



TECHNICAL BRIEF ON DATA FROM OVERSEAS COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES IN THE 7TH NATIONAL REPORTS TO THE CBD

A CASE STUDY BASED ON THE DUTCH, BRITISH AND FRENCH EXAMPLES

Context

For many countries with overseas territories, a significant share of their biodiversity is found far from the mainland. These territories often harbour unique species and ecosystems and can make an important contribution to a country's overall biodiversity. In France for example, although they only represent 0.08% of land, overseas territories harbor 80% of national biodiversity. Similarly, the Dutch Caribbean islands are rich with over 8,000 species recorded, and more than 90% of the UK's endemic species are located in their Overseas Territories.

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Yet this biodiversity is not always adequately captured in CBD reporting and may consequently be underrepresented in global assessments of progress towards biodiversity goals.

Ensuring that overseas territories are adequately reflected in CBD reporting therefore serves two purposes: providing a more complete picture of a country's biodiversity and its progress towards the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), while also making visible the specific biodiversity, pressures and conservation actions of individual overseas territories.

Capturing this biodiversity is, however, not straightforward. Overseas territories can have very different constitutional and legal relationships with the States to which they are linked. National biodiversity strategies, environmental legislation and targets may apply fully to some territories but not to others, affecting whether their biodiversity and conservation actions can be assessed against national targets, incorporated into national indicators, or need to be reported separately.

In addition, data availability and monitoring capacity vary considerably across territories: some indicators may not be applicable or available at territorial level, and the CBD Online Reporting Tool (ORT) does not provide a dedicated space for overseas countries and territories (OCTs).

This issue is particularly important for the seventh national reports, which inform the assessment of collective progress in implementing the KMGBF. Against this background, this technical brief examines the seventh national reporting experiences of France, the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK). It first considers the different legal and constitutional status of their overseas territories, before examining how these territories were included in the reporting process, how their biodiversity data and indicators were incorporated into national reports, and the practical challenges encountered in reflecting geographically specific information within the CBD reporting framework.

1. Legal frameworks for overseas countries and territories in France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom

The constitutional status of overseas territories significantly shaped how the three countries approached reporting under the Convention on Biological Diversity. While some prepared a single national report but explicitly incorporated evidence and contributions from both Overseas Territories, others undertook reporting at the broader level and sought to encompass all territories, reflecting their multi-layered constitutional structure, or even covered a particularly diverse set of overseas entities, requiring a differentiated approach that reflected the varying legal and administrative regimes through which biodiversity policy is implemented.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK)

In the UK, **Crown dependencies** are self-governing jurisdictions owing allegiance to the Crown, not constituent parts of the UK State. Their relationship with the UK is mediated through the Crown rather than through Parliament. Crown dependencies have their own legislatures, courts, tax systems, and governments, and UK legislation does not normally apply to them unless they consent. However, the UK is responsible for their defence and international relations.

Overseas territories are also outside the UK, but remain under UK sovereignty. Most have elected local governments and substantial responsibility for their internal affairs. However, the UK retains responsibility for defence, external relations and good governance, and ultimately constitutional authority rests with the UK. A Governor appointed by the Crown represents the Crown and the UK Government, with responsibility that varies between territories. The extent of self-government differs across the Territories.

The UK's obligations under the CBD have been extended to all three Crown dependencies and to eight of its Overseas Territories.

Kingdom of the Netherlands

The Kingdom of the Netherlands consists of four **countries (*landen*)**: the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao, Sint Maarten. These four countries are the constituent partners of the Kingdom and are autonomous in their internal affairs, while certain matters such as defence, nationality and foreign affairs are "Kingdom affairs". Each country has its own government, parliament, constitution or constitutional framework, and responsibility for most domestic matters.

Public bodies (*openbaar lichaam*) are not countries of the Kingdom. Instead, they are public bodies of the country of the Netherlands itself. They are collectively known as the Caribbean Netherlands (Bonaire, Sint Eustatius, Saba). Since the dissolution of the Netherlands Antilles in 2010, these islands became part of the country of the Netherlands, with a status often described as "special municipalities".

