

## Synergier i arbejdet med miljø og klima

### The issues at hand

Avoiding major disruptions to the climate system and ensuring that ecosystems continue to provide life-giving services has become the defining issue of our time.

Our understanding of how deeply intertwined climate and biodiversity are from a policy perspective has grown significantly in recent years. One of many illustrations of this reality comes from insights gleaned from how food systems operate and how dependent the economy and human wellbeing are on functioning ecosystems and climate stability. The oceans being both a key component of the Earth system and an indispensable element of the food system are another powerful manifestation of the intricate interconnections in the climate-biodiversity nexus.

National policy making has just started to come to grips with the need for a systems approach in policy development and implementation. Barriers resulting from sectoral fragmentation still hamper progress.

### The international context

While complexity at the international level remains high in terms of treaties and organizations, there is growing evidence of alignment around objectives and long-term goals. 2015 was a watershed year in this context and the Paris Agreement and the 2050 Agenda for Sustainable Development are bringing about greater alignment at the international level. There are hopes that the vision and future direction of the biodiversity domain will become clearer as its post-2020 framework takes shape through the ongoing negotiations, the high-level General Assembly debate in September 2020 and the Biodiversity Conference in China few weeks later.

The UN Secretary-General has identified Nature-based Solutions as one of six action portfolios for his Climate Summit in September. This is a good illustration of how the new focus on the promotion of cooperative action through action agendas has resulted in a more systemic and holistic approach. Both UNFCCC and CBD have launched action agendas – in 2014 and 2018, respectively – and many of the key action coalitions are driven simultaneously by climate and biodiversity imperatives. Most if not all have benefitted from injection of ideas and resources from the Nordic region.

The importance of capturing significant synergies between climate and biodiversity and managing potential trade-offs has been well understood in the context of the UNFCCC and the CBD for decades and the Nordic countries have been instrumental in raising awareness of the interlinkages. Parties to these treaties are not likely to agree any further normative guidance in this context, however. This should not be perceived as a problem as most of the key remaining decisions will need to be taken closer to home.

### Looking ahead

All global emissions pathways resulting in warming of 1.5 C by the end of this century, that have been subjected to rigorous scientific scrutiny, include massive increases in the rate of net removals of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. These pathways rely to a differing degree on chemical or geological sequestration, but all rely heavily on biological carbon sinks. Increasing pressure on existing carbon reservoirs from the warming atmosphere and soils and the resulting increase in release of carbon dioxide and methane adds to challenge of re-establishing the global carbon balance by 2050 or soon thereafter.

It is therefore foreseeable that policy debates within the climate-biodiversity nexus at the national, regional and global level will become more intense. This makes systematic learning from effective policy instruments, good practices and success stories critical.

**Governments will be invited to approve a Special Report on Climate Change and Land from the IPCC in August.** This will be a significant milestone as almost two decades will then have passed from the first such report from the IPCC. The action portfolio on Nature-based solutions is taking shape in advance of the Climate Summit in September through the launching of new initiatives and the reinvigoration of existing initiatives.

### **Leadership by the Nordic countries**

The Nordic countries are already in leadership positions in this domain but will be called upon to step up further. This is both at home, in the Arctic context, within Europe and globally.

The hot spots here revolve around forest, wetland and soil ecosystems both in terms of the preservation of existing carbon reservoirs and enhancement of removals. The Nordic countries, the Russian Federation and Canada are the chief custodians of the critically important boreal forest ecosystems, which is under increased threat.

Nordic countries have pioneered cooperation and investment in efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in the tropics under the banner of UNFCCC REDD+. They also play a role globally in ecosystem restoration including the restoration of soil carbon, which promises to be a key component of the African response to climate change and biodiversity loss with huge implications for food security and resilience to the impacts of climate change.

### **Questions for discussion**

1. What contribution could the Nordic countries make, individually or jointly, to progress on Nature-based solutions at the UNSG's Climate Summit in September?
2. How could the Nordic countries promote greater alignment of climate and biodiversity objectives at home, in Europe and globally?

### **Follow up action**

1. **Compile examples demonstrating** how the Nordic Countries have succeed in aligning their laws, policies or actions to both climate and biodiversity objectives and of ongoing and planned contributions to global cooperative action in this direction including through the 2019 Climate Summit.
2. **Encourage relevant expert groups to pay special attention in their ongoing activities to the synergies and potential trade-offs between biodiversity and climate objectives and to initiate joint initiatives as needed.**