



**A4S**

ACCOUNTING FOR  
SUSTAINABILITY



# NATURE GUIDANCE SERIES: GLOSSARY

# Nature Guidance Series: Glossary

The following terms are used in the A4S Nature Guidance Series. You may come across additional technical terms in your work on nature and may wish to refer to the [TNFD Glossary](#) which contains a wider range of definitions.

Term	Definition	Source
<b>Acute risk/event (nature)</b>	Occurrence of short term, specific events that change the state of nature. For example, oil spills, forest fires or pests affecting a harvest.	Cited in <a href="#">TNFD Glossary</a> (2025)
<b>Afforestation</b>	The conversion from other land uses into forest, or the increase of the canopy cover to above a 10% threshold.	<a href="#">Food and Agriculture Organization</a> (2000)
<b>Agroforestry</b>	Agroforestry is the interaction of agriculture and trees, including the agricultural use of trees.	<a href="#">World Agroforestry</a> (2024)
<b>Biodiversity</b>	The variability among living organisms from all sources, including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems. A high level of biodiversity boosts the productivity of ecosystems and therefore increases the availability of natural resources and ecosystem services. Importantly, it also increases the resilience of an ecosystem to climate change.	Adapted from <a href="#">Convention on Biological Diversity</a> (1992)
<b>Biomes</b>	Global-scale zones, generally defined by the type of plant life that they support in response to average rainfall and temperature patterns, eg tundra, coral reefs or savannas.	Cited in <a href="#">TNFD Glossary</a> (2025)
<b>Carbon neutrality</b>	Carbon neutrality is achieved when anthropogenic CO <sub>2</sub> emissions are balanced globally by anthropogenic CO <sub>2</sub> removals over a specified period. Also referred to as net zero emissions.	<a href="#">IPCC Annex I: Glossary</a> (2018)

Term	Definition	Source
<b>Carbon sequestration</b>	The uptake and storage of carbon. Trees and plants, for example, absorb carbon dioxide, release the oxygen and store the carbon. Fossil fuels were at one time biomass and continue to store the carbon until burned.	<a href="#">UNFCCC Glossary</a> . Accessed 27 April 2026
<b>Carbon sink</b>	Carbon reservoirs and conditions that take in and store more carbon (ie carbon sequestration) than they release. Carbon sinks can serve to partially offset greenhouse gas emissions. Forests and oceans are large carbon sinks.	<a href="#">UNFCCC Glossary</a> . Accessed 27 April 2026
<b>Chronic risk/event (nature)</b>	Nature-related physical risks to an organization that emerge from gradual changes to the state of nature (degradation of nature and consequential loss of ecosystem services). For example, pollution stemming from pesticide use or climate change.	Cited in <a href="#">TNFD Glossary (2025)</a>
<b>Circular economy</b>	An economic system in which the value of products, materials and other resources in the economy is maintained for as long as possible, enhancing their efficient use in production and consumption, thereby reducing the environmental impact of their use and minimizing waste and the release of hazardous substances at all stages of their life cycle, including through the application of the waste hierarchy.	Cited in <a href="#">TNFD Glossary (2025)</a>
<b>Climate/climate system</b>	Climate is the general weather over a long period. This can include rainfall, temperature, snow or any other weather condition. We usually define a region's climate over a period of 30 years. The Earth's climate system has many components. It includes everything that can affect weather patterns, such as the atmosphere, clouds, oceans and the land surface and vegetation.	<a href="#">Met Office</a> . Accessed 27 April 2026
<b>Conservation</b>	An action taken to promote the persistence of ecosystems and biodiversity.	Cited in <a href="#">TNFD Glossary (2025)</a>
<b>COP16</b>	The 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) held in 2024. COP16 can be seen as the 'first implementation COP' as it was the first COP since the adoption of the Global Biodiversity Framework.	Adapted from <a href="#">United Nations Development Programme (2024)</a> and <a href="#">Convention on Biological Diversity (2024)</a> . Accessed 27 April 2026
<b>Decarbonization</b>	The process by which countries, individuals or other entities aim to achieve "zero fossil carbon existence". Typically refers to a reduction of the carbon emissions associated with electricity, industry and transport.	<a href="#">IPCC Annex I: Glossary (2018)</a>

