



Environment and Climate Change Committee

Corrected oral evidence: COP15: the international biodiversity conference

Tuesday 22 June 2021

9.50 am

[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Baroness Parminter (The Chair); Baroness Boycott; Lord Browne of Ladyton; Lord Cameron of Dillington; Lord Colgrain; Lord Lilley; Lord Lucas; Baroness Northover; The Lord Bishop of Oxford; Lord Puttnam; Lord Whitty.

Evidence Session No. 3

Virtual Proceeding

Questions 16 - 33

Witnesses

I: Georgina Chandler, Senior International Policy Officer, RSPB; Akanksha Khatri, Head of Nature and Biodiversity, World Economic Forum; Elsa Tsioumani, Editor, *Earth Negotiations Bulletin*, International Institute for Sustainable Development; Melissa Miners, Senior Global Sustainability Manager, Nature and Biodiversity, Unilever.

Examination of witnesses

Georgina Chandler, Akanksha Khatri, Elsa Tsioumani and Melissa Miners

Q16 **The Chair:** Good morning, and welcome to the third session of our inquiry into the CBD. Today, we will be focusing on what civil society and businesses want from COP15 and what the Government can do to help deliver that.

I welcome our four witnesses, and thank them very much for joining us. They are Elsa Tsioumani, who is Editor of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* at the International Institute for Sustainable Development; Akanksha Khatri, who is the Head of Nature and Biodiversity at the World Economic Forum; Georgina Chandler, who is Senior International Policy Officer at the RSPB; and Melissa Miners, who is Senior Global Sustainability Manager for nature and biodiversity at Unilever. You are all extremely welcome.

I remind all attendees that a transcript will be taken and will be made public. All four witnesses will have the chance to review it before it is officially published. The session is webcast live and will subsequently be made available to view via the parliamentary website. I invite members of the committee to state at the beginning if they have any relevant interests.

After that short introduction, I would like to go straight to questions and ask the first one. What are you hoping to be the outcome of COP15, and what outcomes are you actually expecting? I put that question first to Georgina, and I will subsequently put it to the other three members of the panel.

Georgina Chandler: Thank you for having me today. In what we hope to be the outcome for COP15, there are five key tests for success. The first is a 2030 nature-positive mission or goal to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity by 2030 for the benefit of all people and the planet. That is a really ambitious, overarching 2030 goal.

Secondly, that needs to be underpinned by a set of 2030 goals to prevent extinctions, to recover species populations and to retain and to restore habitat quality and extent. Those are the kinds of outcome-oriented species and habitat aims.

The third thing is a prominent target, which some of you might be familiar with: to protect—crucially, to effectively protect—and conserve at least 30% of land and seas by 2030. The “effectively” part of that is particularly important.

The fourth thing is that all of this cannot be achieved unless we have action targets and ambitious pledges from governments to tackle the key pressures and drivers of biodiversity loss. It is all very well aiming to recover nature by 2030, but if we are not actually tackling those pressures and drivers, we will not be successful this decade.

Finally, the fifth thing that we think is particularly important for the next decade is that the framework has to be underpinned by the means and resources to actually implement the targets. That is financing and capacity building, and countries have to be willing to be held accountable for progress towards them, with an improved and more transparent mechanism for the next decade.

The Chair: Thank you, Georgina. Elsa, is there anything you would like to add to that or reflect on in that?

Elsa Tsioumani: Thank you for the invitation. I would largely agree with what Georgina just said. I also highlight the importance of tackling the root causes, which are largely linked to economic sectors outside the environment: transportation, infrastructure and agriculture, as well as climate change. That means two things: first, raising the profile of biodiversity loss as a global challenge, through high-level political action; and, secondly, inviting specific processes and developing tools to mainstream biodiversity action into economic sectors to eventually change global trade, production and consumption patterns.

I would add to what Georgina said about the means of implementation, which are absolutely crucial for the success of the negotiations, and stronger conservation targets: the need to address global inequities, which are increasingly linked to biodiversity loss, as research shows. This means action not only on conservation but on sustainable use of biodiversity and on fair and equitable benefit sharing, with balanced action throughout the convention's three objectives, and a human rights-based approach to safeguard the rights and the knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities, who are the most vulnerable but at the same time are the stewards of global biodiversity.

One last point is the need to provide mechanisms to allow for the adaptation of the convention and its protocols in the emergence and rapid development of new technologies for use with biodiversity. That basically translates, in these negotiations, into the need to reach agreement on some kind of mechanism for sharing the benefits from the use of digital sequence information arising from the use of genetic resources.

The Chair: Thank you. Akanksha, would you like to respond?

Akanksha Khatri: First, I second everything that Georgina and Elsa have said. I fully agree, but maybe using different language. It is about nature sparing and nature sharing. We hope that the framework has very clear targets for nature sparing in what we choose to conserve and restore—as Georgina said, a minimum of 30% by 2030—but that we do not forget nature sharing, which is the sustainable and equitable use and management of our natural resources.

A new point that I would add to what Elsa and Georgina said is that the success of the COP15 negotiations and outcome will depend on how much the non-state actor community can see themselves in the framework, and how much their contributions can be recognised in the commitments.

This of course includes indigenous communities, as Elsa mentioned, who today are less than 5% of the population but are responsible for stewarding more than 80% of our natural capital assets.

The more important piece, which I am sure Melissa will speak more about, is on the business side. Today, it is a really inaccessible framework, so I hope that the outcomes of COP15 are easier for businesses to contribute to and understand.

The Chair: Thank you. That leads very neatly to Melissa.

Melissa Miners: Thank you for inviting us here. I will not repeat what everyone has said about adopting the mission to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030. As a global company with ambitious nature targets that probably touch most of the countries in the world, it is especially important to us that governments adopt a framework that clearly articulates the role that businesses can and must play, includes findings on the long-term approach of mainstreaming and promotes embedding nature in all decision-making. Businesses need policy certainty to underpin our nature targets. It motivates us, it motivates our shareholders and it provides clarity and certainty to the business.

As a global company, we think it is especially important that governments prioritise supporting a common measurement framework. Currently, the data, methods, indicators and tools are lacking to properly enable us to identify the causal links between our decisions and activities that have on-the-ground biodiversity implications. The gap needs addressing as a matter of urgency.

Q17 **The Chair:** Thank you. That was all very clear. Could one or two of you comment on the impact that the pandemic is having on preparations for achieving the targets and outcomes that we hope to see?

Georgina Chandler: I am happy to comment on that. The pandemic has obviously meant continued delays in the CBD process and the negotiations. We have just had some virtual sessions, which have made some progress, but there are obviously concerns over inertia, loss of momentum and loss of awareness for the process if things keep getting pushed back.

One of my particular concerns is that quite a few of the substantive issues are running out of space and time for discussion. Things on resource mobilisation and the implementation mechanism are receiving much less space for negotiation and for problem resolution. One of my key concerns is that there is perhaps a feeling that they cannot be resolved in a virtual session, so they are being pushed forward and forward, which might overload future meetings and potentially lead to a weaker outcome. We need to avoid that as much as possible.

