Restoration policies and implementation remain limited

While policy frameworks recognise the importance of ecosystem restoration, implementation remains fragmented, limited in scale and with weak policy integration. Restoration efforts are often project-based, lacking strategic prioritisation, long-term financing, and systematic monitoring frameworks.

[Text box 2.3] – Ecosystem resilience to climate change is insufficiently addressed

Climate change is increasingly affecting ecosystems across the region through droughts, floods, forest fires, and temperature changes. However, ecosystem-based and NbS approaches to climate adaptation and resilience are not yet systematically integrated into planning and management.

WB6 hold significant opportunities for ecosystem restoration. Large areas of semi-natural and degraded landscapes offer high potential for restoring ecological functions, improving biodiversity status, and strengthening climate resilience while restoration actions can also integrate species-level and genetic-level considerations.

Ecosystem restoration also provides important socio-economic benefits, including improved water regulation, soil stability, drought resilience, erosion control, disaster risk reduction, and support to sustainable land use and rural development.

The EU Nature Restoration Regulation and three Rio Conventions provide a strong policy framework and momentum for scaling up restoration efforts across the region. The WB BSP supports this transition by promoting coordinated restoration planning, implementation, and monitoring across WB6.

The WB BSP therefore focuses on restoration of degraded ecosystems:

- developing and implementing restoration plans on domestic and regional level;
- prioritising key ecosystems and restoration areas;
- integrating restoration and sustainable land management into sectoral policies and land-use systems;
- ensuring the use of native, locally appropriate and genetically diverse reproductive material in restoration, where relevant;
- strengthening ecological connectivity and landscape functionality;
- establishing monitoring systems for ecosystem condition and restoration outcomes.

By strengthening regional cooperation and aligning restoration efforts across WB6, this Strategic Goal aims to support a transition towards healthier, more resilient ecosystems that contribute to biodiversity conservation, climate adaptation, and sustainable development.

Regional Targets (2030)

To translate the above considerations into measurable outcomes, Strategic Goal 2 is aligned with EU Biodiversity Strategy Pillar 2 (Restoring nature, with focus also on rivers and forests) and is supported by the following regional targets:

Target 2.1 – Restoration planning frameworks established

By 2028, all WB6 have developed and adopted **Nature Restoration Plans**, aligned with the EU Nature Restoration Regulation, the Kunming–Montreal GBF and where relevant with commitments to LDN, identifying:

- major ecosystem types (terrestrial, wetlands, inland water, coastal and marine), as well as production ecosystems (agriculture, forestry, fisheries etc.), including special considerations for restoration for each;
- spatial extent of degraded areas and assessment of degradation trends within the WB6, disaggregated by major natural ecosystem types;

- extent of each major natural ecosystem type to be targeted for priority restoration areas across all major ecosystem types;
- expected restoration outcomes;
- preferred approach and methodology for planning, implementing and monitoring restoration measures;
- measurable ecological targets and indicators.

Target 2.2 – Effective ecosystem restoration implemented at scale

By 2030, at least 20% of degraded ecosystems across WB6 are under active restoration, including detailed baseline assessment, technical project defining concrete restoration measures based on baseline data and best knowledge/practices, implementation on the ground, and with special attention to transboundary areas and with priority given to:

- freshwater ecosystems (rivers, wetlands, lakes);
- forest ecosystems;
- grasslands and semi-natural agricultural systems;
- coastal and marine ecosystems;
- effective management of invasive species.

Target 2.3 – Ecological connectivity strengthened through effective restoration

By 2030, ecosystem restoration contributes to improved ecological connectivity across WB6, including:

- effective restoration of degraded corridors and buffer zones;
- restored free flowing rivers through the removal of obsolete barriers;
- restoration of floodplains and wetlands;
- integration of restoration into transboundary landscapes and river basins;
- improved landscape permeability for species movement and genetic exchange.

Target 2.4 – Climate-resilient restoration and NbS mainstreamed

By 2030, ecosystem restoration across WB6 systematically integrates ecosystem-based adaptation and NbS to enhance climate resilience, soil health, water retention and disaster risk reduction in priority landscapes.

- Implement flagship NbS restoration projects that explicitly apply ecosystem-based adaptation approaches in their design and implementation;
- climate-regulating ecosystems (e.g. forests, wetlands, floodplains) are identified in restoration plans and targeted with restoration measures that contribute to reducing climate-related risks such as floods, droughts and erosion;
- Introduce climate-smart NbS project design in restoration initiatives, where applicable.

Target 2.5 – Monitoring systems for restoration and ecosystem condition operational

By 2030, harmonised monitoring using the regional systems established under Goal 5 is in place across WB6 and aligned with reporting under three Rio Conventions to monitor:

- ecosystem condition and trends, using different levels of biodiversity indicators;
- restoration progress and effectiveness;
- contribution of restoration to biodiversity recovery, ecosystem services and climate resilience.

Indicators

The indicators for Strategic Goal 2 focus on tracking progress in restoration planning, implementation, monitoring, ecosystem condition, and resilience. They prioritise measurable proxy indicators that can be consistently applied across WB6 and build on existing data systems where possible.

G2-I1 Restoration planning and financing frameworks

Data: Restoration plans and official policy documents. *Counting rules:* Number of WB6 with adopted and operational restoration plans aligned with EU/GBF/LDN frameworks. *Baseline/targets:* Baseline established for 2026. Target 2028: all WB6.

G2-I2 Restoration coverage

Data: Datasets on restoration areas, supported by remote sensing and land-use data. *Counting rules:* Percentage of degraded ecosystems under active restoration across WB6. *Baseline/targets:* Baseline established for 2026. Target 2030: $\geq 20\%$ of degraded ecosystems under restoration in each WB6.

G2-I3 Connectivity improvement (restoration contribution to G1-I4)

Data: Transboundary restoration plans and projects, spatial datasets (restoration areas + ecological corridors). *Counting rules:* Area of restored transboundary ecosystems and corridors. *Baseline/targets:* Baseline established for 2026. Target 2030: positive trend.

G2-I4 Climate-resilient restoration and NbS uptake

Data: Restoration projects from WB6. *Counting rules:* Percentage of restoration projects implemented in WB6 that explicitly integrate ecosystem-based adaptation and/or NbS for climate resilience in line with the IUCN Global Standard on NbS (soil health, water retention, flood/drought/erosion risk reduction) in their objectives and design. *Baseline/targets:* Baseline established for 2026. Target 2030: at least 50% of restoration projects in each WB6 integrate ecosystem-based adaptation and/or NbS.