Term	Definition	Source
<b>Deforestation</b>	The conversion of forest to another land use or the long-term reduction of tree canopy cover below a 10% threshold. The conversion of forest to other land use independently of whether human-induced or not.	Adapted from <a href="#">Food and Agriculture Organization</a> (2000)
<b>Degradation</b>	Changes within a natural ecosystem that significantly and negatively affect its species composition, structure, and/or function and reduce the ecosystem's capacity to supply products, support biodiversity, and/or deliver ecosystem services.	Cited in <a href="#">TNFD Glossary</a> (2025)
<b>Ecosystem</b>	A dynamic complex of plant, animal and microorganism communities and the non-living environment, interacting as a functional unit.	Cited in <a href="#">TNFD Glossary</a> (2025)
<b>Ecosystem resilience</b>	Ecosystem resilience is the capacity of an ecosystem to deal with pressures and demands, either by resisting, recovering or adapting to them whilst retaining their ability to deliver ecosystem services and benefits now and into the future.	Adapted from <a href="#">Natural Resources Wales</a> . Accessed 27 April 2026
<b>Ecosystem services</b>	The contributions of ecosystems to the benefits that are used in economic and other human activity. Includes provisioning services (eg food and water), regulating services (eg pollination and flood control), cultural services (eg recreational benefits), and supporting services (eg soil formation).	Cited in <a href="#">TNFD Glossary</a> (2025) and adapted from <a href="#">Millennium Ecosystem Assessment</a> (2005)
<b>Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)</b>	See Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.	
<b>Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions</b>	GHG emissions refer to the release of gases into the atmosphere that have direct effects on climate change: CO <sub>2</sub> and other GHGs like methane (CH <sub>4</sub> ), nitrous oxide (N <sub>2</sub> O), chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs), sulphur hexafluoride (SF <sub>6</sub> ) and nitrogen trifluoride (NF <sub>3</sub> ).	<a href="#">OECD</a> (2023)
<b>Just transition</b>	The just transition involves anticipating, assessing and addressing the social risks and opportunities of the transition to a low-GHG emissions and climate-resilient development, as well as ensuring meaningful dialogue and participation for impacted groups (including workers, communities, supply chains and consumers) in transition planning.	<a href="#">IFRS - Transition Plan Task Force Disclosure Framework</a> (2023)

Term	Definition	Source
<b>Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework</b>	In December 2022 196 countries adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) providing a global framework to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030.	<a href="#">UNEPFI</a> . Accessed 27 April 2026
<b>Natural capital</b>	The stock of renewable and non-renewable natural resources (eg plants, animals, air, water, soils, minerals) that combine to yield a flow of benefits to people. Also known as stocks of natural resources or environmental assets.	Adapted from <a href="#">Capitals Coalition</a> (2016)
<b>Environmental assets</b>	Assets such as soil, air, water and all living things, which together produce ecosystems services. Collectively referred to as natural capital.	Adapted from <a href="#">United Nations et al.</a> (2021)
<b>Nature</b>	The natural world, emphasizing the diversity of living organisms, including people, and their interactions with the environment.	Cited in <a href="#">TNFD Glossary</a> (2025)
<b>Nature-based solutions (NbS)</b>	These are actions that protect, manage or restore natural ecosystems to address challenges such as climate change, food and water security, and disaster risk reduction. NbS can also benefit biodiversity and human health.	<a href="#">World Bank Group</a> (2022)
<b>Nature loss</b>	The loss and/or decline of the state of nature. This includes, but is not limited to, the reduction of any aspect of biological diversity, eg diversity at the genetic, species and ecosystem levels in a particular area through death (including extinction), destruction or manual removal.	Cited in <a href="#">TNFD Glossary</a> (2025)
<b>Nature positive</b>	A global societal goal to 'halt and reverse nature loss by 2030 on a 2020 baseline, and achieve full recovery by 2050', in line with the mission of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.	<a href="#">Nature Positive Initiative</a> . Accessed 26 April 2026
<b>Net positive carbon/water/impact</b>	An approach that means doing more good than bad. It goes beyond 'doing less harm' and urges businesses to have a positive impact on the world, eg through its approach and actions on carbon and water.	<a href="#">United Nations</a> . Accessed 27 April 2026

