United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Convention on Biological Diversity

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

Rio Conventions Joint Capacity-building Programme

Integrated planning of strategies and policies under the Rio Conventions

INFOBRIEF 2

Disclaimer

This infobrief is intended solely to provide readers with foundational information on the topic discussed. It is not an exhaustive knowledge source, nor does it claim to represent the latest or comprehensive scientific discoveries, findings, or perspectives in the field. The contents serve as a general reference and are not intended to establish the authors or the publishers as the sole authority on these subjects. Readers are encouraged to consult additional sources and experts for more detailed and up-to-date insights.

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Reminder on key international frameworks bound to the three Rio Conventions

- **Paris Agreement**

Adopted in 2015, this landmark agreement unites all nations in a common cause to combat climate change and adapt to its effects. It aims to significantly reduce global greenhouse gas emissions and limit global temperature rise this century to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, striving for 1.5 degrees Celsius.

- **Kunming-Montréal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)**

Concluded in 2022, this framework sets global targets for biodiversity conservation, sustainable use, and equitable benefit sharing. It seeks to halt biodiversity loss and ensure that ecosystems are restored, resilient, and adequately protected by the year 2030, emphasizing the integration of biodiversity into all sectors.

- **Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) – SDG 15.3 Target**

Part of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, specifically target 15.3, LDN aims to combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought, and floods, and achieve a land degradation-neutral world by 2030.

1. Why is integrated planning important for synergies between Rio conventions?

Inter-linkages and synergy opportunities between the three Rio Conventions (UNFCCC, CBD & UNCCD) are manyfolds. From their structure and processes, a number of commonalities in the commitments made by Parties to the Rio conventions have been identified two decades ago (see Infobrief 1). From a sectoral perspective, concerns and goals of the Rio Conventions are intertwined in a variety of environmental sectors such as land use (Figure 1). From the perspective of sustainable development, it is also noticeable that climate change, biodiversity and land governance have all been integrated into the sustainable development goals (SDG 13 Climate Action & SDG 15 Life on Land, with multiple co-benefits for other SDGs), playing an indispensable role in the Agenda 2030. Synergies between the Rio Conventions should be considered a priority for more efficient use of resources and impacts.

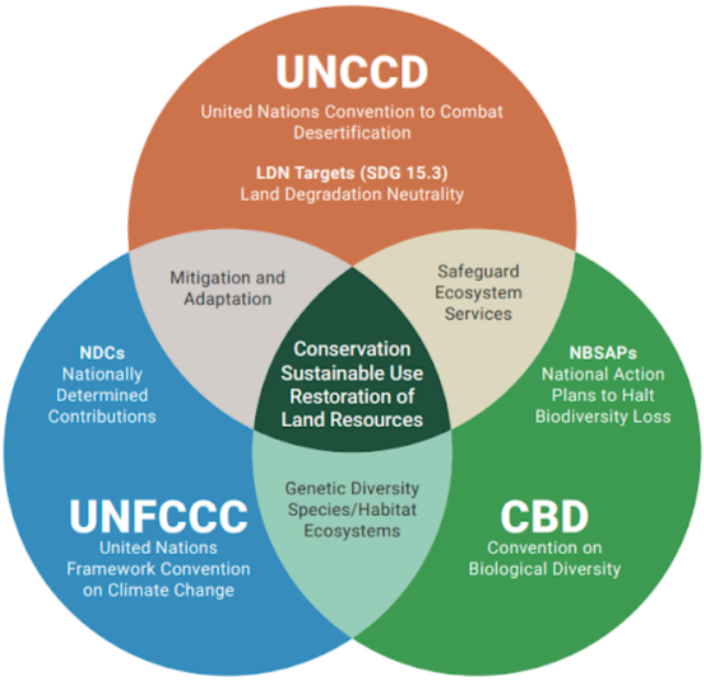

Figure 1. Land restoration and the Rio Conventions [i]

National planning processes under the Rio Conventions include Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) under the UNFCCC, National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) under the CBD, and National Plans to Combat Desertification/Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets under the UNCCD (see table 1). Such an array requires a synergistic approach that ensure these processes not only align with each other but also with the development priorities of the country.