There have also been some concerns over virtual sessions and access and transparency. Any future virtual sessions that are run as part of the process have to be underpinned by principles of transparency and

inclusivity, making sure that everybody who needs access to the negotiations has access to them. That is incredibly important, too.

The Chair: Thank you. I see all the other panellists nodding, so I think that is a pretty clear response, and I will not trouble the other witnesses to respond as well.

Q18 **Lord Puttnam:** This is a very simple question: it is really to Melissa, but it cuts across everybody, and maybe a lot of what we are going to talk about.

Melissa, if we emerge from COP26 looking at a consensus above 1.5 degrees as opposed to below, will that affect your board's decisions? Given your global reach—you literally work in every country in the world—do you think that would change the policy of the board? If anyone else wants to comment on this, they can. My suspicion is that we will emerge with a consensus that we need to hold as close to 1.5 degrees as we can, having given up on below 1.5. I am interested in the policy decision from a commercial point of view.

Melissa Miners: I would have to come back to you on the actual board decision, but a useful piece of information is that we recently put a climate transition action plan to our shareholders, and 99.8% of them voted in favour of it. Our climate transition action plan is intrinsically linked to our business performance. I am not saying that it will fall apart if the negotiations go above the target, but it is important to know that it is intrinsically linked to our business decision-making. Previously, it was not.

The Chair: Thank you. That is a helpful intervention. Thank you, Melissa, and thank you, Rosie, for pointing that out. Over to you.

Q19 **Baroness Boycott:** Thank you all very much. That was extremely interesting.

I want to go a bit further, both into the CBD process and into some things about COP15. This is a broad question about civil society, businesses, indigenous people and local communities and how we can make them better involved in the process and, in a way, energise them. I was rather struck by the last speaker saying that there was a feeling of slight inertia and about the fact of being virtual. If I am reading this right, you were saying that it has taken the urgency out of the situation, which strikes me as extremely worrying and frightening. It would be very interesting to hear from all of you what role you think we the people, so to speak, can play in that to recreate a sense of urgency, because time is very short.

I do not much mind how this starts. Melissa, could I start with you? I would then very much like to hear from everyone else, especially about indigenous tribes.

Melissa Miners: My answer to this slightly reiterates what Akanksha has already said. We need it to be accessible. No one in our business had heard of the previous Aichi targets. I work on nature every day, and I sometimes struggle with the complexities of the language that is used.

Anything we can do to make this more accessible and clearer to businesses is absolutely paramount.

The other thing is the connection to COP26 and the prominence of the nature agenda in COP15. We as a business are using our voice to link this to COP26 and link the nature and climate agenda, but we need that narrative to run through. We hear that COP26 is likely to be in person, so the link there is very important.

Baroness Boycott: Thank you. Elsa, where do you think that we as civil society and other groups can make our voices most useful?

Elsa Tsioumani: These are difficult times for everybody. If collective action is the main pressure tool for civil society, during the pandemic it is practically impossible to hold any collective action. It is a good time, first, to clarify the science and why we need to act urgently on biodiversity, and, secondly, to clarify our communication messages. As Melissa said, linking the entire environment agenda through nature and climate, for instance, is something that civil society can do very well.

These are all very technical matters, and can be seen as very technical matters, but at the end of the day there can be just one message in the eyes of the public: the environment is us and the environment is humanity, and somehow the two are linked. Civil society can help the public to understand exactly why we need to go beyond the technicalities and see the political urgency of uniting the environment agenda.

Baroness Boycott: Akanksha, you mentioned that 80% of our biodiversity is looked after by 5% of people who are under threat. How do we bring that home loud and clear to people like us and to the greater world, so that they understand both the pressures that their lives are under and that we all have a responsibility for this now?

Akanksha Khatri: Thank you for that important question. I have a slightly different take on it. I understand fully that, because of the pandemic, the shift in everything going from physical to hybrid or virtual has definitely brought a certain slowdown of momentum in the negotiation circle, but it is happening at the very same time that, I would argue, there is increased momentum from the non-state actor community on everything related to nature and biodiversity.

We have seen most recently the G7 communiqué that came out, which talks about "net zero" and "nature positive", and there is a nature compact. In the mainstream media, we have had impactful documentaries in the last two years, such as "Our Planet" and "Breaking Boundaries" on Netflix. There is huge hunger and urgency among the public.

What seems to be almost like two worlds running in parallel is the non-state actor community, which wants to do more and wants to see more action from the Government, and the world of negotiators, as well as the world of multilateral discussions, which does not seem to recognise that

urgency or be able to communicate with the public at large. I sincerely hope that government representatives take it upon themselves to translate some of the highly technical and complex language on nature in a way that citizens can understand, so that they recognise that they have a role to play and that A, B and C are the different actions that they need to take.

Baroness Boycott: I will come back to you in a minute, Akanksha, but I want to ask Georgina specifically about all the new things that we hear about: how we are going to have transparency in supply chains, and how we are going to understand if a particular kind of animal feed has involved cutting down a rainforest. How powerful a weapon do you think that will be in making the public understand the interconnectedness of the world and our personal responsibilities about consumption?

Georgina Chandler: I agree with all the previous speakers, including Akanksha; it is important to use as many tools as possible to bring these slightly intangible global targets to life. Consumer choice is one way of doing that and of connecting what you do in your individual decisions on a day-to-day basis to what is happening in a different country. Due diligence obligation discussions are incredibly important from a business perspective, not necessarily just from a consumer perspective, so it is anything we can do that helps to connect that to real-world examples.

That brings me back to one of the suggestions I was going to make about making sure that civil society and other stakeholders are involved in translating what the global targets mean at the national level. From a UK Government perspective, it would be great to see, as soon as we have the new framework, a series of sessions or outreach that looks at helping to translate those global targets into what they mean for different sectors and what implementation means on the ground. There are lots of fantastic examples that could be scaled up or implemented, and could help contribute to these targets. That is incredibly important.

Lastly, it is making sure that there is consistent dialogue. What we saw over the past decade was a flurry of activity around agreement of the targets, and then it sort of went quiet, and everyone was saying, "Oh no, we've missed them", at the end of the decade. It is about making sure that we have consistent dialogue throughout the next decade and that we consistently use the CBD language, using and promoting the targets so that there is continued discussion about implementation and how we are doing, and that we are always checking in with different stakeholders about that. I think that is incredibly important.

Q20 **Baroness Boycott:** This is my last question. I will come back to all of you, but I would like to start with you, Georgina. What do you think the Government should be doing now, in the last remaining months between now and both the CBD and the COP, to inform and engage the public?

Georgina Chandler: There is a big job to do, as other speakers have mentioned, especially on the COP26 dialogue. There is a nature theme and a nature campaign as part of COP26. The public might be more

familiar with the climate change discussions, so it is about using those as a gateway to promote nature and the benefits of nature and nature-based solutions to help to solve the climate crisis is a particularly valuable tool. That is incredibly important.

