

Understanding the Global Report on Collective Progress in the Implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework: Purpose, Content, and Science-Policy Engagement

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Introduction

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), adopted at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), is the most recent strategic plan of action agreed among nearly all sovereign states to realise their vision to live in harmony with nature by 2050 (CBD, 2022a). The KMGBF establishes four long-term goals for 2050, a mission and 23 action-oriented global targets for 2030, and a monitoring framework to track progress. Planning, monitoring and reporting are fundamental legal responsibilities of Parties enshrined in the Articles of the Convention (CBD, 1992). Building on these national obligations, Parties to the CBD agreed to conduct a collective global review of implementation at the mid and end points of the KMGBF. While progress assessments were conducted during previous CBD strategic plans, these were not part of a formal review mechanism (Box 1).

The 2026 global review marks the first operational test of the Party-led planning, monitoring, reporting, and review (PMRR) mechanism agreed at COP15 (CBD, 2022c). A central input to the 2026 global review is the Global Report on Collective Progress in the Implementation of the KMGBF (hereafter, the Global Report). Drawing primarily on seventh national reports, including

indicator data, and other information sources agreed by the Conference of the Parties, the Global Report provides an evidence base for assessing collective implementation progress. It is distinct from the global review itself, through which Parties consider this evidence and its implications for accelerating implementation (CBD, 2025b). Because of its central positioning at the science-policy interface and the high profile of the KMGBF, the Global Report has drawn scrutiny from across the scientific community, non-governmental organizations, and civil society, as well as by CBD Parties, secretariats of other multilateral environmental agreements and UN organizations. Therefore, it is important that its findings and key messages be understood by the broad community of actors involved in supporting the implementation of the KMGBF.

In this Perspective, we—co-authors of the Global Report at the CBD Secretariat and members of its Ad-hoc Scientific and Technical Advisory Group (AHSTAG)—aim to explain the role of Global Report within the science-policy interface and contextualise its key messages to support implementation of the KMGBF to 2030, the second review of progress, and future agreements under the CBD. We do so by: (i) contextualizing the report within the institutional architecture of the PMRR mechanism; (ii) detailing the governance mandates, data rules, and analytical boundaries that framed its production; (iii) providing an guide to interpreting its findings; (iv) synthesizing key lessons from this first operational cycle, including its relationship with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES); and (v) identifying actionable entry points for knowledge transfer, data sharing, research, and capacity-building.

Box 1. Earlier progress assessments under the Convention: the Global Biodiversity Outlook series.

The Global Biodiversity Outlook was initially conceived by the first meeting of the CBD's Subsidiary Body on Technical, Technological and Scientific Advice (SBSTTA), and endorsed by the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties, as a "brief summary of the status and trends of biological diversity at global and regional level ... [and] ... an analysis of the global and regional trends in the implementation of the objectives of the CBD" (CBD, 1995, 1997). Following the publication of the first Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO1) in 2001, the mandates of subsequent editions were directly related to the strategic

plans established by the Conference of the Parties, and their associated targets and goals. Specifically:

- GBO2 (published in 2006) was mandated to “provide an assessment of progress towards the 2010 biodiversity target at the global level and communicate effectively trends in biodiversity related to the three objectives of the Convention” (CBD, 2004);
- GBO3 (published in 2010) was tasked to include “an assessment of the achievement of the 2010 biodiversity target” as well as “considerations for a framework to set targets for implementing the Convention beyond 2010” (CBD, 2008);
- GBO4 (published in 2014) was required “to provide a mid-term review of progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, including an analysis of how the implementation of the Convention and its Strategic Plan has contributed to the 2015 targets of the Millennium Development Goals” (CBD, 2010, 2012); and
- GBO5 (published in 2020) should, according to the Conference of the Parties, provide “a concise final report on the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 [and] a basis for the follow-up to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020” (CBD, 2016, 2018).