G2-I5 Restoration monitoring systems operational

Data: Monitoring systems on domestic-level and regional biodiversity information systems. *Counting rules:* Number of WB6 applying harmonised monitoring frameworks for restoration. *Baseline/targets:* Baseline established for 2026. Target 2030: all WB6.

7. Goal 3: Halt Species Loss and Strengthen Conservation of Endangered Species

Prevent species extinctions, support recovery of threatened species, and improve the conservation status and trend of at least 30% of those currently at risk.

Rationale

The WB6 host exceptionally rich biodiversity, including high levels of endemism and globally important populations of many species. However, species across the region are increasingly threatened by habitat loss, degradation, overexploitation, pollution, climate change, and insufficient conservation measures. The State of Nature assessment 2026 highlights that **more than 500 species**, particularly freshwater fish, molluscs, amphibians, invertebrates, and plants are classified as **Vulnerable, Endangered, or Critically Endangered**, with declining population trends dominating where data is available.

Despite the existence of legal frameworks aligned with international conventions and EU directives, the conservation of species remains uneven and often insufficiently implemented. Species-specific action plans are limited, monitoring systems are incomplete, and enforcement of regulations particularly related to illegal killing, poaching, and trade remains weak. At the same time, many species in the region depend on transboundary habitats and require coordinated regional approaches.

Halting species loss is therefore a central pillar of biodiversity conservation and a core objective of the Kunming–Montreal GBF, which calls for preventing human-induced extinctions and enabling the recovery of threatened species populations. Achieving this requires moving beyond fragmented, project-based approaches towards strategic, systematic, science-based, and well-coordinated conservation actions across the WB6.

The WB BSP therefore focuses on:

- preventing extinction of threatened species;

- improving conservation status and population trends of threatened species;
- improving knowledge of endangered and threatened species, including their distribution, trends, and ecology;
- developing and implementing species action and recovery programmes;
- addressing key direct pressures on species;
- strengthening monitoring systems and Red List assessments.

[Text box 3.1] – Species decline is widespread and affects multiple taxonomic groups

Across the WB6, species of conservation concern occur in all major taxonomic groups, with particularly high levels of threat among freshwater species, invertebrates, and plants. Declining population trends dominate where data is available, indicating ongoing pressures on habitats and ecosystems.

[Text box 3.2] – Species conservation efforts are fragmented and uneven

While some species benefit from targeted conservation efforts, such as vultures and large carnivores, many species lack dedicated action plans, coordinated management, or long-term funding. Conservation efforts are often project-based and not sustained over time.

[Text box 3.3] – Monitoring gaps limit effective species conservation

For a large proportion of species, population trends are unknown due to insufficient monitoring systems and incomplete or outdated Red Lists. This limits the ability to assess conservation status, prioritise actions, and evaluate effectiveness of measures.

Regional Targets (2030)

To translate the above considerations into measurable outcomes, Strategic Goal 3 is supported by the following regional targets.

Target 3.1 – Extinction risk reduced / prevented for threatened species

By 2030, no known threatened species in the WB6 undergoes human-induced regional extinction, and priority threatened species show measurable improvement in conservation status, population trend, habitat condition, and/or recovery prospects.

Target 3.2 – Population trends of priority species improved

By 2030, populations of **selected regional priority species** that are wide-ranging and occur in more than two of the WB6 show stable or increasing trends, based on standardised monitoring data.

Target 3.3 – Species action plans developed and implemented

By 2028, all WB6 have developed and are implementing **action and recovery plans for selected regional priority species**, focusing on:

- threatened or endemic and wide-ranging species of regional importance;
- species of EU and international importance;
- transboundary species requiring coordinated management.

Target 3.4 – Key pressures on species reduced

By 2030, the main human-induced pressures on species are significantly reduced, including:

- wildlife persecution (illegal killing, trapping, harming, or trafficking of wild animals);
- disturbance from human activities;
- incidental mortalities (traffic collisions, infrastructure like power lines, buildings etc, agricultural machinery, and pollution);
- unsustainable hunting, fishing and harvesting.

Target 3.5 – Monitoring and Red Lists strengthened

By 2030, using the regional systems established under Goal 5 all WB6 have:

- prepared Red Lists in each jurisdiction following IUCN criteria and categories;
- operational monitoring systems for selected regional priority species, including genetic aspects;
- harmonised data systems contributing to a regional biodiversity information hub.

Indicators

The indicators for Strategic Goal 3 are designed to track progress in halting species loss, improving conservation status, and strengthening the effectiveness of species conservation measures across the WB6. They focus on measurable changes in extinction risk, population trends of priority species, implementation of species action plans, and reduction of key pressures such as illegal killing and overexploitation. Given the significant data gaps the indicator framework contains indicators that can be realistically monitored using existing and progressively improved data systems. The approach also supports alignment with the monitoring requirements of the Kunming–Montreal GBF and EU reporting obligations, while promoting harmonisation of species data and methodologies across WB6.

G3-I1 Conservation status of species

Data: IUCN Red List and assessments of selected regional species

Counting rules: Trends in the number/proportion of species in threatened categories Vulnerable (VU), Endangered (EN), Critically Endangered (CR) and of species of EU importance

Baseline/targets: Baseline established for 2026. Target 2030: stabilisation or reduction of threatened categories

G3-I2 Population trends of selected regional priority species

Data: Monitoring programmes with species-specific datasets

Counting rules: Share of priority species with stable or increasing population trends

Baseline/targets: Baseline established for 2026. Target 2030: measurable increase

G3-I3 Species action plans operational

Data: Domestic-level policy documents, monitoring and implementation reports

Counting rules: Number of selected regional priority species with adopted and implemented action plans

Baseline/targets: Baseline established for 2026. Target 2028: all WB6

G3-I4 Reduction of illegal killing and exploitation

Data: Enforcement records, monitoring reports

Counting rules: Trends in enforcement and mitigation efforts

Baseline/targets: Baseline established for 2026. Target 2030: decreasing trend

G3-I5 Monitoring and Red Lists operational

Data: Domestic-level biodiversity monitoring systems and domestic-level Red Lists

Counting rules: Number of WB6 with domestic-level Red Lists following IUCN criteria and categories and with operational monitoring systems

Baseline/targets: Baseline established for 2026. Target 2030: all WB6

8. Goal 4: Integrate Biodiversity into Sectors and Policies

Ensure that biodiversity considerations are fully integrated into WB6 policies, planning, and decision-making across key sectors, including agriculture, forestry, energy, water management, spatial planning, and infrastructure.