I will probably come back to this later, but there is also demonstrating by doing. There is a lot of talking the talk, but it is also about walking the walk. For example, we are hoping for a state of nature amendment in the Environment Bill, which I think is sitting with you at the moment. There is a real opportunity to demonstrate tangible action that means something in practice, really committing the financing and the resources, and committing to real-world action on the ground between now and the COP to show that governments are serious about implementing the targets. Demonstrating leadership by doing is incredibly important. It is about communicating, but it is about communicating through actions, too.

Baroness Boycott: Does anybody—Akanksha, Melissa or Elsa—have anything to add on that question? Otherwise, I will throw it back to anyone.

Melissa Miners: Very quickly, if I may. There is a coalition called Business for Nature, which engages with the UK Government and Defra. There are now 530 companies signed up to the coalition, which has some very clear policy asks on its website. I would ask governments to keep engaging with Business for Nature and to keep prioritising that engagement.

Baroness Boycott: Thank you very much.

Q21 **Lord Lucas:** This question is for Georgina in particular. It seems to me that, in motivating people to really get behind what is going on and support companies that are doing the right thing, we need a lot of positive and supportive messaging, along with the negative warnings. That can be very hard for an NGO to do sometimes. There have certainly been areas of RSPB activity where I felt that you were unremittingly negative and not helping those who were trying to inch their way forward. Do you think this is something that the RSPB is committed to, this time: to go out on a limb and support those who are getting half the way there, rather than saying, "Why haven't you done the rest?"

Georgina Chandler: Yes, 100%. Constructive criticism where it is due can be incredibly valuable. Whenever we offer a critique on certain things, we always offer solutions as part of that narrative. We are definitely getting behind the nature-positive movement, which is very positive in itself.

We are entering the UN decade on restoration, which is about recovering and restoring nature. It is not just about making sure that things get less bad over the next decade; it is about taking action. Everyone can take action at all levels to restore and recover nature, from your back garden through to the decisions that businesses and governments take. We are

potentially planning some work doing exactly what I have said: translating the global targets into what they mean domestically.

What can we do in the UK to make sure that we end the decade with more nature than we started it with? As I said before, where are there scalable solutions, and where are there success stories that could potentially apply to different areas? That applies across all sectors. From an NGO perspective, and as an NGO that manages land, we have lots of examples. From a business perspective, there are lots of examples of businesses doing quite positive things that could be communicated and promoted to other businesses to give them ideas on how to implement the targets. That is where the shift needs to happen; as soon as we have the new framework, it is in communicating the solutions for implementing it. That is exactly what we will be focusing on.

The Chair: This is clearly a very fruitful line of inquiry. Do you want to ask a supplementary, Lord Colgrain?

Q22 **Lord Colgrain:** If I could, please. This question is probably for Melissa. Perhaps you would allow me to use an example, so that you could then show us how Unilever approaches this sort of situation.

We know that the indigenous peoples in Brazil and the Amazon rainforest, for the sake of example, are under huge pressure and that the Government appear not really to be protecting them. Do you, as a company, adopt an approach such that the buying public in this country know that you are resisting purchasing from Brazil, and from that neck of the woods in particular, in order to protect the indigenous peoples, or is that a simplistic question to ask?

Melissa Miners: No, it is a good question. Thank you. I will talk about it in the context of Indonesia, if I may, because our largest footprint is in Indonesia, with palm oil, where we have 5% of the global market. We source products that touch the Amazon, but it is very indirect. That is not to say that there is no programme there.

However, to talk about Indonesia, we have our people and nature policy for suppliers, where there is a no deforestation requirement. It means that there is a supplier grievance procedure, and it is done supplier by supplier. We have examples, which we have published on the website—I can share them afterwards—of where we have excluded and exited large suppliers from our supply chain for those reasons. That sends a big political signal. There have been various pieces of *FT* coverage, and I can share some examples of that as well.

That is the way it is done. It is done through our people and nature policy, and it is done through a grievance procedure. We have a grievance process on our website, where anyone can raise a grievance about a supplier or an issue in Indonesia regarding no deforestation, burning and so on. We go through a managed process internally.

Lord Colgrain: Thank you. That was very interesting.

Q23 Baroness Northover: Picking up on some of the points that have already been touched on, I will focus on business per se. It is clearly vital that addressing biodiversity is mainstreamed. What more can businesses do to ensure that they are protecting and not harming biodiversity, in particular through their supply chains, and how can policy best support that? How might those measures affect business competitiveness or even assist business competitiveness? Are the building blocks in place to support businesses to finance biodiversity action?

May I ask Melissa to address this first? Can I also ask that we have a copy of Unilever's action plan, please?

Melissa Miners: The climate transition action plan?

Baroness Northover: Yes.

Melissa Miners: Yes. As I said in response to the first question, businesses need governments to provide direction and urgency at the highest political level to set the direction for positive business actions on nature. This not only gives us clarity; it gives momentum and puts it at the forefront of the mind of shareholders and consumers.

There was an interesting piece of research recently by the Economist Intelligence Unit and WWF, showing that consumers are asking for consideration of nature. That really helps to amplify things in our business. We need other businesses to be aware of this. We operate in a pre-competitive way through industry and coalitions such as the Consumer Goods Forum, the World Economic Forum, Business for Nature and a coalition called One Planet Business for Biodiversity. We ask that other businesses join those, too. They are not just for big businesses such as Unilever; they are for any businesses to work on pre-competitive supply chain programmes. We ask that other businesses join, and we ask that governments continue to engage with those organised coalitions.

Akanksha could say a lot more about the financing piece than I can, but the recently launched Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures, or TNFD, is about organising our nature metrics and our nature impacts so that we can help finance flows and business indicators against those. That is an important development. From that side, we really need it to be in softer, more accessible language because, at the moment, it is quite difficult for businesses to access.

Baroness Northover: Thank you. Can I come to you Akanksha?

Akanksha Khatri: Sure. I agree with everything that Melissa said, but maybe I could pick up the point on financing. We need to focus on how we defund activities that are harming nature and start unlocking capital for things that both protect and sustainably manage nature.

It can be done in two ways by businesses. One is understanding the materiality of nature in all its activities. More than half the world's GDP is moderately or highly dependent on nature and its risk. As well as shifting towards a nature positive pathway—the momentum that Georgina was

talking about—the whole nature positive thing is actually creating more jobs as well as more business opportunities. It can create up to 395 million jobs. Nature actually makes businesses more competitive, as long as it shows up in their balance sheets as well as being assessed across their supply chains. That is where we need governments and regulators to step in, to create a level playing field and have a consistent transparency requirement so that businesses have to report on their footprint as well as on the direct and indirect impact that they have on nature. Such requirements exist for climate in scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions; we now need to be able to create something similar for nature and biodiversity.