While the GBO reports, especially GBO3 and GBO5, did make use of the periodic national reports provided by Parties as an obligation under the Convention, the lack of a standardized monitoring framework, combined with variable alignment between national and global targets, meant that the national reports mainly contributed illustrative examples of implementation in the form of short case studies, rather than standardised information regarding global and regional implementation. For the latter, the GBO reports were largely dependent on analysis of global indicators, especially those provided through the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership, on academic research and consortia convened to support the preparation of the reports (Tittensor *et al.*, 2014), and in the case of GBO5, on the first IPBES global assessment report (Diaz *et al.*, 2019).

The PMRR Process

At COP15, Parties adopted the PMRR mechanism as an iterative, cyclical process designed to foster collective policy learning and support implementation of the KMGBF over time (Figure 1). At the same time, the need for a global level analysis of information submitted by Parties in their national reports was recognised (CBD, 2022b). The procedures for preparation of the Global Report were subsequently adopted at COP16 (CBD, 2025b). Within the PMRR, updated National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) are intended to be the vehicle by which Parties translate global targets into national targets, which are the objectives determined by Parties in their national implementation of the KMGBF. Domestic efforts are tracked through national monitoring systems that inform standardized national reports (in 2026 and 2029). These reports assess progress towards national targets that are aligned with global targets, rather than towards the global targets themselves. The information in the reports is then aggregated in the first (2026) and second (2030) editions of the Global Report to provide evidence on collective progress in implementation of the KMGBF for the global reviews undertaken at COP17 and COP19.

To enable a global analysis of progress, Parties adopted a multilaterally negotiated monitoring framework (Affinito *et al.*, 2024). The framework establishes a suite of indicators including 1) a number of expected standardised headline indicators to measure quantitative trend and binary indicators to assess the extent to which relevant policies are in place; and 2) optional component and complementary indicators for more granular thematic tracking, while also recognising the value of more specific national indicators. This monitoring framework is a deliberate shift away from previous assessments which relied on intergovernmental and non-governmental datasets (Box 1). In contrast, the KMGBF monitoring framework aims to institutionalize bottom-up national monitoring systems, ensuring that indicator compilation is embedded directly within domestic institutions. By pre-agreeing on standardized metrics for headline indicators across all Parties, the framework aims to ensure collective comparability while encouraging governments to build capacity to collect empirical data to inform national decision-making.

While the conceptual structure of the monitoring framework was defined at COP15, its operationalization was carried out through a subsequent scientific and technical process. An Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on Indicators was mandated to clarify indicator metadata, develop binary scoring methodologies, and conduct gap analyses to ensure methodological

soundness (Affinito *et al.*, 2025). These methodologies, along with the final list of indicators, were formally recognised at the resumed session of COP16 in 2025 (CBD, 2025c). Because formal reporting requirements were agreed upon only shortly before the reporting deadline, the 2026 reporting cycle intersected with domestic monitoring systems that were still nascent, or that had not yet been adapted to the needs of KMGBF monitoring framework. For many Parties, this initial cycle could only establish baseline indicator values, typically without historical time series. Consequently, the empirical foundation of the first Global Report provides a view of initial implementation effort and domestic monitoring readiness, establishing a baseline against which future progress can be evaluated.