France

In France, **DROM (*Départements et régions d'outre-mer*)** are the territories most closely integrated into France. They are governed under Article 73 of the French Constitution and operate according to the principle of legislative identity: French laws apply automatically unless specific adaptations are made. In practice, a DROM is much closer to a metropolitan French department than to an autonomous territory. They are fully part of the French Republic, the European Union, are represented in Parliament and residents vote in presidential elections.

The **COMs (Collectivités d'outre-mer)** are governed under Article 74 of the Constitution and follow the principle of legislative speciality: French laws apply only where the territory's statute provides for them. Each COM has its own institutional arrangements and level of autonomy. They remain a part of France and under French sovereignty, but often possess powers over taxation, customs, land law or local administration. Each COM has a tailor-made statute.

The **TOMs (Territoire d'outre-mer)** have almost entirely disappeared since the constitutional reforms of the 2000s, the only remaining TOM today being Terres australes et antarctiques françaises (TAAF). They have no permanent civilian population and are administered by a Prefect-Administrator appointed by the French State.

Finally, **the Public domain of the French State** with special statutory administration, which refers to the island of Clipperton, is not a territorial collectivity. It is directly part of the public domain of the French State and has no local government, no elected assembly, and no permanent population. It is administered directly on behalf of the French State through special arrangements.

2. Reporting experiences from the Netherlands, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and France

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK)

State	Territory	Domestic constitutional status	EU status
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ascension	UK Overseas Territory	N/A
	British Virgin Islands		
	Cayman Islands		
	Falkland Islands		
	Gibraltar		
	Saint Helena		
	South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands		
	Tristan da Cunha		
	Jersey	Crown Dependency	
	Guernsey (including Alderney and Sark)		
	Isle of Man		

The four UK countries were contacted collectively through a single email request, while the Overseas Territories were approached individually by JNCC through separate email exchanges. This approach allowed for more tailored follow-up discussions, creating opportunities to address questions, provide clarification, and encourage engagement with the reporting process.

Recognizing differences in capacity across the Overseas Territories, the reporting exercise was conducted with greater flexibility than for the four UK countries. JNCC identified the information required and issued targeted requests to the Overseas Territories.

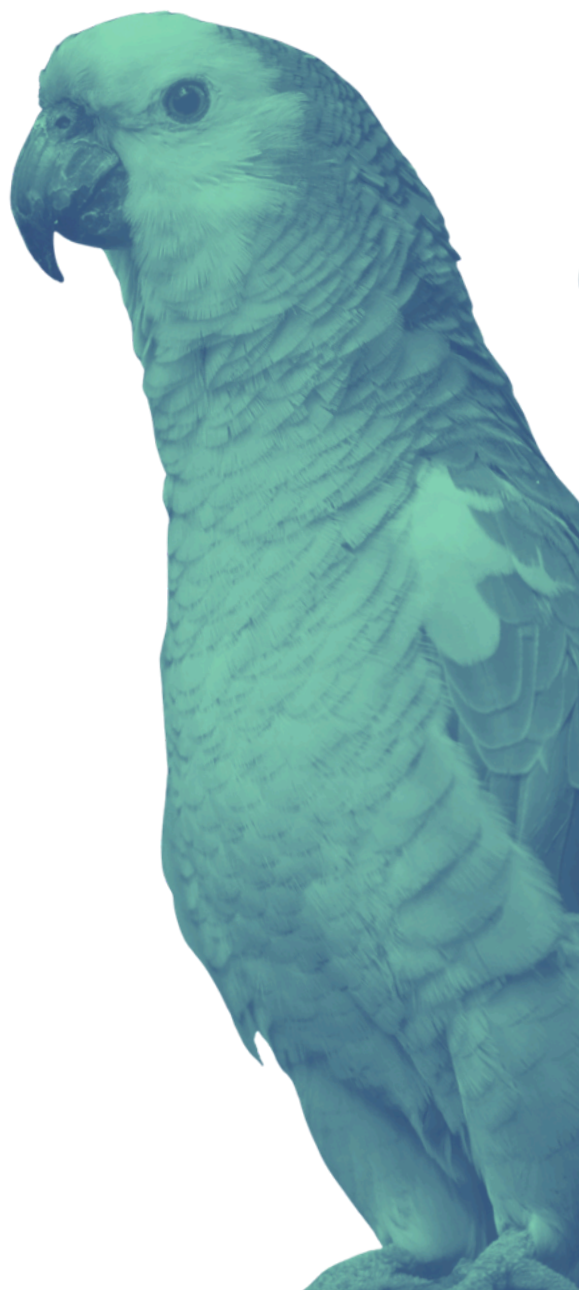
The process involved four rounds of engagement in total, coinciding with successive drafts of the UK 7th National Report. Territories that did not respond initially were given further opportunities to contribute information or provide updates at later stages of the process.