Baroness Northover: It is very interesting to hear what you are saying, as it reminds me of debates that were held about 20 years ago on tackling corruption. The big companies, which knew that they would end up in court if they followed corrupt practices, were very keen that there was a policy to ensure that there was a flat playing field, so that the smaller companies also had to abide by those rules. Therefore, the policies put in place by governments, particularly on corruption in the United States and the EU, drove things forward right across the board. That sounds like what you and Melissa are seeking.

Akanksha Khatri: Absolutely. We need that kind of clarity of policy and regulation, as well as follow-up from government on enforcement.

I think there was some question about the financing of changes. There is of course the financing of activities, but we have to finance our institutions to be stronger to implement those policies. I fully agree with you.

Baroness Northover: Thank you. Georgina?

Georgina Chandler: I have a couple of examples of things that are happening currently in the UK to try to address the issues of supply chains and so on that you were talking about. There is a dialogue which the UK Government have initiated, called the FACT dialogue, which is about deforestation, supply chains and so on. That is supposed to be quite a crucial part of the COP26 discussions. We are particularly looking forward to ensuring that that dialogue has tangible outcomes, as I said previously. I think it includes more than 50 countries. A wide range of countries is involved in that dialogue. I can check the exact details.

That obviously connects to the current process that we are going through with the Environment Bill on due diligence—putting a due diligence obligation into law that makes sure that key consumer markets actually report on their deforestation. That was mentioned in the G7 nature compact, too, although it fell slightly short in not being specific on timeframes. We would also like to make sure that the due diligence obligation applies to financial institutions, not just key commodity industries. There are some real, tangible things that the UK Government are doing that have the potential to take this a step forward. We are looking forward to seeing how they develop.

Baroness Northover: Thank you. Elsa, do you have any comments?

Elsa Tsioumani: Basically, I agree with the previous speakers. I am not a fan of overregulation, but we should not underestimate the importance of well-informed, well-designed, monitored and enforced implementation of regulations. That can go a long way with implementation.

Baroness Northover: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Georgina, do you want to come back in?

Georgina Chandler: Yes. I forgot to tell you that I have quite a good fact that came out recently, which supplements that. As I mentioned previously, part of the CBD process is making sure that we have sufficient finance to implement the targets. The UN Environment Programme recently did a report on financing nature-based solutions, and it found that just 14% of financing for nature-based solutions is currently private finance, and up to 86% is publicly financed, so obviously there is potential when we are talking about mobilising new resources for implementing these targets. I can send that over as well. It is an interesting report.

Baroness Northover: I am sure that Unilever has just heard.

Q24 **Lord Lucas:** Melissa, you mentioned the common measurement framework, and various others of you have mentioned keeping it simple and clear, and having proper means of enforcing what is agreed. Anything you can give us by way of reading material on that would be helpful, so that we can see what you mean by it practically. What can you show us that you think would actually work? What are examples of this working in practice, so that we can get a real grip on exactly what you think we should be aiming for?

Melissa Miners: Akanksha might be best placed on this, but there is something called the Science Based Targets Network, which is creating practical guidance for business. It lays out the issues with no common methodology and no common indicators for biodiversity measurement for business. That might be a useful place to start. It is a four-page document, and I can share that.

Akanksha Khatri: I would direct you to the policy recommendations from Business for Nature, which are available on the website, but we would be happy to share it right afterwards, and then the Science Based Targets Network, which is working on four different pieces: land, fresh water, oceans and biodiversity. Collectively, they lead into that, when combined with climate change.

We are in the process of building a couple of case studies, which seem to focus on one geography, one supply chain or one commodity but, if scaled up, could have positive benefits. A specific example that comes to mind is the carbon tax in Costa Rica, which has been used successfully both to increase the level of education and development in the country

and to get really good outcomes on conservation and protection of its forests.

The Chair: Georgina, do you want to come back, very briefly?

Georgina Chandler: Yes. Last year, with WWF, we published our *Riskier Business* report, which summarises the UK's overseas land footprint for some key commodities. I will add that to our supplementary information for this question. If you are interested in that, it is a really good read.

The Chair: Yes, we are interested, and we are grateful to all of you for offering, at the end, to send us supplementary reading material.

Q25 **Lord Cameron of Dillington:** Good morning, everybody. Just to follow up, first, on those last questions about business, I have a question for Melissa and perhaps Akanksha. In the same way as businesses appoint independent auditors to monitor their financial figures and their results, are there enough independent auditors to monitor their environmental claims around the world? Is it possible to find people to produce an independent report on your environmental performance?

Melissa Miners: For Unilever, there are various methodologies that we follow, and various reporting mechanisms, such as the carbon disclosure measurement and the Dow Jones sustainability index. It would often be done at a landscape level. If we were doing a piece of restoration, we would appoint an independent verification body. At a very high level, it is done through CDP and so on, but it is often done at a landscape level.

There are many different organisations doing this, but there is still a lot of debate about restoration and regeneration, and about net zero and carbon neutral. There are various claims that we might want to make in the end. Yes, there are independent verification bodies, but there is still a lot of uncertainty in the wider scientific sphere.

Akanksha Khatri: I think, Melissa, you are pointing to the right problem in this case, because there are so many actors doing different methodologies and different verification. It could also be pointing a little to a chicken-and-egg situation. We are coming into the discussion on the back of the last 10 years, when not a single one of the Aichi biodiversity targets was met, and we are now going into setting the targets of the framework for the next decade. It is first aligning on an ambitious framework and targets, and then delving into what businesses can do to contribute to it.

There are indeed different methodologies: the CDP—the carbon disclosure project—to GRI reporting, et cetera. One norm or framework that is now getting more momentum is ESG framing: environmental, social and governance. At the end of the day, ESG is like a brake screaming, if we choose to look at the indicators underneath it, and where we need more public-private collaboration is to go a little bit sharper on those indicators. When I say the E of ESG, am I able to go beyond just the GHG emissions and look at my biodiversity footprint, my water footprint and different indicators?

As to the work we need in the next decade, once the global biodiversity framework has been agreed on, as Georgina said, it needs to be translated and communicated to different sections of society, including businesses. In the next three or five years, say, we should start seeing more reporting from businesses, for which we would of course need more professional services support.

Q26 Lord Cameron of Dillington: It sounds as though we are still slightly feeling our way in the dark, but no doubt we will get there.

My real question is about the 2020 framework that we hope will come out of the CBD. What are the main concerns that you are hearing about the latest draft? Indeed, what are your concerns? Is the latest draft continuously improving? If it does not have the right end result, how can we turn it around to make certain that it does? Do you want to go first, Georgina?

Georgina Chandler: Yes. There are a few key points. We are expecting an updated draft off the back of the SBSTA and the SBI—the negotiations we have just had—sometime in the next month. We might be able to answer that question a bit better in about a month's time when we have the updated version. The current version has some strengths, but it has some weaknesses as well.