Rationale

Biodiversity conservation in the WB6 cannot be achieved through nature protection policies alone. The main drivers of biodiversity loss, such as land-use change, infrastructure development, unsustainable agriculture and forestry practices, water regulation, pollution, and climate change, originate primarily from sectoral policies and economic development decisions.

Despite the existence of environmental safeguards, biodiversity continues to decline due to insufficient integration of environmental considerations into sectoral planning and decision-making processes. Strategic planning often fails to account for ecosystem services, ecological connectivity, and long-term environmental costs, while implementation and enforcement remain inconsistent.

A critical priority is the progressive phase-out and redirection of nature-negative finance, particularly environmentally harmful subsidies, which continue to incentivise unsustainable practices in sectors such as agriculture, energy, and infrastructure, and must be reformed to support nature-positive investments and ecosystem resilience.

These challenges are reflected in the following key findings:

[Text box 4.1] – Biodiversity loss is driven by sectoral development pathways

The main drivers of biodiversity loss in the WB6 are closely linked to sectoral development pathways. Infrastructure expansion, hydropower development, accelerated renewable energy deployment, agricultural intensification, unsustainable forestry practices, and urbanisation continue to drive habitat loss, fragmentation, and ecosystem degradation. Biodiversity outcomes are therefore largely determined by decisions taken outside the environmental sector.

[Text box 4.2] – Biodiversity integration in sectoral policies remains limited, fragmented and uneven

While legal and policy frameworks are broadly aligned with EU environmental acquis, biodiversity integration into sectoral policies remains uneven, fragmented and limited in practice. Sectoral strategies frequently lack explicit biodiversity objectives, and policy coherence across sectors is weak. In many cases, biodiversity is addressed through procedural requirements rather than being embedded in core planning and decision-making processes. Harmful subsidies (nature-negative finance) need to be phased out.

[Text box 4.3] – Implementation tools and coordination remain insufficient

Environmental assessment tools such as SEA and EIA are established across WB6, but their effectiveness is often constrained by late-stage application, limited use of biodiversity data, weak assessment of cumulative impacts, and insufficient enforcement. At the same time, fragmented institutional responsibilities and limited coordination between relevant authorities further reduce the effectiveness of biodiversity integration.

At the same time, the region holds significant opportunities to integrate biodiversity into development pathways. Healthy ecosystems underpin key economic sectors, including agriculture, forestry, tourism, and water management, and provide essential services such as water regulation, soil fertility, climate mitigation, and disaster risk reduction. NbS offer cost-effective approaches to address climate and development challenges while delivering biodiversity benefits, including through hybrid approaches that combine green and grey infrastructure to enhance resilience and system performance.

The EU accession process and alignment with the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and related environmental acquis provide a strong policy driver for improving biodiversity integration across sectors. In parallel, global biodiversity commitments call for embedding biodiversity considerations into all levels of planning and decision-making.

The WB BSP therefore emphasises a transition from fragmented sectoral approaches to integrated, biodiversity-inclusive planning and decision-making. It focuses on improving policy coherence, strengthening planning tools, enhancing cross-sectoral coordination, and supporting practical implementation across key sectors.

Effective integration of biodiversity into sectoral policies also depends on enabling conditions related to governance, data systems, and capacities, which are addressed under Strategic Goal 5.

Regional Targets (2030)

To translate the above considerations into measurable outcomes, Strategic Goal 4 is supported by the following regional targets.

Target 4.1 – Biodiversity integrated into sectoral policies and planning

By 2030, biodiversity, NbS and ecosystem service considerations are systematically integrated into key sectoral policies and planning instruments across WB6, including spatial planning, (renewable) energy, transport, agriculture, forestry, water management, and climate strategies. Integration includes consideration of biodiversity impacts and dependencies, ecosystem services, NbS, and application of the mitigation hierarchy, in line with EU environmental acquis and global conventions.

Target 4.2 – Strengthened application of environmental assessment instruments

By 2030, SEA and EIA systems are effectively implemented across WB6 and consistently incorporate biodiversity considerations in decision-making processes, including early-stage integration, use of biodiversity-relevant data, ecological sensitivity mapping, cumulative impact assessment, alternative analysis, strengthened compliance monitoring and integration of NbS in assessment procedures and mitigation measures.

Target 4.3 – Enhanced cross-sectoral coordination and governance

By 2030, effective cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms are strengthened across WB6 to support biodiversity integration into sectoral policies and decision-making, including coordination between relevant authorities, strengthened regional cooperation mechanisms, and inclusive stakeholder engagement.

Indicators

The indicators for Strategic Goal 4 are designed to provide a concise and operational framework for tracking progress in integrating biodiversity into sectoral policies, planning processes, and decision-making across WB6. The indicator set prioritises measurable proxy indicators that reflect system-level changes in policy integration, application of planning tools, and coordination, while relying on data that can be consistently collected across WB6.

G4-I1 Sector integration — *Data*: Sectoral policy and planning documents across WB6, compiled through RCC/BDTF reporting, such as the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans Report of Implementations (GARI). *Counting rules*: Number of sectoral policy frameworks (agriculture, forestry, (renewable) energy, transport, spatial planning) that explicitly include biodiversity provisions, assessed against an agreed regional checklist. *Baseline/targets*: Baseline established for 2026 through initial review. Target 2030: increasing number of sectoral frameworks incorporating biodiversity provisions across WB6.

G4-I2 Assessment uptake — *Data*: SEA and EIA documentation from relevant authorities across WB6, supported by project-based reviews where needed. *Counting rules*: Percentage of SEA/EIA processes applying biodiversity screening criteria, mitigation hierarchy and NbS. *Baseline/targets*: Baseline established for 2026 using sample-based assessment. Target 2030: consistent upward trend in application of biodiversity criteria across WB6.

G4-I3 Coordination mechanisms — *Data*: Records of coordination processes, including meeting reports, agendas, and outputs, compiled through RCC/BDTF and relevant authorities. *Counting rules*: Number of active coordination mechanisms meeting defined criteria (regular meetings and documented outputs such as guidance, decisions, or reports). *Baseline/targets*: Baseline established for 2026. Target 2030: sustained number of operational coordination mechanisms with regular outputs across WB6.

G4-I4 Uptake of NbS across sectors — *Data*: Compiled from domestic-level SEA/EIA reports, sectoral investment plans, and selected project-level reporting (e.g. water management, infrastructure, agriculture, climate adaptation), aggregated at regional level by IUCN/RCC.