Once contact had been established, JNCC held bilateral meetings with the Crown Dependencies and the Overseas Territories to explain the international reporting context and align expectations regarding timelines, staffing changes, and other practical considerations.

The request for information from the Crown Dependencies and the Overseas Territories focused on Section III - Assessment of progress towards national targets. Information on the implementation of each target (Q1) and on the impact and challenges of actions taken (Q3) were requested as free text, with some guidance on word limits. When combined with submissions from the four countries, this created a very large volume of text for each target.

In the UK's 7th National Report, the submissions under Q1 and Q3 from the Crown Dependencies, the Overseas Territories and the four countries were presented separately and largely disaggregated. An overarching summary paragraph for each question described the UK's overall progress in implementing each of the National Targets. This resulted in a lengthy UK 7th National Report.

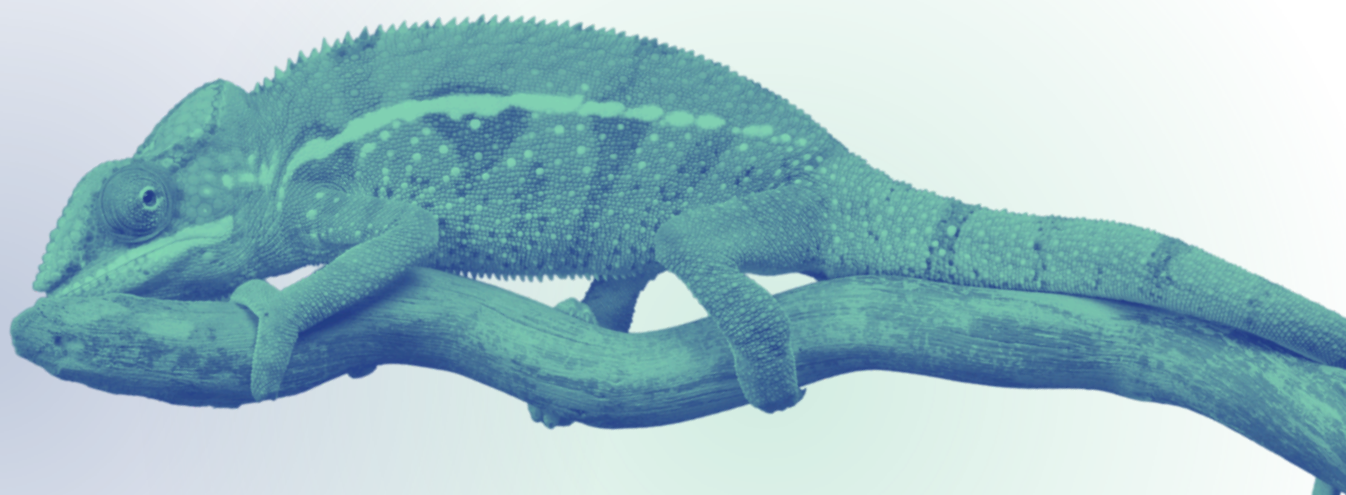
In contrast, responses to binary indicator questions (Q5) were requested using a webform, which enabled responses from multiple Overseas Territories, Countries and Crown Dependencies to be easily collated and integrated into a single UK response to each indicator.