I will give a couple of examples. It is worth noting that, especially for the target language and the target text, a lot of the target wording still has brackets around specifics. For example, instead of giving a specific percentage for restoration, it just has X% at the moment. It means that a lot of the ambition that is built into the targets and the framework is yet to be determined. The language might be quite good and the things that we want to see are in there, but I do not know how ambitious it is. It could be 1% or it could be 50%, which changes the ambition of the target quite substantially. The next important round of negotiations will be the Open-ended Working Group in August. That is where some of these details should start to be worked out. Until that happens, we are not really sure at the moment what the overall ambition of the package looks like.

Obviously, there are a few key issues that we would like to see changed. For example, there is a package of targets, as I mentioned before, on pressures and drivers of biodiversity loss. At the moment, they are not very tangible, specific or measurable. I think for people like Akanksha and Melissa, who are talking about being helped to translate them for business and other sectors, this is the set of targets that should speak to those stakeholders. At the moment, they are not specific enough for a mining or extracting company to say, "Yes, this is the part of the framework that applies to me or speaks directly to me". Obviously, the whole framework should, but there need to be signposts for specific sectors, and currently that section is particularly weak.

As I said, Open-ended Working Group 3 in August is the key place where some of these issues will be ironed out. At the moment, it is very hard to

judge what the ambition level for the framework looks like. Some of it is good; some of it needs improvement, and greater specificity and measurability, specifically.

Lord Cameron of Dillington: Elsa?

Elsa Tsioumani: I must agree. I think process-wise the biggest challenge at this stage is that what we have right now is far from a negotiating draft. It is not a draft owned by the parties and the other participants. It is largely a co-chairs' draft. We do not really know how the parties will react. We might have an indication at the next meeting of the working group in August, although it will again be virtual. Judging from the recently held meetings of the subsidiary bodies, the best-case scenario is that we will know parties' views and, hopefully, they will be reflected somehow in the draft. That is the best we can expect, I think, at this stage, taking into account the situation and all the challenges linked to virtual negotiations.

I very much agree with what Georgina said. I would add that there is no indication in the draft of what I mentioned before, benefit sharing from digital sequence information, which as developing countries have repeatedly highlighted will be at the core of the negotiations. We should assume that the issue is that controversial that it is not even in the draft at this stage, so that will be a major difficulty.

Lord Cameron of Dillington: Thank you very much. Do either of the other two want to say anything? I will come back to you, Georgina. I can see your hand up. Melissa, do you want to add to that?

Melissa Miners: I think Georgina has summarised it. Businesses need clarity on what is expected from them and how we can work together with governments to implement the framework. It is the clarity.

Lord Cameron of Dillington: Thank you. Akanksha, do you want to add anything?

Akanksha Khatri: No, I am actually in agreement with everything, so I will let Georgina come in.

Georgina Chandler: I support everything that Elsa said. I completely agree with her observations. To add a further point on your question about the areas that need quite a bit of work and improvement, I mentioned this before, but I will keep mentioning it: resource mobilisation and the discussions about financing. There really has been no kind of resolution on what we would like to see, what that looks like, and what solutions will be built into the framework. It is an incredibly important issue for the CBD process and the implementation of the targets. There are some concerns about the space. As Elsa said, some of the most contentious issues are not necessarily even in there yet properly. We are waiting to see what they begin to look like, which is a concern.

Q27 **The Lord Bishop of Oxford:** What you have just said about the lack of

progress in the draft is really alarming. It is terrifying, actually, in the context of what we are talking about. Are there things we can be doing as a Select Committee, or that we can urge the UK Government to do at this stage to respond to this lamentable slip in progress? There seems to be a really serious problem.

The Chair: Georgina, would you like to comment?

Georgina Chandler: Yes. I think it is worth commending the UK for playing a particularly pivotal role on some of the key issues. On things such as the implementation mechanism and transparency discussions, it has been very heavily involved in trying to ensure that we have a really constructive outcome. I think we should model the outreach that it has been doing on that for other issues, such as bilateral outreach and informal workshops with other parties; talking to the COP15 presidency; and discussions with developing countries and making sure that they are on board and involved in the conversations about solutions. The UK has an incredible resource to be able to do that. We could do more outreach on sticky issues, potentially, and really start to show leadership, and begin to have both formal and informal discussions with other parties.

All that stuff helps to lay the groundwork before we get into the negotiations. The virtual setting has been quite difficult for doing some of these things, but it is also an opportunity to bring people together virtually in a way that might be easier than it was beforehand. Taking advantage of that, we could do dedicated diplomatic bilateral outreach and, as I said previously, use our presidency of COP26 to promote ambition for nature as part of COP15, not seeing them as two completely separate things, even though they are different processes. If we are to have an ambitious nature outcome, and an ambitious nature campaign as part of COP26, we should advocate openly for an ambitious outcome for COP15 as well. It is about making sure that the communications around those things are linked.

The Lord Bishop of Oxford: Thank you.

Q28 **The Chair:** Georgina, you were very clear in making some suggestions about what the UK Government can do. You referred to diplomacy and some of the leadership in the UK Government. Does anyone want to comment on what they feel the actual presidency, the Chinese presidency, should be doing at this stage to make sure that some of the lamentable slip-back that the Bishop of Oxford mentioned is turned around, so that it gets a successful event? Would anyone like to comment on that? We can ask the Chinese. Georgina.

Georgina Chandler: I can comment on it very briefly. I think the CBD is quite unusual, in the sense that if you are a COP26 presidency you tend to be more front and centre in ensuring that there is a successful outcome. COP15 has a slightly more spread-out approach, and the CBD has a slightly more spread-out approach. Different countries have different champion issues. The targets and the framework are very diverse. They cover everything from protected areas, to species, to

access and benefit sharing, and to financing. It is quite hard to be an overall champion for the whole framework. It is putting those pieces in place.

The Chinese presidency can do similar things to every other government: diplomatic outreach, making sure that it has dialogues with developing nations; finding solutions and facilitating solutions, because that is much more its style of negotiation; and making sure that there are spaces for those discussions, both virtually and in person. Creating space is definitely something that the host of COP15 can do.

The Chair: Thank you. Elsa.

Elsa Tsioumani: I agree. Unfortunately, we might see this only at the very last moment of the negotiations. I do not know how active the Chinese have been during the virtual negotiations in the pandemic. I know they have been pushing to hold actual sessions. There are practical challenges, as was said. It is in an Asian time zone, so it is hard to co-ordinate with Europe and North America, which is a practical difficulty at this stage. In 2010, in COP 10, Japan was instrumental in reaching agreement on the Nagoya protocol and the strategic plan only over the very last couple of days of negotiations, but they were instrumental, so we might expect China to do the same.

The Chair: Thank you. Akanksha, do you want to come in?

Akanksha Khatri: One difference between CBD and the climate COP is that China actually assumes the presidency of the CBD COP only in October. We need to recognise the process where two years ago there was the launch of the Sharm el-Sheikh to Kunming action agenda for nature and people, which is a track for non-state actor engagement, and how that can contribute to a post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

In my view, in addition to being a really good host and a leader at UNFCCC COP, what the UK has been doing quite brilliantly is mobilising the non-state actor community. It has done this by creating a community of climate champions, et cetera. In addition to going into the multilateral intergovernmental processes, more active engagement from the UK in the non-state actor track through the Sharm el-Sheikh to Kunming action agenda for nature and people would go a really long way.