Counting rules: Annual composite proxy indicator based on one or more of the following measurable parameters (depending on data availability):

- a) Number or share (%) of projects/plans integrating NbS as a primary or hybrid (green-grey) solution
- b) Estimated area (ha) where NbS are implemented to replace or complement grey infrastructure

Regional value reported as aggregated WB6 total or average.

Baseline/targets: Baseline established for 2026 based on initial screening of sectoral plans and projects. Target 2030: progressive increase in NbS uptake across all WB6 by 2030, with at least a measurable upward trend by mid-term (2028).

G4–I5 Private sector engagement in biodiversity-relevant sectors. *Data source:* Sectoral regional organisations, complemented by WB6 reporting on voluntary commitments and partnership initiatives; validation by BDTF.

Counting rules: Number of formal regional or multi-jurisdiction partnerships or initiatives where private companies participate in implementing WB BSP or GAWB biodiversity related actions.

Baseline/targets: Baseline established for 2027. Target 2030: at least one engagement per WB6 with systematic private sector participation and demonstrable contributions to WB BSP goals.

9. Goal 5: Advance Biodiversity Action through Knowledge, Governance, and Finance

Strengthen biodiversity governance, data systems, knowledge sharing, and financial resources at all levels of governance to enable inclusive, effective, and accountable implementation and reporting

Rationale

Achieving the objectives of the WB BSP requires enabling conditions that go beyond site-based conservation and sectoral integration. Biodiversity outcomes in the WB6 remain constrained by systemic challenges related to governance and capacities, knowledge systems, and financing, as highlighted in the Biodiversity Conservation Report.

Biodiversity governance frameworks across the region have evolved considerably, particularly in the context of EU accession processes and alignment with international agreements. However, implementation remains uneven and often constrained by institutional fragmentation, limited administrative capacity, and insufficient coordination across levels of governance. Responsibilities for biodiversity are frequently dispersed across multiple institutions, reducing efficiency and weakening accountability. Institutions responsible for biodiversity conservation, particularly at local and protected-area levels, often face shortages of technical expertise, high staff turnover, and limited access to training and professional development.

These challenges are reflected in the key findings of the Policy Analysis report presented in Text box 5.1.

[Text box 5.1] – Fragmented governance and limited capacity constrain implementation

Biodiversity governance in the WB6 remains fragmented across institutions and administrative levels, with limited coordination between sectors. While legal frameworks are broadly aligned with EU requirements, implementation is often constrained by insufficient institutional capacity, limited technical expertise, and weak enforcement. Strengthening coordination and capacity is essential for effective biodiversity action.

Possible perspectives include establishing long-term, well-resourced capacity development programmes for nature conservation institutions; strengthening legal, organisational and governance frameworks for coordinated action; professionalising protected area and agency staff; fostering

participatory governance models with NGOs, academia and local communities; and institutionalising regional training, exchange and peer-learning mechanisms.

At the same time, biodiversity knowledge systems remain underdeveloped and long-term trend data are often unavailable. Existing information systems across WB6 are not sufficiently integrated or interoperable at regional level. This limits evidence-based decision-making and weakens reporting against European and global biodiversity commitments (see Text box 5.2).

[Text box 5.2] – Fragmented data systems limit evidence-based decision-making

Biodiversity monitoring in the WB6 remains fragmented and largely project-based, with significant gaps in data on species, habitats, and ecosystems. Existing information systems across WB6 are uneven and not fully interoperable, limiting data sharing and regional analysis. Developing a regional biodiversity information hub offers a key opportunity to support consistent monitoring, reporting, and decision-making.

In this context, the development of a regional biodiversity monitoring and information system under the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (Pillar 5, Action 57) provides a critical opportunity to establish a coherent framework for data collection, management, and reporting. Such a system can serve as a regional biodiversity information hub, supporting the tracking of progress across all goals of the WB BSP and enabling more consistent and comparable reporting across the WB6.

Financial constraints represent another major barrier. Biodiversity conservation in the WB6 continues to rely heavily on external funding, with limited domestic-level budget allocations and underdeveloped financing mechanisms. While international support has enabled important progress, this dependency undermines long-term sustainability and ownership across the WB6. Innovative financing approaches, payments for ecosystem services, and private sector engagement remain insufficiently developed and scaled. These constraints hinder the effective implementation of policies, monitoring systems, and conservation measures (see Text box 5.3).

[Text box 5.3] – Financing remains insufficient and externally dependent

Biodiversity conservation in the WB6 relies heavily on external funding, while domestic-level investment remains limited. Financial resources are often insufficient to support effective management, monitoring, and restoration. At the same time, opportunities for innovative financing - such as NbS and private sector engagement - remain underutilised.

However, the region is well positioned to address these challenges through strengthened regional cooperation. Shared ecosystems, common policy frameworks, and ongoing alignment with the EU acquis provide a strong basis for developing coordinated approaches to governance, knowledge sharing, and resource mobilisation. While Strategic Goal 4 focuses on integrating biodiversity into sectoral policies and planning, Strategic Goal 5 addresses the enabling conditions required to support implementation. It therefore focuses on improving governance effectiveness, establishing integrated biodiversity knowledge and monitoring systems, strengthening capacities, and mobilising sustainable financial resources.

Regional Targets (2030)

To translate these enabling conditions into measurable outcomes, Strategic Goal 5 is supported by the following regional targets:

Target 5.1: Strengthened biodiversity governance and institutional coordination

By 2030, governance frameworks for biodiversity across WB6 ensure effective, transparent, and coordinated implementation of biodiversity policies across sectors and levels of governance, supported by strengthened ministerial dialogue, regional coordination mechanisms, and technical advisory structures.

Target 5.2: Operational and interoperable biodiversity knowledge and information systems

By 2030, an operational and interoperable regional biodiversity information hub is established, building on existing systems across the WB6 and supporting data sharing and analysis across the region, in line with Action 57 (Pillar 5). The regional biodiversity information hub established under Goal 5 will serve as the primary platform for tracking and reporting progress across all BSP goals and indicators.

Target 5.3: Strengthened biodiversity monitoring and reporting frameworks

By 2030, harmonised biodiversity monitoring and reporting frameworks are operational across WB6, enabling consistent tracking of biodiversity status, trends, and progress towards BSP targets across all three levels of biodiversity: ecosystems, species and genetic diversity.

Target 5.4: Increased and diversified financing for biodiversity

By 2030, financial resources for biodiversity conservation in WB6 are increased, diversified, and more effectively mobilised and aligned with biodiversity priorities.

Target 5.5: Enhanced technical and institutional capacities for biodiversity implementation

By 2030, institutional, technical, and stakeholder capacities for biodiversity conservation are strengthened across WB6, enabling effective implementation of biodiversity policies, monitoring systems, regional dialogue, and conservation action.