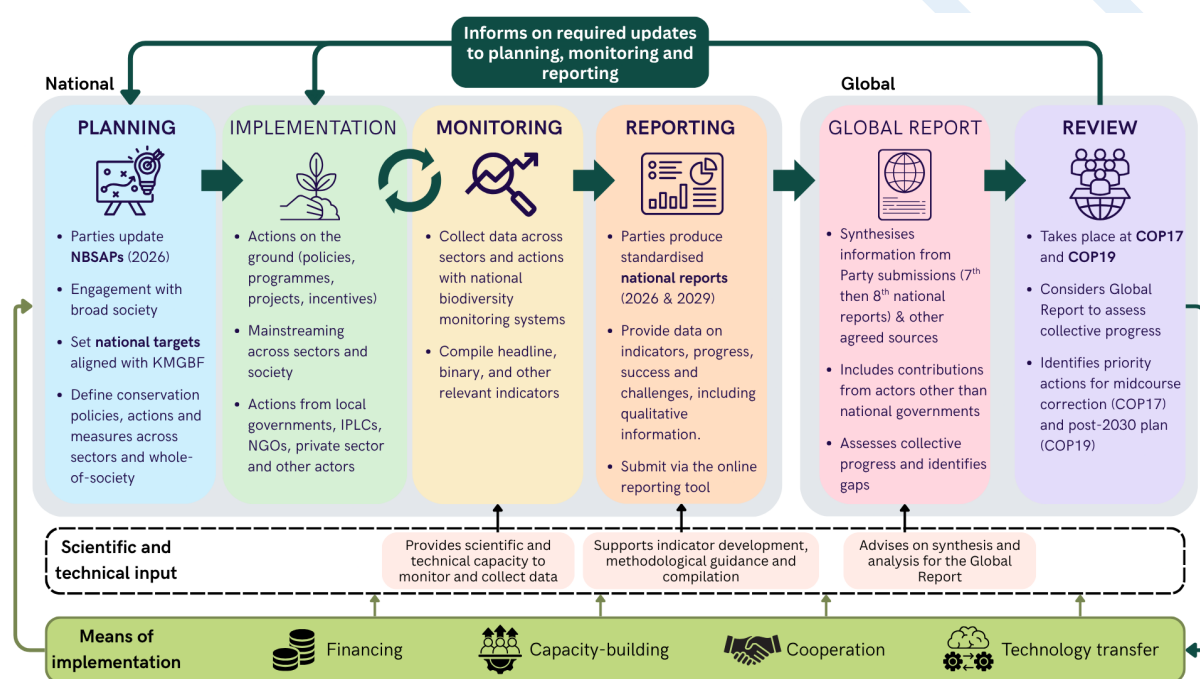


Figure 1. The PMRR mechanism to support implementation of the KMGBF. The process is a cyclical learning mechanism bridging global targets to national planning, implementation, monitoring, and reporting, back to global assessments of progress. Under the KMGBF, two rounds of the PMRR process are planned (Figure 2). Development of the next global biodiversity framework beyond 2030 will also benefit from the successes and challenges highlighted by the PMRR process.

Producing the Global Report

At COP16, Parties established an Ad Hoc Scientific and Technical Advisory Group (AHSTAG) to provide advice on the preparation of the Global Report. The production of the first Global

Report responded to a strict intergovernmental mandate codified in Decision 16/32 and adhered to an annotated outline drafted by the AHSTAG and endorsed through SBSTTA (CBD, 2025a). Methodologically, the report was bounded by core policy requirements: multilateral legitimacy, transparency, traceability, and a strict focus on collective assessment. As such, the Global Report draws primarily on information submitted through national reports, alongside other agreed information sources described below. These operational constraints allow 196 Parties to mutually accept the report's main findings as a shared evidence base for intergovernmental negotiations.

The organizational workflow was managed by the CBD Secretariat under the oversight and guidance of the AHSTAG with an explicit division of labour:

- Parties served as primary data providers via their standardized 7th national reports.
- Actors other than national governments, Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs), and other multilateral environmental agreements, United Nations organizations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) communicated their contributions through responses to formal notifications from the Secretariat and a dedicated submission platform.
- An analytical and editorial team at the Secretariat compiled, cleaned, and standardized submitted data under predetermined protocols, and drafted text based on synthesis of non-quantitative information (CBD, 2026b).
- The AHSTAG had scientific and technical oversight, for methodological rigour and consistency with the mandate, and provided editorial input especially regarding the key messages of the report.
- A formal intergovernmental peer-review process exposed the first draft of the report to scrutiny by Parties, observer organizations, and academic institutions, providing comments which were addressed by the Secretariat and used to develop the final text of the Global Report (CBD, 2026c).

The production process operated under severe time and institutional constraints (Figure 2). The finalization of indicator methodologies occurred only a year before national submissions were due, leaving limited time for Parties to align domestic statistical frameworks and data flows. These operational issues were exacerbated by delays in access to funding, experienced in many countries (CBD, 2026e). The analytical and editorial team within the Secretariat was similarly subjected to a compressed production timeline, inevitably constraining the depth of

analyses and ability of the AHSTAG to provide internal feedback and input during preparation of the report.