Planning Process	Description
Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)	Part of the UNFCCC framework, NDCs are commitments by countries to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. These are submitted every five years and are central to achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement.
National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)	Also under the UNFCCC, NAPs aim to reduce vulnerability to the impacts of climate change by building adaptive capacity and resilience. They integrate climate change adaptation into new and existing policies at all levels.
National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs)	Required by the CBD, NBSAPs are country-specific plans designed to conserve biodiversity, promote sustainable use, and distribute the benefits of biodiversity in an equitable way. They align national policies with global biodiversity goals.
National Plans to Combat Desertification/National Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Targets	Under the UNCCD, these plans focus on setting actionable targets to halt and reverse land degradation to achieve a balance where the amount of healthy and productive land resources remains stable or increases.

Table 1: Quick description of national planning processes under the three Rio conventions

Two key dimensions should be considered in the planning processes towards synergies:

First, **assessment of the needs and priorities of stakeholders** is indispensable. This can identify common priorities, avoid duplication, and streamline resource allocation, thus leading to more efficient use of domestic resources.

Second, **institutional capacity to coordinate different planning processes** is pivotal. Effective coordination requires robust national institutions that can facilitate collaboration, information sharing, and decision-making among relevant stakeholders from various sectors, contributing to a stronger positioning of Rio conventions priorities within overarching national planning processes. In the following parts of this policy brief, possible entry points, good practices and policy recommendations will be provided to help policymakers carry out synergistic planning while taking the above points into account.

2. Entry points for synergies: What are the key opportunities to promote integrated planning?

Developing and revising national plans and strategies under the Rio Conventions present significant opportunities to foster synergies in a cost-effective manner. This is because decision-makers and policy implementers overseeing the implementation of the Rio Conventions at the national level often belong to the same government ministry or ministries that share responsibilitye for environmental management, climate change, and sustainable development.

The institutional synergy potentials are particularly embodied in the national focal points (NFPs) of the Rio Conventions. 153 out of 198 Parties have their NFPs of at least two Conventions established under the same government ministry or department. In 53 countries, NFPs to two or even all three Conventions are represented by the same person or persons. NFPs play a significant role in coordinating the planning processes of different conventions. For instance, the Montreal Protocol is an early case that paid attention to the potentials of NFPs to create synergies between different conventions. National Ozone Officers (NFPs to the Protocol) accepted capacity-building to simultaneously focus on both ozone depletion substances and greenhouse gases in their works, promoting integrated planning of ozone and climate actions. Likewise, NFPs of the Rio Conventions can play a similar role in coordinating the planning of NDC, NAP, NBSAP and LDN and harmonizing the goals of the Conventions and sustainable development.

In theory, this institutional overlap or proximity potentially facilitates communication, coordination, and alignment of priorities, creating a conducive environment for collaboration and integration across different convention-related plans and strategies. But in reality, gaps of basic capacities such as information sharing, or lack of institutional arrangement can significantly hinder synergies from happening. Examples presented in the third part of this policy brief are good illustrations of both co-benefits and drawbacks identified in the integrated planning processes.

There are many initiatives that strive to support the national processes under that strives to support the harmonization between different Rio Conventions processes listed in Table 1. Table 2 provides an unexhaustive list of such initiatives, including at the planning stage, such as the NDC Partnership, NAP Global Network, NAP Global Support Programme, NBSAP Accelerator Partnership, and the LDN Target Setting Program of UNCCD.

NDC PARTNERSHIP

NDC Partnership

A global coalition assisting countries in achieving their nationally determined contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement. Focuses on technical and financial support. Collaborates with international agencies and governments. Aims to enhance and implement climate actions effectively.