Indicators

The indicators for Goal 5 are designed to provide a focused and operational framework for tracking progress in strengthening biodiversity governance, knowledge systems, and enabling conditions across the WB6. In line with the regional scope of the WB BSP, the indicator set prioritises a limited number of measurable and comparable proxy indicators that reflect key system-level changes, rather than comprehensive or process-heavy metrics. Indicators are selected based on their feasibility, data availability, and relevance for decision-making, and are intended to build, wherever possible, on existing data collection and reporting processes under the GAWB and related regional initiatives. The approach is aligned with the established indicator frameworks, including those under the EU Biodiversity Strategy, the global biodiversity monitoring framework, and the Sustainable Development Goals, while focusing on tracking progress in regional coordination, system development, and implementation of the WB BSP rather than assessing domestic-level performance or compliance. The regional biodiversity information hub will provide the backbone for tracking and reporting progress across all BSP goals and indicators. The regional biodiversity information hub established under this Goal will serve as the primary platform for tracking and reporting progress across all BSP goals and indicators.

G5-I1 Annual biodiversity governance cycle completed. *Data:* IUCN/RCC Secretariat (with RWG GAWB confirmation). *Counting rules:* as “1” if: (a) a ministerial progress point occurs (or equivalent high-level meeting under GAWB) and (b) an annual biodiversity workplan or agreed deliverable list is endorsed/recorded. *Baseline/targets:* Baseline = first full year after BSP adoption (likely 2026). Target = 1 every year 2026–2030, mid-term 2028: 3/3 years achieved.

G5-I2 Coordination mechanism functionality. *Data:* compiled by IUCN. *Counting rules:* number of (i) BDTF meetings with documented action logs and (ii) regionally adopted technical outputs (guidelines, standards, protocols, templates) per year. *Baseline/targets:* Baseline established for 2026 = current practice. Target = ≥ 2 BDTF meetings/year + ≥ 2 regional technical outputs/year by 2028; sustain through 2030.

G5-I3 WB BSP annual progress synthesis published. *Data:* IUCN (linked to annual GAWB reporting). *Counting rules:* as “1” if: a public BSP biodiversity progress section/annex is published with indicator table. *Baseline/targets:* Baseline = 0 if not yet published. Target = published annually 2026–2030.

G5-I4 Regional biodiversity information & monitoring system (hub) maturity. *Data source:* IUCN as a Pillar 5 coordinator; technical validation by BDTF. *Counting rules:* score based on evidence checklist aligned with GBF Target 21 indicator intent: Level 1 (standards + prototype), Level 2 (operational submissions), Level 3 (demonstrated policy use + accessible outputs). *Baseline/targets:* 2026 likely 0–1. Target 2028 = 2, Target 2030 = 3.

G5-I5 Biodiversity finance mobilised for regional actions. *Data source:* RCC donor coordination focal point with project implementers; relevant authorities validate domestic-level contributions. *Counting rules:* annual committed and disbursed totals for regionally coordinated biodiversity actions (as defined in BSP Annex I and GAWB biodiversity roadmap). *Baseline/targets:* Baseline established for 2026 = establish methodology + first inventory. Target 2028 = full coverage of major projects, Target 2030 = stable annual series and trend.

G5-I6 Regional biodiversity capacity development programme operational and effective. *Data source:* IUCN ECARO and BDTF (as coordinators of a regional capacity development programme), with inputs from RCC and participating WB6 institutions; compiled through annual programme reports, training records, and participant feedback.

Counting rules:

- number of regional capacity building activities (e.g. training sessions, workshops, peer-learning exchanges, thematic group support) with participation from all WB6;
- coverage of key target groups (public authorities, protected area managers, experts, civil society and other stakeholders) and evidence of follow-up use of skills and tools in domestic-level implementation; and
- systematic evaluation of activities, including annual synthesis of lessons learned feeding into BSP implementation and monitoring.

Baseline/targets: Baseline established for 2026; Target 2030 = institutionalised regional programme with demonstrated influence on biodiversity governance, monitoring, and implementation across WB6.

Annex I: Priority Regional Actions

Goal 1: Ensure Effective, Equitable and Representative Area-based Conservation

The actions below are designed to support the achievement of Targets 1.1–1.4 by addressing key regional gaps in conservation coverage, representativeness, connectivity, and management effectiveness. They build on and complement ongoing implementation of the GAWB and are supported by existing regional initiatives.

Action	Description	Lead	Timeline
G1-A1	Develop and apply a WB6 harmonised accounting framework for protected areas and OECMs, including a regional dashboard for tracking conservation coverage and progress towards the 30% target.	BDTF / IUCN ECARO / RCC	2026– 2027
G1-A2	Develop and operationalise a WB6 strict protection equivalence framework to enable consistent classification and reporting of strictly protected areas across WB6.	BDTF / ECARO	2026– 2028
G1-A3	Conduct a regional analysis of priority biodiversity areas and ecosystems, including KBAs and underrepresented ecosystems across WB6, to inform expansion of protected and conserved areas.	BDTF / ECARO / Partners	2026– 2028
G1-A4	Identify and support a regional portfolio of priority ecological corridors and shared conservation areas, including the development of cooperation arrangements, joint objectives, and coordinated monitoring approaches.	BDTF / RCC / ECARO / Partners	2026– 2029
G1-A5	Develop and implement a WB6 programme for improving management effectiveness of protected and conserved areas, including common standards, evaluation methodologies, and capacity development.	ECARO / BDTF / Partners	2026– 2030
G1-A6	Develop a regional pipeline of priority investments and projects to support protected area management, ecological connectivity, and recognition of OECMs.	RCC / ECARO / Partners	2026– 2030

Goal 2: Restore and Enhance Ecosystem Integrity and Resilience

Ecosystem restoration is a central pillar of the WB BSP, addressing the urgent need to reverse widespread ecosystem degradation and to rebuild ecological integrity across the region. While Strategic Goal 1 focuses on expanding and strengthening area-based conservation, Goal 2 complements this by restoring degraded ecosystems and enhancing their functionality, connectivity, and resilience. Restoration represents not only a biodiversity priority, but also a critical investment in climate resilience, water security, soil health, and sustainable livelihoods.