The COP decisions on the Global Report imposed a strict data hierarchy. The PMRR process, reinforced by the detailed scope of the report, required that national reports form the primary evidence base, reported separately and distinctly from additional sources. For quantitative metrics, the Global Report utilized only agreed headline indicators supported by pre-established methodologies and accessible datasets referenced in official COP documentation (CBD, 2024), separating them from aggregations based on data submitted in national reports (e.g. the Red List Index). In this context, the distinction between nationally reported and globally compiled indicator data is not always straightforward. Several global datasets maintained by international organizations are themselves derived from official national submissions. However, differences in reporting procedures, reference periods, methodologies and subsequent data revisions may produce discrepancies between nationally submitted values and corresponding datasets (such as those maintained by the FAO or the World Database on Protected and Conserved Areas maintained by UNEP-WCMC and IUCN). Therefore, while Parties have the option of using country-level data provided by these agencies where available, they are under no obligation to do so.

Alongside indicators, national submissions provided an extensive corpus of qualitative narrative data documenting governance arrangements, legislative and policy instruments, intersectoral initiatives and project activities, consultations and collaborations with stakeholders, and budgetary allocations, among other evidence linked to implementation of the KMGBF. The narratives associated with such evidence constitute a rich source of information on domestic progress in implementation. They also reveal forms of implementation that are difficult to capture through standardised indicators, including customary governance, community-based and other locally grounded practices. The Global Report synthesized them in a structured manner, attempting to summarize the types of action and challenges most commonly reported for each target and goal, as well as generating short case studies to illustrate successful and scalable initiatives.

In addition, the dedicated platform established for submission of contributions from actors other than national governments was operational for only a short period before the cutoff point for evidence to be used in the Global Report, and only 180 submissions were available with sufficient detail to enable analysis. These submissions were highly heterogeneous and

voluntary, with a strong majority by NGOs and very few contributions from business or from IPLCs, women, youth and other groups, thus making it difficult to generate meaningful and representative aggregations. Furthermore, the reporting and communication of Traditional Knowledge submissions requires respecting distinct epistemologies. Such knowledge cannot simply be converted into aggregate progress metrics without losing context, meaning, ownership and the values embedded in those narratives. The report accommodated these sources through dedicated qualitative syntheses, establishing an initial benchmark while underscoring the structural need for a more inclusive, whole-of-society reporting architecture.