The Headline Indicators in the UK's 7th National Report (Q4) were constructed using data from the four countries only and did not include data from the Crown Dependencies and the Overseas Territories. Due to a lack of consistent monitoring data in the Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories, it was not possible to include territory level data in the UK Headline Indicators. However, some data and national indicators were provided by some of the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies and were incorporated into the UK's 7th National Report and also uploaded as an attachment to the Online Reporting Tool. Some of these indicators were also used as case studies (Q7) to demonstrate the effectiveness of action taken to implement the national targets in some Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies.

Lessons learned:

- It is important to recognise that many Overseas Territories operate with limited resources, which can constrain their ability to engage with reporting requests alongside other environmental and government priorities. Reporting processes should therefore seek to minimise administrative burden, allow sufficient time to respond and provide appropriate support where possible.
- Early and ongoing engagement is important, including training activities, annual discussions, general briefings, and regular updates on the multilateral reporting process. Linking these discussions to work being undertaken on the ground can help maintain relevance and encourage continued participation.
- The one year lead in time for the UK's 7th National Report and the open-ended nature of the information request proved challenging to some Overseas Territories. Clearly, earlier engagement, as described above, will help preparations for the 8th National Report. Furthermore, a more focused request for information will also help, particularly if it is bespoke to each Overseas Territory and recognizes their specific priorities and challenges.
- Supporting biodiversity data management and standardisation across the Overseas Territories could improve future reporting. At present, the Overseas Territories have limited capacity to manage and share biodiversity data, which increases reporting burdens. Effective management of biodiversity data would create opportunities for Territory data to contribute more effectively to UK-level assessments and indicators.



The Kingdom of the Netherlands

State	Territory	Domestic constitutional status	EU status
Kingdom of the Netherlands	Aruba	Country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands	OCT
	Curaçao		
	Sint Maarten		
	Bonaire	Public body (<i>openbaar lichaam</i>) of the country of the Netherlands	
	Sint Eustatius		
	Saba		

The Netherlands organised its national reporting process into three parts: the European Netherlands, the three special municipalities (Bonaire, Sint Eustatius, and Saba), and the three autonomous countries (Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten).

For both the European Netherlands and the special municipalities, the government commissioned Wageningen University to compile the available data to report on the headline and binary indicators. Wageningen University also produced the first draft of the report on the national targets of the special municipalities. All information was subsequently reviewed by the responsible ministries and the special municipalities. The autonomous countries prepared their own reports.

For all six Caribbean islands, significant data gaps remain, and most GBF indicators cannot yet be compiled in a robust and comparable manner. This reflects long-standing constraints in monitoring capacity, financial resources and institutional arrangements. Moreover, the current reporting templates do not provide a dedicated structure for the inclusion of data from overseas territories, making it more difficult to adequately reflect their specific circumstances and to ensure their full and visible inclusion in the GBF process. Within the ORT, the Netherlands reported mainland information for the headline and binary indicators directly in the designated fields, while information from the overseas territories was included in the comment sections.

Lessons learned:

- Several overseas countries and territories have already begun addressing identified information gaps in order to establish a stronger baseline for future reporting cycles.
- Ownership of the reporting process should remain with the OCTs themselves as much as possible, even when the mainland country plays a coordinating or facilitating role.

- The ORT does not currently provide a dedicated space for information from OCTs. This raised concerns about whether all submitted information would be adequately reflected in the global report and review process. Enhancing the reporting template to better accommodate OCT-specific information could be considered in future iterations.
- The process highlighted the value of facilitating dialogue and peer learning among OCTs. Supporting exchanges of knowledge, experience, and good practices can help strengthen capacities and improve future reporting efforts.