Action	Description	Lead	Timeline
G2-A1	Develop a WB6 common framework for ecosystem restoration planning, covering current status and priority ecosystem identification, restoration opportunity mapping, targets, and monitoring indicators aligned with EU and GBF requirements, and support its jurisdiction-level application through domestic Ecosystem Restoration Plans, including integration into policy frameworks and financial planning. The framework will invite the WB6 to consider, where relevant, their targets under three Rio Conventions.	BDTF / ECARO / RCC	2026– 2028
G2-A2	Implement a regional portfolio of pilot restoration projects across priority ecosystems (forests, rivers, wetlands, grasslands, coastal systems), including transboundary	Relevant authorities across WB6 /	2027– 2030

Action	Description	Lead	Timeline
	landscapes and clearly defined ecological targets, showing progress towards LDN (for example by addressing erosion-prone lands).	Partners / BDTF	
G2-A3	Develop and implement a coordinated WB6 programme to identify, prioritise, and restore ecological corridors and connectivity areas across terrestrial, freshwater, and coastal ecosystems. The activity will integrate restoration into spatial planning and transboundary cooperation frameworks.	Relevant authorities across WB6 / ECARO / Partners / BDTF	2028–2030
G2-A4	Establish a regional framework and practical guidance through capacity building to ensure that ecosystem restoration systematically contributes to climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and ecosystem service enhancement through NbS.	ECARO / BDTF / RCC	2027–2030
G2-A5	Establish a harmonised monitoring and reporting framework for ecosystem condition and restoration outcomes, under the regional biodiversity information hub and supporting reporting under BSP, EU, and GBF frameworks.	RCC / ECARO / BDTF	2027–2029

Goal 3: Halt Species Loss and Strengthen Conservation of Endangered Species

The Goal 3 action package translates the commitment to halt species loss into a practical regional framework for effective species conservation in the WB6. It requires coordinated regional action and implementation, particularly for threatened, endemic, migratory, and transboundary species. The actions integrate species prioritisation, action planning, monitoring methodologies, strengthened Red List systems, and enforcement measures addressing direct pressures such as illegal killing, poaching, and wildlife trade.

Action	Description	Lead	Timeline
G3-A1	Develop a regional framework for species conservation and recovery, including criteria for prioritising species and determining a set of priority regional species, preparing methodologies for action planning, and alignment with EU and GBF requirements.	BDTF / ECARO / RCC	2026–2027
G3-A2	Support the development and implementation of (transboundary) species action plans, focusing on threatened, endemic, and migratory species, including the species with endangered genetic diversity.	Relevant authorities / BDTF	2026–2029
G3-A3	Establish a regional programme for monitoring priority species within G5-A2, including harmonised methodologies, species taxonomy, data standards, and integration into a regional biodiversity information hub.	ECARO / BDTF / partners	2026–2030
G3-A4	Strengthen enforcement and measures to combat illegal killing, poaching, and wildlife trade, including capacity building, cross-border/boundary cooperation, and awareness campaigns.	WB6 authorities	2026–2030
G3-A5	Update and harmonise Red Lists and species databases of the WB6, ensuring alignment with IUCN standards and integration into regional and global data platforms.	Relevant authorities / ECARO	2026–2029

Goal 4: Integrate Biodiversity into Sectors and Policies

The actions below are designed to support the achievement of Targets 4.1–4.3 by addressing key regional gaps in biodiversity integration across sectoral policies, planning processes, and governance

frameworks. They focus on developing shared approaches, strengthening planning and assessment tools, enhancing cross-sectoral coordination, and building capacities for effective implementation. These actions build on and complement the ongoing implementation of the GAWB and related regional initiatives.

Action	Description	Lead	Timeline
G4-A1	Develop a WB6 guidance framework for integrating biodiversity and ecosystem services into key sectoral policies, including minimum standards, tools, and examples aligned with EU acquis.	BDTF / ECARO / RCC	2027
G4-A2	Develop and promote harmonised regional guidelines for incorporating biodiversity into SEA and EIA processes, including early-stage screening, cumulative impact assessment, ecological connectivity, ecosystem services, and integration of NbS in assessment procedures and mitigation measures.	BDTF / ECARO / relevant authorities across WB6	2026–2028
G4-A3	Develop and implement regional capacity building programmes on biodiversity integration for public authorities and sectoral stakeholders, including planning authorities and SEA/EIA practitioners.	ECARO / BDTF / Partners	2026–2030
G4-A4	Support integration of biodiversity considerations into spatial planning systems, including identification of ecological corridors, priority areas, and biodiversity-sensitive infrastructure planning approaches.	Relevant planning authorities across WB6	2026–2029
G4-A5	Develop a regional framework and pipeline for NbS, building on the existing frameworks in WB6 to support climate adaptation, water management, and sustainable land use, and facilitate their integration into relevant planning instruments.	ECARO / BDTF / Partners	2026–2030
G4-A6	Promote private sector engagement in biodiversity integration through partnerships, pilot initiatives, and guidance on biodiversity-friendly practices, including alignment with EU sustainability frameworks.	RCC / ECARO / Partners	2027–2030

Goal 5: Advance Biodiversity Action through Knowledge, Governance, and Finance

The actions below are designed to support the achievement of Targets 5.1–5.5 by strengthening biodiversity governance, knowledge systems, monitoring frameworks, capacities, and financing mechanisms across WB6. They focus on establishing enabling conditions for effective implementation of the WB BSP, including coordinated governance structures, interoperable data systems, strengthened institutional capacities, and increased and diversified financial resources. These actions build on and complement the ongoing implementation of the GAWB and related regional initiatives.

Action	Description	Lead	Timeline
G5-A1	Strengthen regional biodiversity governance and coordination mechanisms, including enhancing the role of the BDTF, supporting thematic groups, and reinforcing biodiversity-related ministerial and cross-sectoral dialogue under the GAWB framework.	BDTF / ECARO	2026–2030
G5-A2	Establish and operationalise a WB6 regional biodiversity information hub, ensuring consistency with the whole BSP and enabling data sharing, analysis, and reporting in support of BSP indicators and GAWB Pillar 5 (Action 57).	ECARO / RCC / BDTF / relevant authorities across WB6	2026–2028

Action	Description	Lead	Timeline
G5-A3	Develop and implement a harmonised regional biodiversity monitoring and reporting framework, including common methodologies, priority indicators, and alignment with EU and international reporting requirements.	BDTF / ECARO / relevant authorities across WB6	2026–2029
G5-A4	Develop a regional framework for biodiversity finance mobilisation, including identification of funding sources, alignment with EU and international financing mechanisms, and promotion of innovative financing approaches.	RCC / ECARO / Partners	2026–2029
G5-A5	Develop and implement a regional biodiversity capacity development programme, including training, peer-learning, thematic group support, and stakeholder engagement for public authorities, experts, civil society, and other relevant actors.	ECARO / BDTF / Partners	2026–2030
G5-A6	Strengthen capacities and systems for biodiversity data management, analysis, and use, including support to relevant institutions across WB6 for integrating data into the regional biodiversity information hub and applying it in decision-making.	ECARO / relevant authorities across WB6 / Partners	2026–2029

Annex II Glossary

This glossary is aligned with the terminology of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), relevant EU environmental acquis and IUCN standards.