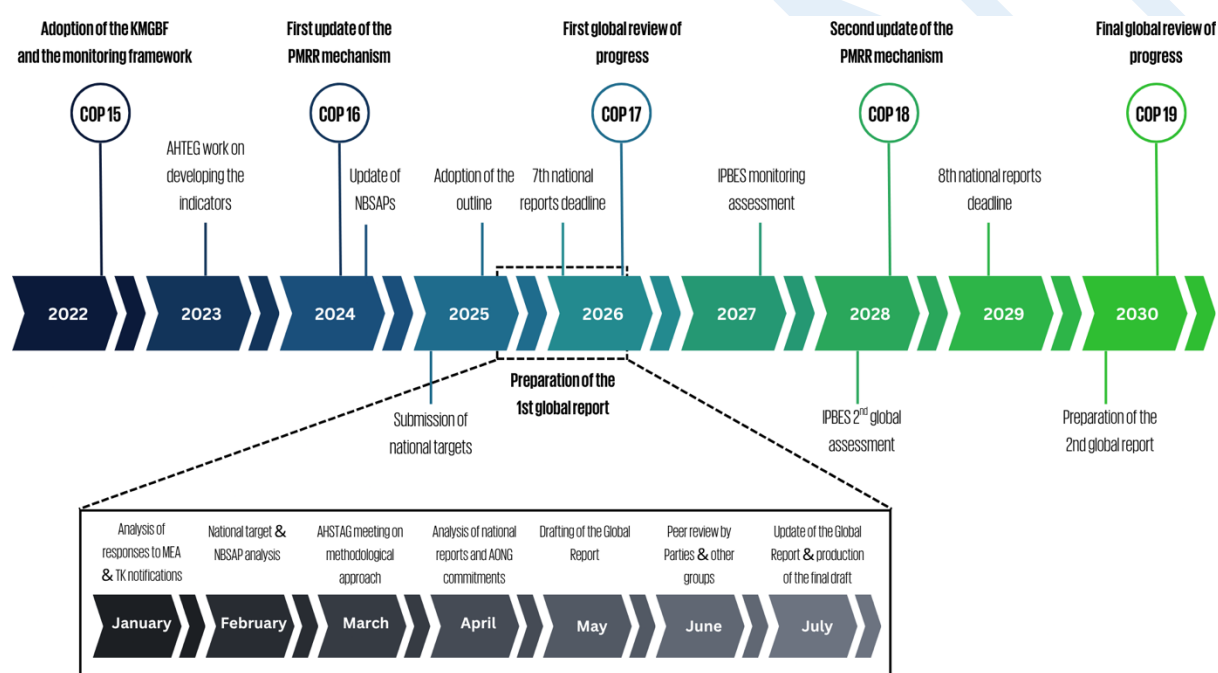


Figure 2. Timeline of key milestones in the PMRR mechanism from 2022 to 2030, including relevant IPBES publications and the preparation of the Global Report(s). Note that not all relevant meetings and dates are reflected and that the timeline of preparation of the Global Report is a necessary simplification of a more complex, overlapping timeline of tasks, and omitting certain elements such as analytical updates or early preparatory work. Acronyms: MEA – multilateral environment agreements, TK – Traditional Knowledge, AONG – actors other than national governments.

Understanding the Global Report

The empirical outputs of the first Global Report need to be interpreted within the boundaries of its mandate and time constraints for its production. The report provides a collective analysis of reported implementation efforts by 129 Parties (66% of total). Specifically, it establishes (i) the scope of, and degree of alignment between, national targets and the 23 global targets of the KMGBF; (ii) the status of implementation for each target, evaluated via indicators and Party self-assessment of progress; (iii) the completeness and representativeness of data used for reporting on headline indicators, reflecting operational bottlenecks in domestic monitoring and reporting capacity across UN regions; and (iv) gaps in means of implementation, tracking the mobilization and distribution of financial resources, capacity building, technical and scientific cooperation, technology transfer, and institutional capacity. Its results demonstrate that while there is relatively good alignment of targets addressing conservation and restoration, progress towards addressing indirect drivers of biodiversity loss is more limited.

Interpreting the Global Report requires distinguishing three related but analytically different dimensions: (i) implementation effort, reflected in policies, institutional arrangements, actions and resources deployed; (ii) monitoring and reporting capacity, which determines the extent to which progress can be documented and assessed; and (iii) outcomes for biodiversity and nature's contributions to people, reflected in observed ecological and societal changes. These dimensions are interconnected but should not be conflated. Firstly, missing data is not equivalent to inaction. The report shows that many Parties have enacted local conservation programs, customary management regimes, community-based monitoring practices, or cross-sectoral regulations that are not yet captured through indicators. Second, implementation effort may not necessarily lead to desired biodiversity outcomes within the timescale of the KMGBF. Extensive legislative activity or high financial expenditures do not guarantee rapid ecological recovery. Due to implementation challenges, enforcement gaps, and ecological response lags, substantial policy progress may coexist with ongoing species declines or habitat degradation for years before measurable improvements manifest (Langhammer *et al.*, 2024). Conflating these dimensions leads to two equal and opposite misreadings: either dismissing genuine implementation progress because ecological outcome indicators continue to decline, or misinterpreting indicator data gaps as national inaction. The Global Report provides a high-level scorecard of progress that distinguishes progress towards these distinct dimensions for each global target.

The Global Report also has important analytical limitations. Although available indicators can provide information on biodiversity status and trends, the limited temporal coverage and uneven availability of data constrain the assessment of ecological outcomes. In addition, documenting implementation measures or observing biodiversity changes does not establish whether those measures have been effective. Assessing causal relationships between policy interventions and biodiversity outcomes requires longitudinal data, appropriate counterfactuals and complementary analytical approaches (Gonzalez, Chase and O'Connor, 2023). Similarly, determining whether current efforts are sufficient to achieve the 2030 targets requires prospective scenario modelling based on a conceptual understanding of the relationship between targets and goals, which were beyond the scope of this first report.