Q29 **Baroness Boycott:** This question was partly answered by the Bishop of Oxford. What happened to Brazil in all this? It has a leader who is against taking biodiversity targets. How can the international community work to pressurise that?

Georgina Chandler: Obviously, there have been some difficulties with a few parties in the negotiations, Brazil being one of them. As I said previously, it is about outreach and constructive dialogue, and it is about including them in the discussions, but it is also about countries really demonstrating leadership.

At the moment, we have seen some leadership outside the negotiations through things like the Leaders' Pledge for Nature and the high ambition coalition, but it has not quite translated back into the CBD negotiation process itself yet. We need the countries that have signed up to these ambitious initiatives to demonstrate that ambition in their negotiating positions, and in the diplomatic outreach they do as part of the CBD process.

The next step for ensuring that we have an ambitious outcome is parties taking responsibility for the ambition they have signed up to for nature outside the CBD process and making sure that it translates into it. There are quite a few regions, and the EU is a good example. Personally, I feel that the EU could be a much stronger champion for nature in the CBD negotiations. It has the Green Deal and the biodiversity strategy. There is lots of good stuff going on. It is the same for lots of countries. It is making sure that the rhetoric, as I said before, translates into reality in the negotiations process. We have not necessarily seen that in the previous sessions that we have had. It needs to come through at Open-ended Working Group 3 in August.

The Chair: If you do not mind, Elsa and Akanksha, I am going to move on to Lord Whitty because he wants to talk about parties' positions, which I think is the territory we are in at the moment.

Q30 **Lord Whitty:** You have been touching on this, in a sense, but I was interested in the negotiating dynamics. First, in relation to the UK Government position, Lord Goldsmith said they have done much of the heavy lifting so far, and some of what you have said confirms that. How far do you think the British Government still need to push things, to get them into a more positive state before we finally sit down in China?

Can you give us a more explicit description of the dynamics? We know those who are most committed. We probably know those who are least committed, or obstructive, and Brazil has been mentioned, but do we know where many of the major countries are that have quite a lot of money that could be funnelled into this area? I am thinking, for example, of countries that are recalcitrant on the climate change side—oil producers—but are big financiers of large parts of the world economy. It would be useful to get countries like that on side, as well as countries such as Brazil and Indonesia, which, at present, are being pretty negative. Perhaps Georgina and Melissa could talk about the UK Government and Elsa and Akanksha on the overall situation.

Georgina Chandler: I can semi-touch on both. As regards the UK Government's position, as I said, they have been quite ambitious in certain areas, for sure, and we have a good idea of what their priorities and areas of focus are. It will be interesting to have further dialogue with them about the specifics of the actual negotiations, and what their positions are on very specific target issues, such as the species target and the pressure and driver targets. As I mentioned, and will continue to mention, I think the UK can play a really valuable role, because it is a key donor country as well, in the resource mobilisation discussion. Let us do

some outreach and some proactive solution-oriented discussions ahead of the negotiations. That is potentially an area where most governments could do more to come together to try to have those discussions proactively.

On the wider dynamics of the negotiations, the way I visualise it, and Elsa will have more to add, is that there are three traded-off issues. There is target ambition and overall ambition of the framework; resource mobilisation and financing; and an issue that has been mentioned a couple of times, access to benefit sharing in genetic resources. Those three things are traded off against each other within the negotiations.

For regions like the African group, ambition depends very much on having the resources to implement the framework. It also depends on having an agreement on the access and benefit-sharing part of the framework. It is the same for the EU, for example, or other regions that might be pushing for ambition. Obviously, there is a trade-off with being able to provide the resources to other countries to implement. They have a very different position on access and benefit sharing to developing and mega-diverse countries. Those three issues are the ones that are most traded off. It is basically: who will pay for it, how will we implement it, and where will the capacity come from?

Where we have less of an idea of positioning is in ASEAN—the Asia-Pacific region. We have heard a little from countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia, but they have not been active in the negotiations to date, and we are not clear what their positioning is. It is the same for India, for example. It could be ambitious on some topics, and potentially trying to dilute ambition on other topics, but we do not have a clear idea of how it is going to position itself yet. For that region in particular, we do not have much clarity on negotiating positions.

I was going to make a final point, but I have forgotten it. You might have to come back to me. My train of thought was going. I was getting very into the negotiation dynamics.

Yes, my final point was one that I think I have made before, which is that the CBD covers a broad range of topics. Quite often, a party that is ambitious on one issue might not be as ambitious on another issue. Even in something like the 30by30 target—the protected area target—a country might be really ambitious on protected areas on land, but have a completely different position on what it would like to see for protected areas at sea because of its vested interest in fishing, for example. Even within targets, there are different dynamics. I will let somebody else speak, too. Thank you.

Lord Whitty: Melissa, would you like to say something about the UK Government's position, and then we will go to the wider area?

Melissa Miners: I do not have anything to add, except that Georgina mentioned earlier the FACT dialogue—Forest, Agriculture and Commodity Trade—for COP26. The UK Government are running that. She mentioned

Indonesia, and it is interesting to note that Indonesia has confirmed to co-chair that group, which I think is a strong signal of its support.

Lord Whitty: That sounds positive. Before we leave the UK Government's position, has their negotiating position been shared with you and the industry group, or indeed the NGOs, or are you surmising from more informal contacts?

Melissa Miners: Was that for me?

Lord Whitty: Primarily, yes.

Melissa Miners: Defra runs an informal business working group. I will have to check the official title of the group. Through Business for Nature, we have been pulled into several working sessions where Defra has shared its position.

Lord Whitty: Thank you very much. Can I ask Akanksha and Elsa about the international dynamics?

Akanksha Khatri: What Georgina shared was very educational and super-insightful, so I will not repeat her expert views. I want to raise what has underlined many of these dynamics, and that is how we choose to transform wealth and funds across the world, and how we choose to globally value nature and start remunerating for valuing nature.

Today, we are increasingly seeing a group of countries called high forest, low deforestation countries. Since the pandemic, these are the countries that are under severe fiscal stress. When a country is under severe fiscal stress, whether we like it or not, on the ground, there will be destruction of nature because, first, a poorer population have no other way, and, secondly, when funds are cut in any country, they will be cut in the environment ministries and, within those, the forestry departments.

In the context of talking about fighting climate change and halting biodiversity laws, we have to start recognising the value of the global public good, and how we as a global community choose to remunerate for it. There is definitely a dynamic or a dimension on how the wealth and technology transfer happens from the global north to the global south. I want to put that out there.

Again, I feel that there has been some really good work done on that, led by the UK. One example that comes to mind from the private sector perspective is the Taskforce on Scaling Voluntary Carbon Markets, which is really walking into the space of carbon markets and carbon pricing with a lot of mindfulness, thinking about equity and other issues. This is just one of the pieces. I am not saying this is the final mantra, but we have to think about these issues. Thank you.

