



Principle 1 of the Sports for Nature Framework

Protect nature and avoid damage to natural habitats and species

Principle 1 of the [Sports for Nature Framework](#) focuses on safeguarding natural habitats and species, encourages sports organisations to recognise and reduce their negative impact on nature, and become active participants in its conservation.

Importance of protecting nature

The importance of nature protection transcends environmental benefits. It includes the preservation of the very arenas where sport is played. Nature also plays an important role in providing athletes with clean air and water, healthy nutrients needed for optimal performance, materials for sport equipment, apparel, and infrastructure (wood, cotton, and others), as well as space to relax and unwind.

Relevance to sports organisations

For nature and its ecosystems to offer these environmental services, they need to be in a healthy state. Natural habitats, once lost or degraded, can take decades to restore. While restoration is also critical and addressed in Principle 2 of the Sports for Nature Framework, if conservation is prioritised, restoration may not be needed.

Principle 1 thus urges sports organisations to assess their relationship with nature and mitigate any negative impact their events and operations may have on habitats and species.

Location, location, location

When sport events or venues – permanent or temporary – and their associated infrastructure are developed in natural or critical habitats, they can contribute to habitat degradation, fragmentation, and loss, especially if they have a large footprint. The magnitude of this impact greatly depends on the biodiversity values of the area. Constructing sports venues or staging events in, or near, marine, coastal, and/ or terrestrial protected areas, [Key Biodiversity Areas](#), [World Heritage Sites](#), [Ramsar sites](#), or [Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas](#) come with high risks to biodiversity.

Full text of Principle 1

Protect nature and avoid damage to natural habitats and species

Goal: Our organisation is committed to protecting and avoiding damage to natural habitats and species, including respecting protected areas.

We will

assess the ways in which our organisation impacts and depends on nature, including natural habitats and species, avoid the introduction of invasive species, and identify significant environmental impacts and opportunities.

avoid building permanent infrastructure in protected areas and other important areas for nature conservation and biodiversity, as well as temporary infrastructure in these areas if it will lead to negative impacts on nature.

ensure appropriate and effective measures are put in place and monitored throughout the lifecycle of infrastructure projects and major events, to avoid potential damage and deliver overall positive results for nature.

use relevant information and guidance to avoid impacts on nature, and share this with all stakeholders, including our athletes, teams, staff, volunteers, contractors, sponsors, spectators and delivery partners.

Principle 1 presents numerous opportunities. It leads to practices that can:

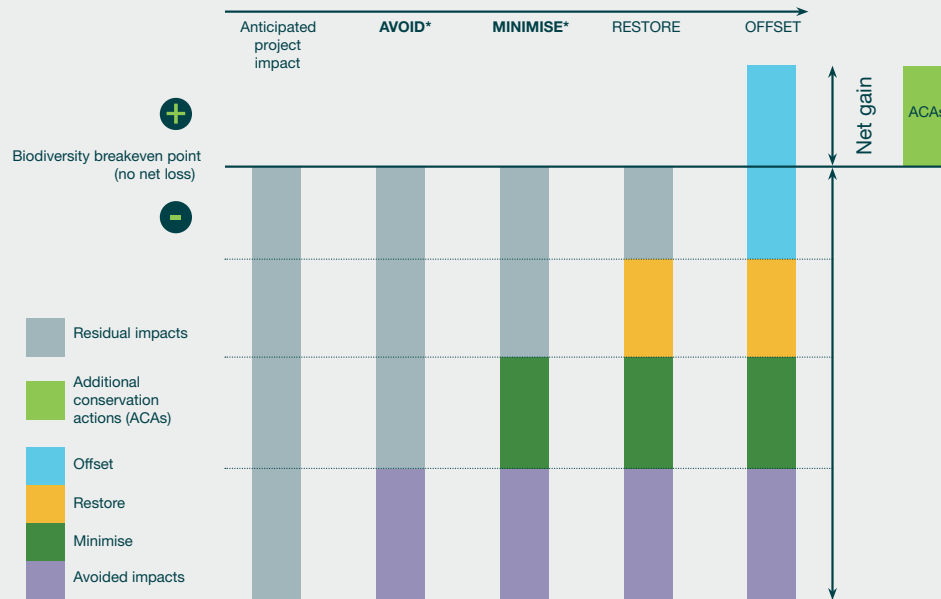
- **Reduce legal risks** – by helping to identify, understand, and anticipate regulatory requirements),
- **Reduce reputational risks** – by avoiding, for example perceived misuse or overuse of natural resources in local communities that rely on those resources for their livelihoods),
- **Reduce operational costs** – for example through water conservation or waste reduction measures).