Technical term	Definition
Biodiversity	The variability among living organisms from all sources, including terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species, and of ecosystems.
Connectivity and integrity	An area with high ecological integrity is one which has a composition, structure, function and ecological process close to that of a natural ecosystem. Connectivity ensures the maintenance of natural species habitats. Taking into account both objectives is an important consideration in the design of restoration activities.
Conservation status	The sum of influences acting on a species or habitat that may affect its long-term distribution, abundance, structure, and functions. Often assessed as favourable or unfavourable under EU and IUCN frameworks.
Degraded ecosystems	Degradation refers to a persistent (long-term) reduction in the capacity to provide ecosystem services. Degraded land includes natural ecosystems which have included a loss of ecosystem functions and services and transformed ecosystems (such as agricultural areas). An assessment of degraded areas within a jurisdiction is a necessary first step for monitoring the total percent of degraded ecosystems which are under restoration.
Drivers of biodiversity loss	Direct and indirect factors causing biodiversity decline, including land- and sea-use change, overexploitation, climate change, pollution, and invasive alien species.
Ecological connectivity	The unimpeded movement of species and the flow of natural processes that sustain life on Earth, enabling ecosystems to function and species to maintain viable populations.
Ecological corridors	Geographical areas that facilitate ecological connectivity by enabling the movement of species and the maintenance of ecological processes across landscapes.
Ecosystem	A dynamic complex of plant, animal and micro-organism communities and their non-living environment interacting as a functional unit. A community of living organisms interacting with each other and with their physical environment (e.g. forests, rivers, grasslands).
Ecosystem restoration	The process of assisting the recovery of ecosystems that have been degraded, damaged or destroyed, with the aim of re-establishing their structure, function and ecological integrity.
Ecosystem services	The contributions of ecosystems to human well-being, including provisioning, regulating, cultural, and supporting services, such as food, water regulation, climate regulation, and recreation.
Effective	In order for restoration activities to be effective, they need to be appropriately resourced and monitored over time. Further, the potential for restoration should not be regarded as a justification for the further degradation of ecosystems. The target does not require areas to be restored, given that restoration is a long-term process, but that effective restoration activities have been initiated.

Technical term	Definition
Enhance biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services	While restoration activities can be undertaken for various reasons, this target specifies that such activities should be undertaken for the purposes of enhancing biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, ecological integrity and connectivity. These different objectives should be considered in the design and implementation of actions to reach this target.
Environmental assessment instruments	Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Appropriate Assessment (AA)
Green infrastructure	A strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural areas designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services and biodiversity benefits.
Habitat	The place or type of site where an organism or population naturally occurs.
Invasive alien species	Species introduced outside their natural range whose introduction and spread threaten biodiversity, ecosystem services, or human well-being.
Land degradation	The reduction or loss of the biological or economic productivity and ecological integrity of land resulting from human activities or natural processes.
Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)	A state whereby the amount and quality of land resources necessary to support ecosystem functions and services and enhance food security remain stable or increase within specified temporal and spatial scales.
Mitigation hierarchy	A framework for managing environmental impacts by prioritising: (1) avoidance, (2) minimisation, (3) restoration, and (4) offsetting of residual impacts.
Nature-based Solutions (NbS)	Actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, while providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits.
Protected area	A clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.
Restoration	Restoration refers to the process of actively managing the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged or destroyed. Restoration activities can be undertaken for a variety of reasons and across a continuum of actions. For example, ecological restoration includes efforts to increase the area of a natural ecosystem and its integrity through recovering an ecosystem that has been degraded or destroyed; this includes conversion of non-natural transformed ecosystems back to a natural ecosystems state. On the other hand, ecosystem rehabilitation includes efforts to increase ecosystem functions and services of transformed ecosystems. Given the continuum of restoration activities, efforts to reach this target should be specific and identify the type of restoration being undertaken, the overall objectives being sought and the type of area or ecosystem being restored.
Restoration planning	A systematic process for identifying degraded ecosystems, setting priorities, defining targets, and designing and implementing restoration actions, in line with international frameworks such as the EU Nature Restoration Regulation and the GBF.
Strict protection	A form of protected area management where natural processes are allowed to operate with minimal human intervention, typically corresponding to IUCN categories Ia and Ib or equivalent regimes.

Annex III Log Frame

Goal 1: Effective Area-based Conservation

Target	Action	Indicator
Target 1.1 – Expanded and representative conservation coverage:	G1-A1: Develop and apply a WB6 harmonised accounting framework for protected areas and OECMs,	G1-I1 Protected and conserved area coverage (30%)

Target	Action	Indicator
30% of terrestrial and marine areas across WB6	including a regional dashboard for tracking conservation coverage and progress towards the 30% target.	
Target 1.2 – Strengthened strict protection: 10% of terrestrial and marine areas across WB6	G1-A2: Develop and operationalise a WB6 strict protection equivalence framework to enable consistent classification and reporting of strictly protected areas across WB6.	G1-I2 Strict protection coverage (10%)
Target 1.2 – Strengthened strict protection: 10% of terrestrial and marine areas across WB6	G1-A3: Conduct a regional analysis of priority biodiversity areas and ecosystems, including KBAs and underrepresented ecosystems across WB6, to inform expansion of protected and conserved areas.	G1-I3 KBA and Natura 2000 coverage
Target 1.3 – Strengthened ecological connectivity and regional cooperation	G1-A4: Identify and support a regional portfolio of priority ecological corridors and shared conservation areas, including the development of cooperation arrangements, joint objectives, and coordinated monitoring approaches.	G1-I4 Connectivity (ConneCons)
Target 1.4 – Improved management effectiveness of conserved areas: 70% MPs and 50% Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT)	G1-A5: Develop and implement a WB6 programme for improving management effectiveness of protected and conserved areas, including common standards, evaluation methodologies, and capacity development.	G1-I5 Management effectiveness
All targets	G1-A6: Develop a regional pipeline of priority investments and projects to support protected area management, ecological connectivity, and recognition of OECMs.	-

