



Protect coastal and marine biodiversity from geoengineering

Silvia Ribeiro ETC Group

In a wave of “blue carbon” hype, oceans and coastal areas are increasingly pitched as tools to fight global warming. Around the globe dozens of new projects are projected to increase the ocean's capacity to absorb CO₂ with a view to selling the carbon credits generated commercially. Despite these false promises, all those projects are experimental and speculative in nature, and none are proven to have any real effect on climate change.

More fundamentally, this approach ignores the complexity and fragility of marine ecosystems, especially their key role as source and support for vital food chains for plants, animals and humans, and their intrinsic relationship to traditional livelihoods that maintain and increase biodiversity.

Marine geoengineering proposals include reviving ocean fertilization techniques (under the guise of new names); spreading synthetic reflective beads over Arctic areas; brightening marine clouds; establishing mega plantations of algae monocultures; sinking huge amounts of minerals to change ocean chemistry; and sinking large volumes of organic material and biomass into the seas to supposedly absorb carbon.

With so many new private sector proposals threatening marine and coastal biodiversity, CBD urgently needs to ensure the implementation of its precautionary decisions on geoengineering, especially the 2010 Decision X/33 8 (w) which called for a moratorium on the deployment of all geoengineering activities until a set of conditions are met.

Today, none of the conditions expressed in the CBD decisions on climate-related geoengineering are yet in place. These precautionary calls are as important as ever and should be brought forward in discussions of marine biodiversity at SBSTTA 26, as well as in all discussions on biodiversity and climate change in COP16 and beyond.

To stay in line with previous decisions, the CBD should also recognize the ongoing work at the London Protocol / London Convention which recently issued a cautionary statement about four geoengineering technologies, stating that they had the **“potential for deleterious effects that are widespread, long-lasting or severe”** and that **“there is considerable uncertainty regarding their effects on the marine environment, human health and other uses of the ocean.”**

The threat of new sources of carbon credits being included in the UNFCCC new carbon market regime makes it even more urgent for the CBD to act against marine geoengineering and protect coastal biodiversity.

More in our new briefing paper: Protect coastal and marine biodiversity from geoengineering:

English: tinyurl.com/mp6ktd88

español: tinyurl.com/3jnwj5f4

1. [International Maritime Organization \(2023\) 45th Consultative Meeting of Contracting Parties to the London Convention and the 18th Meeting of Contracting Parties to the London Protocol \(LC 45/LP 18\) https://bit.ly/4diiTrS](https://www.imo.org/en/pressroom/2023/04/2023041401.html)

How False Indicators like TNFD will Undermine the GBF

By Simone Lovera, advisor to the Rainforest Action Network

The adoption of a strong GBF monitoring framework is urgent and necessary. It needs to be adopted at the 16th Conference of the Parties (COP16) to ensure Parties can start reporting over GBF implementation. However, if the monitoring framework includes indicators that are squarely contradictory to the thrust of the GBF, the resulting reports will be statements of false progress. They would merely show how biodiversity policy is moving backwards again, rather than forward

The weak or even false indicators that have been proposed for targets 14 and 15 of the GBF are a good example. Target 14 is at the heart of the GBF and shows the significant progress that has been made in international biodiversity policy by recognizing the need to align not just all policies and activities that harm biodiversity with the GBF, but also harmful financial flows.

Thanks to the annual UN State of Finance for Nature reports and NGO reports like Banking on Biodiversity Collapse, biodiversity policy-makers have become aware that it is essential to redirect the more than 7 trillion USD in financial flows that currently trigger biodiversity destruction. The overwhelming majority of these harmful financial flows concern private investments, which is why according to target 15 Parties are to "Take legal, administrative or policy measures in particular to ensure that large and transnational companies and financial institutions..... transparently disclose their risks... and impacts on biodiversity....in order to progressively reduce negative impacts on biodiversity."

However, the proposed monitoring framework fails to do justice to these targets. This can also be seen in already approved indicators for target 15, which would lead to false reporting as it only suggests Parties to report on whether organizations have adopted the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosure (TNFD) recommendations. But TNFD recommendations fail to oblige financial institutions to report on the full impacts of their investments on biodiversity in general, they mainly recommend them to report on the potential consequences of biodiversity loss for their own financial interests.

But the impacts of biodiversity loss tend to affect the Indigenous Peoples, women, local communities and other rightsholders that depend on biodiversity first, especially in the least developed countries. Rich investors in Northern countries tend to be the last to suffer from biodiversity loss. Moreover, TNFD is not comparable with a legally binding regulation that obliges investors to actually divest from destruction.

By having TNFD as an indicator, the monitoring framework reinstates exactly the kind of ecological injustices the GBF was supposed to address. Such a flawed indicator is not just a "gap" that needs to be addressed in the future, using it is simply unethical. We need to strengthen the GBF where possible by adopting a monitoring framework that supports rather than undermines it.

The opinions, commentaries, and articles printed in ECO are the sole opinion of the individual authors or organisations