France

State	Territory	Domestic constitutional status	EU status
France	Guadeloupe	Département et région d'outre-mer (DROM)	Outermost Region (OR)
	French Guiana		
	Martinique		
	Réunion		
	Mayotte		
	French Polynesia	Collectivité d'outre-mer (COM)	OCT
	Saint-Barthélemy		Outermost Region (OR)
	Saint-Martin		
	Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon		OCT
	Wallis and Futuna		
	New Caledonia	<i>Sui generis</i> status under Title XIII of the Constitution	
	French Southern and Antarctic Lands (TAAF)	Territoire d'outre-mer (TOM)	Neither OR nor OCT
	Clipperton	Public domain of the French State, with special statutory administration	

The French reporting process was built on existing NBSAP governance structures and reporting arrangements. France's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), the "Stratégie Nationale Biodiversité 2030" applies to the Overseas Departments and Regions (DROMs) in the same way as it does to mainland France. As a result, implementation data reported under the NBSAP includes contributions from the DROMs, where such data is available. In contrast, the Overseas Collectivities (Collectivités d'Outre-Mer, COMs) have their own environmental legislation and strategic frameworks. Although they are French territories, the French NBSAP does not apply directly to them. Instead, the COMs were invited to provide their own contributions - highlighting their own progress in implementing the KMGBF - which were annexed to France's 7th national report.

The national reporting process also included a dedicated section for overseas territories within France's internal reporting framework to showcase specific priorities that may not apply to mainland France.

Several headline indicators used in the reporting process are derived from international or European frameworks. While France was able to report figures for these indicators, the underlying European regulations do not always apply to overseas territories. In addition, data availability remains limited for many overseas countries and territories, resulting in gaps for several indicators. This was particularly evident for indicators related to natural ecosystem extent, ecosystem services, or invasive alien species.

Similarly, France's national restoration plan will be applied only in mainland France as an obligation resulting from regulation (EU) 2024/1991. France has nevertheless engaged efforts with the DROMs to obtain more specific information on restoration activities in overseas areas and provide restoration priorities.

To improve the visibility of overseas territories within the national report, France included a table identifying where data could be geographically disaggregated (e.g. Red List Index). However, because information from overseas territories was often limited, reporting remained largely based on mainland data. Additional information on priorities and actions undertaken in the DROMs was included in an appendix under the "other information" section.

For the COMs, the Ministry of Environment coordinated data collection by inviting each COM to contribute. Those that took part submitted a summary of the progress they have made towards the KMGBF targets, linking the Framework's targets to the actions implemented in their territory. In the case of French Guiana, specific efforts were made to collect data related to headline indicator 22.1 on land used or managed by Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Information was also obtained on the Zones of Collective Use Rights through the land focal point at the Prefecture of French Guiana. The resulting figures were reviewed by the Directorate-General for Overseas Territories before being incorporated into the reporting process and validated by the Prime Minister following an interministerial consultation process.



Lessons learned:

- The National Biodiversity Committee emphasized the need to strengthen the visibility of overseas territories within national reporting. Proposals to create dedicated overseas sections throughout the national reporting template were considered but ultimately not adopted, partly because progress and available information varied significantly across territories and across national targets. As a result, contributions from overseas territories can sometimes remain insufficiently visible.
- A dedicated section within the ORT for OCTs would help ensure that their information is more clearly reflected in national and global reporting processes.
- France sought to build on existing NBSAP reporting mechanisms and implementation structures rather than creating parallel reporting processes. A key challenge was avoiding duplication of effort while maximizing synergies between NBSAP implementation and Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) reporting requirements.
- Improving data availability in overseas territories will require significant time and resources. Efforts should focus on better recognizing and showcasing the biodiversity-related work already being undertaken in these territories, while avoiding additional administrative burdens for local stakeholders.

Conclusion

The experiences of the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and France highlight several common challenges and opportunities in incorporating OCTs data into national biodiversity reporting.

Across all three cases, early engagement, regular communication, and tailored support were identified as key factors for improving participation and addressing capacity constraints. At the same time, existing reporting structures do not always provide sufficient visibility for OCT contributions, underscoring the need for more suitable mechanisms within national reports and ORT.



The reporting process also highlighted the importance of adopting flexible approaches that reflect local contexts, particularly where data availability is limited or indicators are not fully applicable. Continued efforts for capacity building and development, to address data gaps, develop local baselines, and strengthen reporting capacity will be critical for future reporting cycles.

Finally, greater coordination, peer learning, and knowledge sharing among OCTs could help build capacity and reduce duplication of effort. Strengthening these elements will contribute to more inclusive and representative reporting, ensuring that the biodiversity values and conservation efforts of OCTs are more effectively reflected in future national and global assessments.

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