Facilitates support for developing countries to plan and implement their National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). Emphasizes capacity building and knowledge sharing. Engages a wide range of stakeholders. Seeks to increase resilience to climate change impacts.	**NAP Global Network**
NAP Global Support Programme	Supported by UNDP and UNEP to help countries advance their NAP processes. Provides direct technical assistance and training. Promotes integration of climate adaptation into national planning. Aims to create sustainable development pathways that are climate-resilient.
Supports countries in accelerating the implementation of their National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs). Focuses on biodiversity conservation. Offers technical guidance and fosters international cooperation. Seeks to align national goals with global biodiversity targets.	**NBSAP Accelerator Partnership**
LDN Target Setting Program of UNCCD	Spearheaded by the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). Assists countries in setting Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets. Integrates scientific approaches and policy frameworks. Aims to halt the degradation of land as part of sustainable land management.

Table 2: Quick description of support initiatives to Rio conventions'planning processes

Research proposing key opportunities and analytical frameworks also exist. For instance, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) summarized 6 entry points for synergies across national planning, implementation and monitoring for climate, biodiversity and sustainable land management (Figure 2), such as guidance for developing, implementing and monitoring national strategies, global processes for taking stock of climate and biodiversity action, planning and developing national policy, etc.[ii] Likewise, the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) proposed a framework for promoting synergies between climate adaptation and biodiversity through the NAP and NBSAP processes, identifying four elements respectively focusing on assessment of needs and priorities of stakeholders, planning, implementation and financing, and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL). Above mentioned

guidelines and processes lack inclusion of LDN and UNCCD goals though. Good practice approaches for synergies will need to complement such frameworks to effectively address considerations of the three conventions.

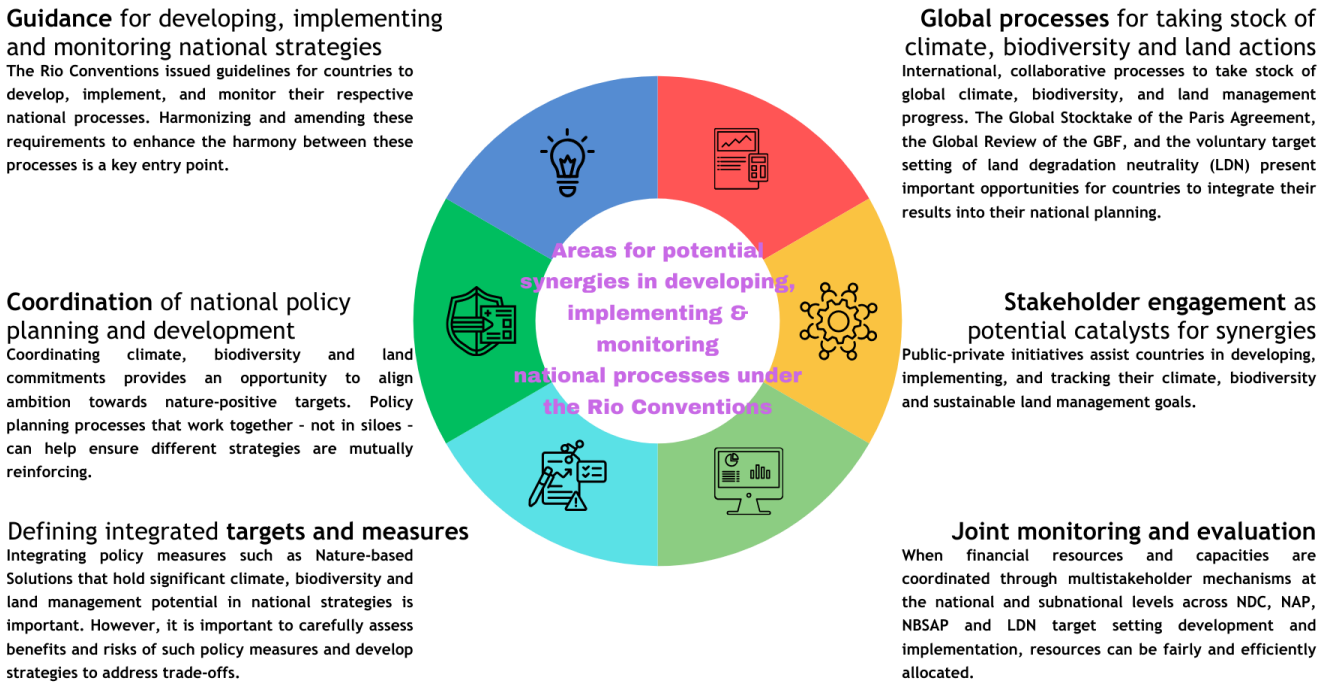

Figure 2. Areas for potential synergies in developing, implementing and monitoring national processes under the Rio Conventions