Lessons from the Global Report

The first operational test of the monitoring framework confirmed that indicator use varies widely across targets (CBD, 2026d). While conservation-oriented targets possess relatively mature metrics (e.g. protected area coverage, reported by 100/129 Parties), targets on socioeconomic sectors and governance-settings, benefit-sharing, and mainstreaming of biodiversity face data and methodological deficits. Binary indicators proved effective for rapidly capturing the status of policy adoption, but their simple and self-reported nature prevents them from measuring the depth, scope, or realized outcomes of implementation. The lack of consistent indicator disaggregation (e.g., across ecosystem functional groups, sex or age) leaves major blind spots in understanding the equitable distribution of progress. These findings highlight key priorities ahead of the 2028 review of the monitoring framework.

The geographic imbalances observed in the Global Report reflect structural inequalities in national monitoring infrastructure and financial resources. Delivering a robust bottom-up monitoring system requires sustained means of implementation. Financial and technical support must be available for national monitoring systems, including support for different knowledge systems and knowledge holders, community-based monitoring and information systems, domestic research institutions, IPLCs and NGOs that document and generate primary ecological data (CBD, 2026a). If capacity-building and technology transfer remain weak, reporting in the 2029 cycle will remain skewed toward developed countries, fundamentally compromising the global representativeness of the 2030 final review if it remains primarily focused on information submitted in national reports.

The Global Report also highlights the challenge of capturing whole-of-society implementation efforts. Actors other than national governments make substantial conservation efforts, yet their actions are not well reflected in national reports, nor in the dedicated platform established to register such contributions and help operationalize whole-of-society reporting. To capture these contributions effectively, the PMRR architecture requires better structured modalities, such as consideration of incentives for non-state actors to voluntarily report. Such efforts could build on the Monitoring, Reporting and Review (MRV) mechanism being employed by non-state actors (Widerberg *et al.*, 2021). Concurrently, strengthening the contribution of IPLCs requires supporting community-based monitoring and information systems, respecting Indigenous data sovereignty and developing equitable approaches to knowledge co-production. The multiple evidence base approach offers a means of bringing different knowledge systems into dialogue while maintaining their distinct integrity, rather than requiring their assimilation into standardized indicators (Tengö *et al.*, 2014).

In parallel, lessons from the Global Report are relevant to IPBES's agenda and vice versa. Both IPBES assessments and the CBD Global Report are intergovernmentally mandated exercises, but they serve different purposes. IPBES delivers comprehensive expert-led assessments of the state of knowledge. Whereas the Global Report assesses collective implementation progress under a Party-agreed mandate. Making the most of opportunities for alignment between the PMRR process and the cycle of IPBES assessments, can help fill the evidence gaps. The upcoming IPBES methodological assessment on monitoring biodiversity and nature's contributions to people evaluates the knowledge, methods, data systems, and capacities needed to monitor biodiversity, nature's contributions to people, and progress towards the Framework's goals and targets, strengthening the evidence base for reporting towards the second Global Report. The methodological assessment of integrated biodiversity-inclusive spatial planning and ecological connectivity will support both progress in implementation efforts and reporting capacity for several targets (especially targets 1, 2, 3 and 11). Finally, the second global assessment of biodiversity and ecosystem services, scheduled for approval and acceptance in the second half of 2028, is set to establish the status and trends of biodiversity and the impact of both direct and indirect drivers of change ahead of COP18, using a much more diverse range of knowledge and data than the Global Report, which will offer a more complete and up-to-date assessment of progress towards ecological outcomes, to be supplemented by the second Global Report, which will rely on new data published after the second global assessment.

Opportunities for Science-Policy Engagement

The Global Report highlights areas where science-policy engagement is most urgently needed. Bridging the gap between scientific capacity and multilateral reporting requires targeted engagement and mutual understanding. It is essential that independent research efforts aimed at supporting implementation of the KMGBF be well informed about the CBD policy agenda and its processes. Therefore, independent research should focus on existing policy needs for the work to be truly policy relevant and engage with the established mechanisms to improve uptake.