Lord Whitty: Thank you. Elsa.

Elsa Tsioumani: It is very much along the lines of what Georgina said. In the CBD process we see, very roughly, that developed countries push

for strong conservation targets, and developing countries push for strong provisions on means of implementation—financing, technology transfer and capacity building. That is how it plays out.

Benefit sharing is largely symbolic but very powerful politically, because the way developing countries see it is that it refers to the historical debt of developed countries that have been destroying the biodiversity of developing countries, and using their genetic resources to build bio-based products and apply for patents. What do developing countries get out of it? That is mainly the political narrative behind it. How it has been translated into technical details is extremely complex. To a large degree, it has lost its meaning somehow, but it is still very much there, and it affects the negotiations.

I want to add one other point on the responsibility of national governments for implementation. We cannot expect that the global biodiversity framework will do everything. It will be an international instrument, hopefully, with good strong provisions and targets, but it will most probably be quite vague and open to interpretation. Its implementation will depend on the action of national governments. That is where the UK and any other national government can do a lot to translate the messages into legally binding regulations or convincing policies at national level, or to communicate the messages.

Q31 Lord Whitty: Thank you all for that. There is one final point from me on the dynamics of this, and we have touched on it, and it is the role of China. You made the point that China has only recently become the chair, but how important is the role of the chair and the role of China? In the context of the general attitude to China over recent months, is China in a position to take leadership in this without its raising wider issues? Does anybody want to have a go at that? Georgina.

Georgina Chandler: I can have a go, and I can follow up with some further information. As regards China as chair, I think Akanksha mentioned that, technically, the Chinese do not take the presidency until COP15 itself happens. They have a role, and their approach at the moment is very much about facilitating dialogue, facilitating the negotiation process, rather than leading it in that way. It is very much a facilitation, and they see themselves as facilitating an outcome. That is the kind of approach they are taking.

We know that there have been EU-China dialogues and Africa-China dialogues, and we know that outreach is happening. They are doing it in their own style and their own way, which potentially is different from what we are used to but not necessarily less effective. It is more on a bilateral and outreach basis. Obviously, there is an interesting dynamic as well around the belt and road initiative and the belt and road countries. Obviously, they are doing quite a lot of outreach on biodiversity to countries where they have existing partnerships. They are also thinking about how they demonstrate leadership from a domestic perspective, so what will their commitments be as part of COP15? Will it be financing?

Will it be protected area initiatives? What is their contribution as hosts of this negotiation going to be?

Yes, the Chinese play a particularly important role and, from a very practical perspective, their public health policy will impact whether we can have the COP at all. Depending on what is happening from a public health and security perspective, that will impact on what is happening and whether we can have the COP in October. China plays a very important role and we would like to see more outreach and more dialogue between the UK and the China departments that are dealing with the two COPs. I know that that is happening, and it should be a continuing process.

Lord Whitty: Thank you very much.

Q32 Lord Browne of Ladyton: My question was in two parts, but I think the first part has been covered already, in response to Lord Whitty's question. It was designed to ask you where governments, especially the UK Government, need to adjust or change their positions or policies to reflect the challenges that are fundamental to this agreement. I think we have already spent quite a lot of time on the key issues of level of ambition, resource mobilisation, processes for implementation and DSIs. I think we have those as priorities, so I do not think I need to ask that question, other than to say that, if you have priorities for us as regards recommendations, maybe you could tell us.

I will move on to the other question. It is broader than what we have been discussing up until now, which has been immensely informative and an amazing example of systems thinking. I will broaden the system a little. Both COP26 and COP15 exist in a much wider political context. In particular, I want to ask you to think about that and tell us how important the positions of governments, in particular the UK Government's position on other global issues such as vaccines and overseas development aid, are in reaching an effective agreement on COP15. It might be interesting on this occasion to start internationally, to see ourselves as others see us. Elsa, may I ask you to respond first?

Elsa Tsioumani: I will give it a go. I am no expert on UK policies, but from my general knowledge of intergovernmental negotiations, people are knowledgeable on the main issues. Vaccine distribution, for instance, at this stage is probably the main global challenge. Basically, it affects the trust in the negotiations and whether developing countries perceive the UK's position, or other developed countries' positions, as being in good faith. For instance, if distribution of vaccines does not happen in the developing world, or there is no financial mobilisation towards vaccines by the World Health Organization, or the patent is not waived for the vaccines to be distributed, how will that influence the CBD agenda, particularly agenda items that are linked to, for instance, the management of intellectual property rights and technology transfer?

It goes to the degree of good faith, and whether the developed countries show good faith on, for example, resource mobilisation, particularly when

it comes to ODA. It is linked to specific agenda items with regard to management of intellectual property rights when it comes to vaccines.

Lord Browne of Ladyton: Thank you. Akanksha, maybe you could comment on the G7 communiqué in relation to biodiversity, and the degree to which some of the issues that are apparently at the heart of the negotiation of this framework document were engaged, because I cannot find very much about any of them in the G7 communiqué.

Akanksha Khatri: Sure. I like your line of inquiry on systems transformation, because the fundamental issue over here is how the topics of climate change, nature loss, social inequity, as well as global vaccine inequality, interconnect with each other. Sometimes we could get siloed into just thinking about biodiversity, or just thinking about nature in terms of decision-making, but the truth is that all these pieces exist in a microcosm where the different forces and tensions are dealing with each other. It is impossible to have a high ambition for nature, or an ambitious outcome at CBD COP15, in a world that is completely riddled with inequality. That has been more and more visible when it comes to fighting the COVID pandemic. Vaccine is definitely one of them, but by now it is not even a question of debate that we are faced with this situation with COVID also because of our untenable relationship with nature.

Most of the vaccines, more than 70% of them, one way or another, find their genesis in material that we find in nature. Investing in nature and natural capital and fighting climate change improves our resilience for future pandemics while also avoiding them in the first place.

Was that strongly visible in the G7 communiqué? Maybe not. I would still like to be hopeful. There was mention of the nature compact. Thanks to the UK's leadership, after a lot of negotiations and debates, we are finally starting to see the climate and biodiversity agendas coming together. There was language on net zero and nature positive. While that may seem really small, for many of us who have been trying to join the dots, and for me, honestly, that was a victory. I would not worry too much about where it landed but would concentrate on where we can actually go from here, and how we recognise the efficacy of our international institutions to address all of these systems transformations, as you said, Lord Browne, instead of just looking at it in a silo.

Lord Browne of Ladyton: Thank you. Georgina and Melissa, as Brits who represent organisations that have a global perspective, it would be interesting to hear from your perspective, because you work internationally, how important this is, what we should do as a country and as a Government, and what we as a committee should recommend they do to deal with this challenge. Georgina, please.

