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# **GRI Topic Standard Project for Biodiversity**

## **Project proposal**

Approved by the Global Sustainability Standards Board (GSSB) on 29 September 2021

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# Project background

As part of the [GSSB Work Program 2020-2022](#), the Global Sustainability Standards Board (GSSB) has identified the review of *GRI 304: Biodiversity 2016* as a priority project for commencement in 2021. Since the GRI disclosures on biodiversity were last revised in 2006, the issue of biodiversity has received significant attention in the global sustainable development agenda.

Biodiversity features as a key theme in the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Both governments and private sector organizations are being called upon to realize SDG 14 and SDG 15. SDG14 is devoted to “conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources”<sup>1</sup>. While SDG 15 is devoted to “protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss”<sup>2</sup>.

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) issued the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services in 2019<sup>3</sup>, highlighting that biodiversity is declining in every region and issues an urgent call to halt and reverse the unsustainable use of nature.

Over the past years, the United Nations have been working on the Convention on Biological Diversity, a new global framework to reverse nature loss in the next decade. At the time of issuance of this project proposal, parties to the convention are in ongoing negotiations of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework with the aim to agree on the new convention at the upcoming meeting in Kunming, China, in April-May 2022<sup>4</sup>. The Global Biodiversity Outlook 5<sup>5</sup> and the first draft of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework<sup>6</sup> issued by the Convention on Biological Diversity form the basis of the ongoing deliberations.

## Project objectives

The project aims to review the *GRI 304: Biodiversity 2016* to represent internationally agreed best practice and align with recent developments and the relevant authoritative intergovernmental instruments in the field of biodiversity.

The revised Topic Standard enables an organization to publicly disclose its most significant impacts on biodiversity and how it manages them. This disclosure enhances transparency on the organization's impacts and increases organizational accountability. The revised Topic Standards will contain disclosures that allow an organization to report information about its impacts consistently and credibly. In doing so, the global comparability and quality of reported information on these impacts supports information users in making informed assessments and decisions about the organization's impacts and contribution to sustainable development.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/oceans/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/biodiversity/>

<sup>3</sup> IPBES, *Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*, 2019.  
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3831673>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/article/new-dates-cop15-october-2021>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/gbo5>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/article/draft-1-global-biodiversity-framework>

The review includes but is not limited to the review of the current disclosures. The revised Topic Standard can but does not necessarily have to build on the existing contents of the *GRI 304: Biodiversity 2016*.

## Division of responsibilities

A Technical Committee will be formed to provide technical advice for the development of the revised Topic Standard.

The Standards Division will draft the Topic Standard, and the GSSB will have oversight and final approval over the Topic Standard before its release.

The project will be conducted in accordance with the [GSSB Due Process Protocol](#).

## Timeline

This project is envisioned to commence in September 2021. Table 1, on the following page, outlines the anticipated project duration.

Table 1: Estimated duration of Topic Standard Project for Biodiversity

Phase	~Duration (months)	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	Month 5	Month 6	Month 7	Month 8	Month 9	Month 10	Month 11	Month 12	Month 13
Project commencement	1	█												
Recruitment of Technical Committee	2	█	█											
GSSB approval of Technical Committee	-		◆											
Content development by Technical Committee	4			█	█	█	█							
GSSB approval of exposure draft	1							◆						
Public comment period	3								█	█				
Analysis of public comments and revision of draft	3										█	█	█	
GSSB approval of final standard	1													◆
Total (months)	13													