Embracing sustainable practices to protect nature can enhance community relations and create new partnerships with environmental groups and other stakeholders, and attract a growing demographic of eco-conscious fans and sponsors.

How to put Principle 1 into practice

- **Assessment:** Sport can map environmental impacts and opportunities linked to its activities, such as hosting (large-scale) sporting events, constructing new venues, or retrofitting venues that sports organisations already use, operate, or own. A detailed list of the main sources and associated biodiversity impacts from sports events can be accessed [here](#).
- **Applying the mitigation hierarchy (see figure next page):** Mitigation strategies might include creating and implementing specific rules for selecting event locations, developing operational processes and implementing infrastructural changes to conserving water, reducing waste, minimising the use of harmful substances (e.g. pesticides).
- **Infrastructure decisions:** Choosing locations for new infrastructure involves considering ecological sensitivity such as avoiding construction in areas critical for endangered species or near vital water sources.
- **Introduction of invasive species,** organisms that are not Indigenous, or native, to a particular area. These species can be introduced through non-indigenous plants or through foreign species imported on building materials or equipment of participants and can cause great economic and environmental harm.
- **Event organisation:** Ensure that nature protection is considered when planning and delivering events staged in both urban and natural settings, such as the impact noise, pollution, and waste will have on surrounding areas.
- **Education and engagement:** Inform and involve stakeholders, from athletes to spectators, in conservation efforts can amplify positive impacts. This includes promoting sustainable practices and fostering a culture of respect for nature. Such actions could involve availing of athletes as ambassadors, managing education and media campaigns, or leading workshops that raise awareness about the importance of nature and its protection.
- **Collaboration with nature conservation organisations:** Partnerships with environmental organisations can provide expertise and resources for effective nature protection strategies.

The mitigation hierarchy



* Note: Emphasis by the authors of this factsheet, to highlight the importance of this measure.

Source: Adapted from *Sport and Biodiversity* (IUCN, 2018, p. 8).

The mitigation hierarchy comprises a sequence of actions to address negative impacts on biodiversity. Wherever possible, impacts should be avoided. Where avoidance is not possible, impacts are to be minimised. These impacts should then be mitigated through restoration actions, and, where significant residual impacts still remain, biodiversity offsets should be implemented.



Principle 1 strongly aligns with the targets of the [Biodiversity Plan](#), a UN-led global landmark agreement for nature to safeguard and sustainably use biodiversity with global goals and targets to be achieved by 2030 and beyond.