Georgina Chandler: I have mentioned it before, but I agree with all the global context setting that Akanksha gave about pandemics and their origin, green recovery, and systems change and how we approach that, and specifically what the UK can do. There is a lot of rhetoric about us

being a global leader for the environment. What we do has an impact. It shows leadership to other countries and it gives other countries ideas for things they can implement domestically as well. As I said previously, it is demonstrating by doing, whether that is through having a really strong due diligence obligation, through making sure that our ODA is nature and climate positive, or through things such as the Environment Bill and the state of nature amendment in the Environment Bill so that we have truly world-leading legislation for nature.

It is the same for the green recovery and the financing narrative. The Dasgupta review response was launched recently. It is all about making sure that all those very positive things add up to tangible action, that we are demonstrating by doing, and that it has an impact on the ground. We have an impact both as the UK and, as I mentioned previously, because our footprint in other countries is very extensive. Nearly every decision we make has an impact on nature. It is about ensuring that those targets are mainstreamed into decision-making, that the issues are properly reflected, and that we are taking tangible action. Hopefully, that gives you some ideas for some of the things that we could be asking for to show that we are truly global leaders.

One example is the Climate Change Act, which is putting climate change targets into law. Hopefully, the Environment Bill will start to do the same thing for nature, and for other environmental issues. Those kinds of things are truly globally leading, and we should be encouraging other countries to do the same. There is quite a package of things in train at the moment. We just need to go to the next step to show that we are truly world-leading. Hopefully, that gives you some ideas for things that we could be asking of the UK Government.

Lord Browne of Ladyton: Melissa, yours is a truly global business.

Melissa Miners: From our side, I echo what Georgina says: what we do makes an impression on other businesses. As I said, we are involved in various business coalitions such as the Consumer Goods Forum, Business for Nature and One Planet Business for Biodiversity. Each of those has various political engagements. It is about sharing our success stories, showing other businesses that it can be done, and working with local governments in those regions, and keeping that dialogue with our local governments, such as the UK Government.

I want to make another point. I touched on palm oil and Indonesia before, but the important thing for us there is working with the local people. Before we even consider any forest project, it is about our smallholder farmers, about engaging the local NGOs and the local smallholders and indigenous peoples. That is at the core of everything we do and runs through all our considerations as a global company.

Lord Browne of Ladyton: Thank you.

Q33 **Lord Colgrain:** I have found this evidence session absolutely fascinating and informative. As we are rather short of time, perhaps I can put my

question and my supplementary together. If we assume the worst, if the outcome of COP15 is suboptimal, how else should governments such as the UK Government seek to address international biodiversity issues? As part of that, what more can be done to address those biodiversity issues through the WTO? Elsa, perhaps you could start.

Elsa Tsioumani: Thank you, I can try. As we have said multiple times, there is a big opportunity with the UNFCCC COP coming up in Glasgow. The UK could definitely promote an integrative agenda for the implementation of biodiversity and climate change commitments.

Some argue that biodiversity commitments can also be pushed through bilateral and multilateral trade agreements. There are risks and benefits, but that is definitely an option. The UK can definitely promote biodiversity-inclusive sectoral legislation within the country and cover entire supply chains when it comes to agriculture, transportation, forestry, fisheries, et cetera.

When it comes to the WTO, which is a different universe, the fishery subsidies negotiations are going on right now, which are of extreme relevance to biodiversity. I am not familiar with the UK positions there, but it is definitely an opportunity. There is also the process to guarantee the review of Article 27.3(b) of the TRIPS agreement, for the patenting of inventions relating to plants and animals, but this is currently stalled, and I do not know what kinds of hopes there are for that process to start again. But that is another opportunity.

Lord Colgrain: Thank you. Akanksha.

Akanksha Khatri: Thank you for that question. I feel that nature, as I said, is the underpinning infrastructure for all our social and economic activities. I want to pick up a framework that was shared by Professor Dasgupta in the economics of biodiversity review, in which he talks about how over the past century our stock of produced capital, which is capital produced by humans, and our stock of financial capital have been steadily on the incline and rise. However, our stock of natural capital has actually been going down. In the WTO and other institutions, we have mechanisms for governing our financial flows across countries, the mobility of people across countries, as well as how we trade in goods and services. We do not recognise in any of that decision-making the so-called externality of the impact that we have on nature.

Instead of just thinking that nature and biodiversity will be resolved and taken care of at COP15 and by the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, what is required today is that, increasingly, we need every global governance mechanism to start talking about the impact human activity has on the planet and the planetary boundaries. I feel that the WTO is one of the most effective institutions; it has really pushed forward a certain globalisation agenda, so it is ripe now for reform, as well as making sure that the next stage of human and economic growth does not come at the expense of nature but comes in support of and with nature.

Lord Colgrain: Thank you very much. Georgina.

Georgina Chandler: Obviously, COP15 will be a success, so let us start on a positive note. Building on what my colleagues have said, a lot of momentum for nature is happening outside these processes as well—the Leaders’ Pledge for Nature, the high ambition coalition, the G7 nature compact, and the UNFCCC nature theme. There is a lot of stuff happening and all of it can be used to support ambition, and ambition for nature as well—for example, making sure that our commitments on nature-based solutions within the UNFCCC procedure are truly beneficial for nature and for climate. There are some principles for that.

I have spoken to the commitments in each of the different coalitions. Sometimes it can just be nice words, and we need to make sure that that translates into tangible action, whether through financing, through putting targets into law for nature, or through committing to restoring X% of degraded habitats, for example. There are real things that we can do. I think the most important thing is sending a signal to the real economy that change is happening and change is coming, and if you are not on that train it will go without you. That is an incredibly powerful signal to send. There are ways we can do that that can be supported by the negotiation process but can also happen outside it as part of the implementation.

All the things that the UK Government are involved in for nature this year should be the start of the conversation, not the end of the conversation. We should, as I said previously, be having a continued discussion over the next decade about the legacy for some of these processes, what they mean in practice, and how they are going to be implemented; and show willing to be held accountable for those actions, as businesses, as stakeholders, as governments, saying: “We’re going to do these things and we’re going to be held accountable on them”. That sends a very strong signal as well.

Lord Colgrain: And linking through to the WTO?

Georgina Chandler: I agree with everything my colleague said, so I do not have anything particular to add. As I said previously, nature is impacted by nearly every one of our decisions, and there are real opportunities to make sure that we embed in those decisions the principles that the Aichi targets and the new post-2020 framework are trying to communicate.

Lord Colgrain: Thank you. Finally, Melissa.

Melissa Miners: I do not have anything to add on that. My colleagues have summarised it well.

Lord Colgrain: Thank you very much.

The Chair: On behalf of the committee, I thank all four of you, Elsa, Akanksha, Melissa and Georgina, for your incredibly impressive presentations. It was great to see the synergies between the

presentations and the different perspectives that you each bring to this issue. We are very grateful for that. We are also grateful for your generous offers at various points in the hearing to send us further supplementary information. We look forward to receiving that in due course. On that note, I formally close this meeting. Thank you very much indeed.