3. Synergies in practice: What practical examples exist that show how to build synergies?

To better illustrate how synergistic implementation of the Rio Conventions can be realized through national plans and projects, this infobrief will introduce cases studies that embody different entry points and approaches in practice.

Rwanda: Revising NBSAP and leveraging related land-focused targets of LDN and NDC [iii]

Rwanda has identified the overlaps of land-focused activities by its LDN, NDC and NBSAP: it aims to conserve, sustainably manage, and restore 1,069,476 hectares of land under its LDN, 805,000 ha under its NDC, and safeguard and reduce the degradation of at least 50% of natural ecosystems under its NBSAP. Currently, Rwanda is facing a window opportunity to revise its NBSAP in alignment with the new Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), while leveraging on other related agendas and targets through taking a significant step towards coherence, synergies, and efficiency.

According to a study conducted by ELD Initiative, coordinated implementation of land-focused activities under the Rio Conventions can reduce transaction costs of land restoration by almost 56% in Rwanda. Specifically, coordinated implementation is estimated to save about 45.6 million US dollars per year compared to when the activities are carried out separately. To ensure synergies throughout the planning, implementation and monitoring processes, the study proposed Rwanda to establish five mechanisms including a joint inter-agency working group, an information exchange platform, a joint monitoring and evaluation system, joint planning and fund mobilization, and joint research on land activities.

Grenada: Integrating Rio and Sustainable Development Goals into climate resilient agriculture planning [iv]

Grenada launched the Climate Resilient Agriculture (CRA) for Integrated Landscape Management project in 2019 to mainstream biodiversity conservation in production landscapes and increase the resilience of agricultural systems. To promote the synergies between the goals of Rio Conventions and sustainable development in implementing the CRA project, Grenada developed its National Sustainable Development Plan 2020-2035 integrating the NBSAP, LDN and NAP priorities and targets, as well as the goals of SDG 5 (gender equality), 10 (reduce inequalities), 13 (climate action), 14 (life below water) and 15 (life on land). Following the integrated planning, Grenada also created institutional arrangements, to ensure cross-sectoral and multi-thematic coordination in implementing the project, such as MEAs coordination meetings and ad-hoc Project Steering Committee.

Grenada attached great importance to capacity-building to support the synergistic planning and implementation, as gaps of some basic capacities were identified in practice. For instance, one challenge for leading the cross-sectoral coordination is a lack of adequate and qualified technical personnel within the key institutions or ministries, leaving the above-mentioned institutional arrangements largely remain un-operationalized. This was worsened by significant gaps of data collection and sharing, and low efficiency of data management. To overcome these difficulties and fill up the capacity needs, extensive training, awareness-raising and knowledge management programs were undertaken.

Benin: Building LDN around a biosphere reserve [v]

Benin resolved to harmonize policies for the environment and sustainable development. In its LDN target setting report, Benin outlines its aim of slashing the steep 21% fall in forest and savanna cover recorded between 1990 and 2010 to 5% between 2010 and 2030. The country also aims to halt all conversion of wetlands to other land uses. These aims align with Benin's commitments under the NBSAP, which envisages a 20% reduction in the rate of deforestation by 2020, an expansion of forests and protected areas, and wider use by farmers of integrated soil fertility management techniques. Having identified this overlap of targets, Benin established the Mono Transboundary Biosphere Reserve to enhance the synergies between sustainable land management and biodiversity conservation.