The scientific literature is replete with proposals for biodiversity indices, with hundreds already catalogued (e.g. (Burgess *et al.*, 2024)). However, the monitoring framework is an adopted political reality; proposing new, unmandated metrics does not assist Parties struggling with existing commitments. Research should prioritize operationalizing, testing, and standardizing the indicators already adopted. This includes working with Parties to develop the datasets and data infrastructure they need to report on existing indicators, including disaggregations using standardized classifications, such as the IUCN Global Ecosystem Typology (Keith *et al.*, 2022), to enable comparable ecosystem tracking, and refining methodologies for headline indicators without agreed methods (e.g., headline indicators 1.1 “percentage of land and seas covered by biodiversity-inclusive spatial plans” and 9.1 “benefits from the sustainable use of wild species”). The newly proposed Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on the Further Operationalization of the Monitoring Framework for the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework is an opportunity for such engagement.

A significant barrier to indicator reporting is the technical challenge of turning data into indicators. The research community and the groups that generate data can substantially lower national reporting burdens by developing and making readily available open-source, automated data pipelines to compile indicators that can be deployed at national scale (Griffith *et al.*, 2026). These efforts must be done in close collaboration with national focal points and domestic institutions tasked with compiling indicators, as well as IPLCs and other organisations supporting the production and sharing of data, while respecting the rights, consent, ownership and governance arrangements of data providers. New collaborative initiatives, such as the proposed Yerevan Tech for Biodiversity Monitoring Platform, bringing together government representatives, partner organisations and funding partners (e.g. the Global Environment Facility) offer an actionable pathway forward to build capacity ahead of the next reporting cycle.

Additionally, taken together, the national reports contain thousands of pages of detailed qualitative narrative describing inter-agency governance, regulatory barriers, and implementation innovations. In the first Global Report, this qualitative corpus was inevitably synthesized into high-level summaries. Developing analytical methods to systematically mine and categorize these national narratives represents an immediate, high-value opportunity for social scientists (Immerzeel *et al.*, 2026). In parallel, NBSAPs and other national sectoral strategies contain much information relevant to assessing progress in implementation that could also be analysed in this way ahead of the next reporting cycle. Transforming disparate narrative submissions into structured policy insights, while retaining their context and provenance, will provide an empirical basis for mutual policy learning.

Finally, bottom-up monitoring requires direct collaboration with national institutions. Therefore, the research community must engage and work with Parties in order to strengthen the next review. Existing infrastructure, such as the technical and scientific cooperation support centres (TSCCs), as well as CBD national focal points are the practical entry points for engagement. Independent research is essential, but it is not sufficient, effective science-policy engagement also requires sustained collaboration with Parties, rights holders, knowledge holders and institutions that generate and use evidence at national and local levels. Improving implementation, monitoring, and reporting will also require innovative collaborations with NGOs, businesses and rights holders on specific themes and knowledge sources to promote more mutual understanding. For this to be most effective, Parties will also need to open their national processes to relevant groups working on capacity-building and sustain efforts from these groups. Enhancing these collaborations also has the potential to improve the geographic coverage of national submissions due in 2029.

Conclusion

The first Global Report represents an important step in assessing collective progress towards the KMGBF. While it cannot provide a definitive assessment of the effectiveness of implementation or its impact on biodiversity, it offers valuable insights into the actions being taken by Parties, the gaps in monitoring and reporting, and the challenges that need to be addressed. Understanding these limitations is essential for interpreting its findings and making effective use of them in the global review.

The challenge now is to build on this first assessment and strengthen the evidence available for future reviews. The scientific community has an important role in improving existing

indicators, supporting national monitoring capacities, and generating evidence on whether implementation measures are delivering the intended results. Closer collaboration between researchers, national institutions, Parties and other knowledge holders will be essential, not only to improve the quality of reporting but also to ensure that the knowledge generated informs decisions and supports more effective implementation of the KMGBF towards 2030.

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