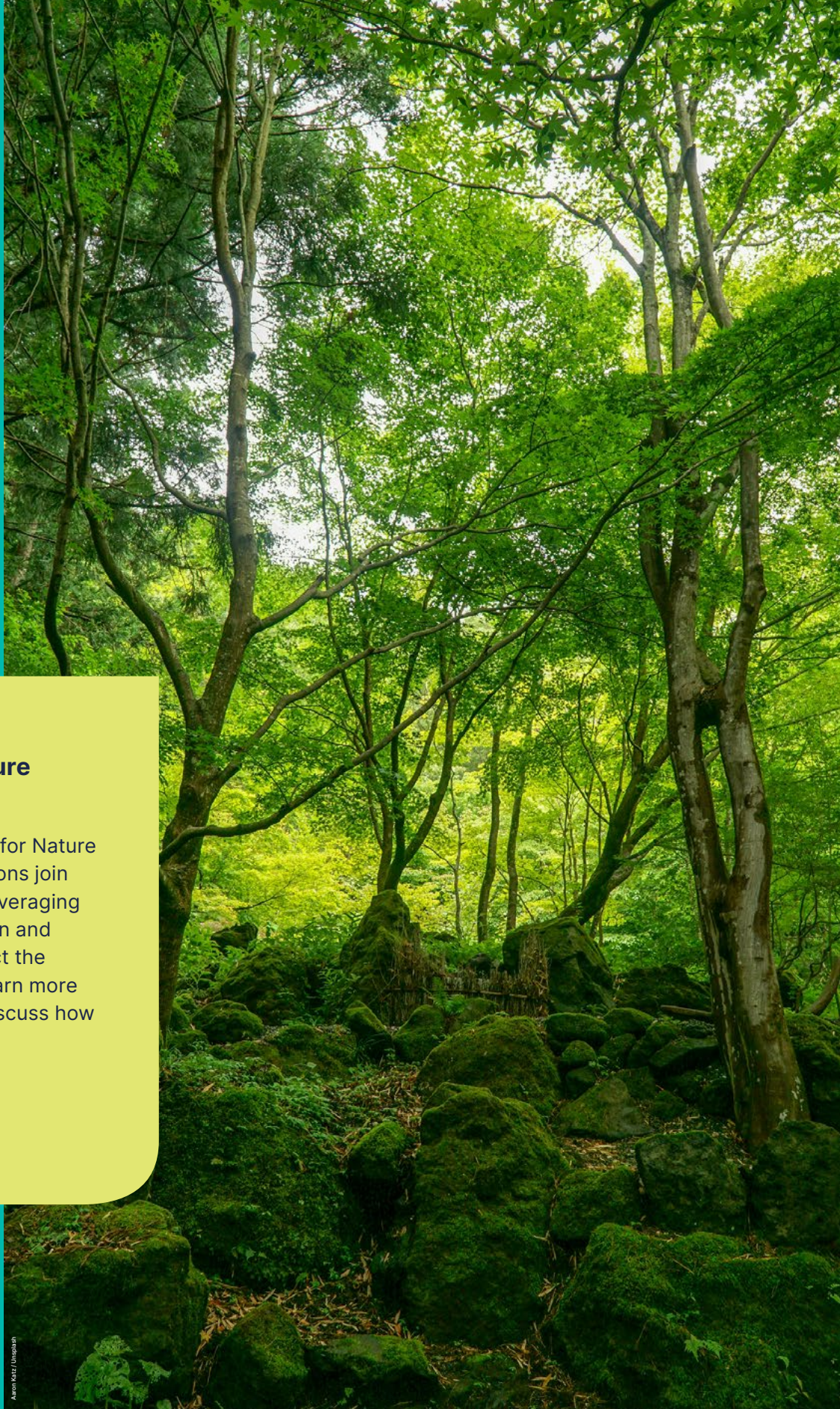
Principle 1 relates to the following Biodiversity Plan targets, in particular:

- **Target 3:** Conserve 30% of land, waters and seas
- **Target 4:** Halt species extinction, protect genetic diversity, and manage human-wildlife conflicts
- **Target 6:** Reduce the introduction of invasive alien species by 50%
- **Target 7:** Reduce pollution to levels that are not harmful to biodiversity
- **Target 8:** Minimize the impacts of climate change on biodiversity

Join the Sports for Nature community

By committing to the Sports for Nature Framework, sport organisations join a community dedicated to leveraging sports towards the protection and restoration of nature. Contact the Sports for Nature team to learn more about the Framework and discuss how you can get involved.

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