The Mono Transboundary Biosphere Reserve is a new biosphere reserve protecting some 345,000 ha of degradation-threatened land, which lies at the core of Benin's LDN target. The reserve is located at the delta of the Mono River, which marks the boundary between Benin and Togo, is home to endangered flora and fauna as well as about 2 million people and used to suffer from unsustainable farming, fishing and tree harvesting. Currently, Benin and supportive partners are undertaking projects to secure the biodiversity and ecosystem services, including for climate change mitigation and adaptation, in the reserve and to support the livelihoods of the people living there.

Peru: Linking forests to climate and biodiversity planning and assessing needs and priorities of stakeholders in planning national strategies [vi]

In Peru, forests simultaneously play the role of carbon sinks, resilient ecosystems that can preserve biodiversity and provide ecosystem services, as well as an important source of the ancestral knowledge of the Indigenous Peoples. Therefore, the Peruvian government took the linking function of forests into account in various national plans and strategies. In its National Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2021–2030, Peru identified forests as one of the seven priority areas of the NAP. In the Peruvian NDC, 26 measures have been linked to Nature-based Solution (NbS) and the thematic area of forests is presented and prioritized in both climate change mitigation and adaptation. The links and co-benefits between biodiversity conservation and addressing climate change are also explicitly set out in the National Forest and Climate Change Strategy 2030 and in the preparatory work for the National Climate Change Strategy 2050.

Assessment of the needs and priorities of indigenous stakeholders is realized by establishing the Indigenous Peoples Platform for Climate Change (IPPCC, or PPICC in Spanish) in 2020. IPPCC serves as a space of coordination and dialogue and key instrument for national adaptation planning. It is an institutionalized space comprising representatives from the seven national organizations representing and recognized by the State of Peru's Indigenous Peoples, plus the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Culture. An example of indigenous participation is the National Forest Conservation Programme for Climate Change Mitigation, which works directly with Indigenous Peoples to conserve and monitor forest ecosystems in their territories, drawing on their vision, knowledge, and ancestral wisdom. Another example is the participation of the IPPCC in constructing the NAP, providing its inputs and explaining its needs and priorities. N.B.: In this case study, it would also have been possible to consider relevant LDN targets in particular those dealing with the forest sector.

4. Recommendations for policymakers and practitioners

The following recommendations are provided for policymakers and other stakeholders to further strengthen synergies between Rio Conventions through integrated national planning:

- **Make best use of windows of opportunities**: Formulating or revising national strategies provides good opportunities to strengthen the linkages of goals and targets set in different plans. For instance, aligning an NBSAP with the Global Biodiversity Framework can leverage target setting related to LDN or NAP, leading to a synergistic planning and implementation of the Rio conventions' goals.
- **Assess the needs and priorities of stakeholders**: This process involves mapping stakeholders, developing engagement strategies, inclusive decision-making and building relevant national dialogue platforms and fora. The purpose is to identify and understand the diverse perspectives, interests, challenges, and opportunities of various stakeholders so as to better coordinate the priorities setting.
- **Enhance institutional coordination**: Foster closer collaboration and information sharing among national focal points, relevant government ministries, agencies, and departments responsible. Inter-ministerial working groups or task forces are possible options to integrate planning processes such as NDCs, NAPs, NBSAPs, LDN targets, and other relevant national strategies into a cohesive framework.
- **Enhance capacity-building**: Capacity-building for policymakers, government officials, and stakeholders can effectively ensure the integrated planning of different strategies and action plans. Capacity-building should focus on various levels (individual and institutional) to create an enabling environment for synergies.
- **Joint monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) process**: A joint MEL process is crucial for assessing progress, measuring impacts, identifying gaps and therefore should be considered at the planning stage. This process involves setting shared indicators and targets, participatory monitoring and evaluation, and regular reporting and feedback.
- **Develop a joint Science-Policy Interface at national level**: to aggregate and share the knowledge among scientists, experts and practitioners addressing topics related to the three conventions. Those interfaces can then feed joint planning and MEL processes.

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With the support of RIO impact