Goal 2 Restore and Enhance Ecosystem Integrity and Resilience

Target	Action	Indicator
Target 2.1 – Restoration planning frameworks established	G2-A1: Develop a WB6 common framework for ecosystem restoration planning, covering current status and priority ecosystem identification, restoration opportunity mapping, targets, and monitoring indicators aligned with EU and GBF requirements, and support its jurisdiction-level application through domestic Ecosystem Restoration Plans, including integration into policy frameworks and financial planning.	G2-I1 Restoration planning and financing frameworks
Target 2.2 – Effective ecosystem restoration implemented at scale	G2-A2: Implement a regional portfolio of pilot restoration projects across priority ecosystems (forests, rivers, wetlands, grasslands, coastal systems), including transboundary	G2-I2 Restoration coverage

Target	Action	Indicator
	landscapes and clearly defined ecological targets, showing progress towards LDN (for example by addressing erosion-prone lands).	
Target 2.3 – Ecological connectivity strengthened through effective restoration	G2-A3: Develop and implement a coordinated WB6 programme to identify, prioritise, and restore ecological corridors and connectivity areas across terrestrial, freshwater, and coastal ecosystems.	G2-I3 Connectivity improvement (restoration contribution to G1-I4)
Target 2.4 – Climate-resilient restoration and NbS mainstreamed	G2-A4: Establish a regional framework and practical guidance through capacity building to ensure that ecosystem restoration systematically contributes to climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and ecosystem service enhancement through NbS.	G2-I4 Climate-resilient restoration and NbS uptake
Target 2.5 – Monitoring systems for restoration and ecosystem condition operational	G2-A5: Establish a harmonised monitoring and reporting framework for ecosystem condition and restoration outcomes, under the regional biodiversity information hub and supporting reporting under BSP, EU, and GBF frameworks.	G2-I5 Restoration monitoring systems operational

Goal 3: Halt Species Loss and Strengthen Conservation of Endangered Species

Target	Action	Indicator
Target 3.1 – Extinction risk reduced for threatened species	G3-A1: Develop a regional framework for species conservation and recovery, including criteria for prioritising species and determining a set of priority regional species, preparing methodologies for action planning, and alignment with EU and GBF requirements.	G3-I1 Conservation status of species (IUCN Red List)
Target 3.2 – Population trends of priority species improved	G3-A2: Support the development and implementation of (transboundary) species action plans, focusing on threatened, endemic, and migratory species, including the species with endangered genetic diversity.	G3-I2 Population trends of selected regional priority species
Target 3.3 – Species action plans developed and implemented	G3-A3: Establish a regional programme for monitoring priority species within G5-A2, including harmonised methodologies, species taxonomy, data standards, and integration into a regional biodiversity information hub.	G3-I3 Species action plans operational

Target	Action	Indicator
Target 3.4 – Key pressures on species reduced	G3-A4: Strengthen enforcement and measures to combat illegal killing, poaching, and wildlife trade, including capacity building, cross-border/boundary cooperation, and awareness campaigns.	G3-I4 Reduction of illegal killing and exploitation
Target 3.5 – Monitoring and Red Lists strengthened	G3-A5: Update and harmonise Red Lists and species databases of the WB6, ensuring alignment with IUCN standards and integration into regional and global data platforms.	G3-I5 Monitoring and Red Lists operational

Goal 4: Integrate Biodiversity into Sectors and Policies

Target	Action	Indicator
Target 4.1 – Biodiversity integrated into sectoral policies and planning	G4-A1: Develop a WB6 guidance framework for integrating biodiversity and ecosystem services into key sectoral policies, including minimum standards, tools, and examples aligned with EU acquis.	G4-I1 Sector integration - Sectoral policy and planning documents
Target 4.2 – Strengthened application of environmental assessment instruments	G4-A2: Develop and promote harmonised regional guidelines for incorporating biodiversity into SEA and EIA processes, including early-stage screening, cumulative impact assessment, ecological connectivity, ecosystem services, and integration of NbS in assessment procedures and mitigation measures.	G4-I2 Assessment uptake — SEA and EIA documentation
Target 4.3 – Enhanced cross-sectoral coordination and governance	G4-A3: Develop and implement regional capacity building programmes for public authorities and sectoral stakeholders. G4-A4: Support integration of biodiversity considerations into spatial planning systems.	G4-I3 Coordination mechanisms
	G4-A5: Develop a regional framework and pipeline for NbS to support climate adaptation, water management, and sustainable land use, and facilitate their integration into relevant planning instruments.	G4-I4 Uptake of NbS across sectors
	G4-A6: Promote private sector engagement in biodiversity integration through partnerships, pilot initiatives, and guidance on biodiversity-friendly practices, including alignment with EU sustainability frameworks.	G4-I5 Private sector engagement in biodiversity-relevant sectors

Goal 5: Advance Biodiversity Action through Knowledge, Governance, and Finance

Target	Action	Indicator
Target 5.1: Strengthened biodiversity governance and institutional coordination	G5-A1: Strengthen regional biodiversity governance and coordination mechanisms, including enhancing the role of the BDTF, supporting thematic groups, and reinforcing biodiversity-related ministerial and cross-sectoral dialogue under the GAWB framework.	G5-I1 Annual biodiversity governance cycle completed G5-I2 Coordination mechanism functionality G5-I3 BSP annual progress synthesis published
Target 5.2: Operational and interoperable biodiversity knowledge and information systems	G5-A2: Establish and operationalise a WB6 regional biodiversity information hub, ensuring consistency with whole BSP and enabling data sharing, analysis, and reporting in support of BSP indicators and GAWB Pillar 5 (Action 57).	G5-I4 Regional biodiversity information & monitoring system maturity
Target 5.3: Strengthened biodiversity monitoring and reporting frameworks	G5-A3: Develop and implement a harmonised regional biodiversity monitoring and reporting framework, including common methodologies, priority indicators, and alignment with EU and international reporting requirements.	
Target 5.4: Increased and diversified financing for biodiversity	G5-A5: Develop a regional framework for biodiversity finance mobilisation, including identification of funding sources, alignment with EU and international financing mechanisms, and promotion of innovative financing approaches.	G5-I5 Biodiversity finance mobilised for regional actions
Target 5.5: Enhanced technical and institutional capacities for biodiversity implementation	G5-A4: Develop and implement a regional biodiversity capacity development programme, including training, peer-learning, thematic group support, and stakeholder engagement for public authorities, experts, civil society, and other relevant actors.	G5-I6 Regional biodiversity capacity development programme operational and effective
	G5-A6: Strengthen capacities and systems for biodiversity data management, analysis, and use, including support to relevant institutions across WB6 for integrating data into the regional biodiversity information hub and applying it in decision-making.	