Term	Definition	Source
<b>Net zero</b>	Net zero carbon dioxide (CO <sub>2</sub> ) emissions are achieved when anthropogenic CO <sub>2</sub> emissions are balanced globally by anthropogenic CO <sub>2</sub> removals over a specified period. Net zero CO <sub>2</sub> emissions are also referred to as carbon neutrality.	<a href="#">IPCC Annex I: Glossary (2018)</a>
<b>No net loss</b>	'No Net Loss' is a goal for a development project, policy, plan or activity in which the impacts on biodiversity it causes are balanced or outweighed by measures taken to avoid and minimize the impacts, to restore affected areas and finally to offset the residual impacts, so that no loss remains.	<a href="#">Forest Trends</a> . Accessed 27 April 2026
<b>Paris Agreement</b>	The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change. It was adopted by 195 Parties at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris, France, on 12 December 2015. Its overarching goal is to hold "the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels" and pursue efforts "to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels." However, in recent years, world leaders have stressed the need to limit global warming to 1.5°C by the end of this century.	<a href="#">UNFCCC</a> . Accessed 27 April 2026
<b>Reforestation</b>	Reforestation is the re-establishment of forest formations after a temporary condition with less than 10% canopy cover due to human-induced or natural perturbations.	<a href="#">Food and Agriculture Organization (2000)</a>
<b>Restoration</b>	Any intentional activity that initiates or accelerates the recovery of an ecosystem from a degraded state. May be "active" involving human interventions or "passive" relying primarily on natural process.	Adapted from <a href="#">TNFD Glossary (2025)</a>
<b>Science Based Targets Network (SBTN)</b>	A civil-society and science-led initiative founded by a group of global NGOs to develop science-based targets for nature for both companies and cities, so they can comprehensively address their environmental impacts across biodiversity, land, freshwater and ocean, in addition to climate through the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi).	Adapted from <a href="#">SBTN</a>
<b>Science-based targets</b>	Measurable, actionable and time-bound objectives, based on the best available science, that allow actors to align with Earth's limits and societal sustainability goals.	<a href="#">SBTN Glossary of Terms (2023)</a>

Term	Definition	Source
<b>SDGs</b>	Seventeen development goals “adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity”.	<a href="#">United Nations Development Programme</a> . Accessed 27 April 2026
<b>Stranded assets/stranding</b>	Assets that have suffered from unanticipated or premature write-downs, devaluation or conversion to liabilities. Changes to the physical environment driven by climate change, and society’s response to these changes, could potentially strand entire regions and global industries within a short timeframe, leading to direct and indirect impacts on investment strategies and liabilities.	<a href="#">Lloyds</a> (2017)
<b>Sustainability-linked bond (SLB)</b>	An SLB is a borrowing instrument where financial and structural characteristics are based on whether the issuer achieves sustainability or ESG metrics within a given timeframe. If the company doesn’t meet those goals, there’s a penalty: higher interest paid to investors. This performance-based instrument allows issuers to commit explicitly to future improvements in sustainability outcomes while benefiting from discounted interest rates on the bond.	<a href="#">World Economic Forum</a> (2022)
<b>Tipping points</b>	A level of change in system properties beyond which a system reorganizes, often abruptly, and does not return to the initial state even if the drivers of the change are abated.	Cited in <a href="#">TNFD Glossary</a> (2025)
<b>TCFD (Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures)</b>	The TCFD produced a set of comprehensive recommendations for climate-related financial disclosures. The task force has now fulfilled its remit and has been disbanded, with the International Financial Reporting Standards ( <a href="#">IFRS</a> ) <a href="#">Foundation</a> now taking on the working of monitoring companies’ climate-related disclosures through the <a href="#">International Sustainability Standards Board</a> (ISSB) which is also undertaking a project on Nature-related Disclosures.	Adapted from <a href="#">TCFD</a>
<b>TNFD (Task Force on Nature-related Financial Disclosures)</b>	The TNFD produces guidance for organizations on how to assess and address their nature-related dependencies, impacts, risks and opportunities, alongside a set of recommended disclosures.	<a href="#">TNFD</a>