

# IUCN position paper for UNFCCC COP27

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change  
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UNFCCC COP27 is taking place at a time of considerable global turmoil, with growing economic hardship and food and energy insecurity worsening the effects of a still ongoing pandemic. Yet, as the extreme weather events of 2022 – catastrophic floods, droughts and hurricanes – illustrate, the climate crisis is also continuing unabated, hitting vulnerable communities the hardest and exacerbating global inequalities. COP27, therefore, provides an opportunity to the world's political leaders to demonstrate their commitment to raise collective global ambition and action to realise the goals of the Paris Agreement.

Noting that the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) COP15 will convene in Montreal, Canada shortly afterwards, in December 2022, COP27 also provides a unique opportunity for the international climate community to reinforce the deep interlinkages that exist between the climate change and biodiversity loss crises and the critical role that Nature-based Solutions can play in addressing both.

As Parties to the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement convene in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, IUCN would like to emphasise the following:

- I. **There is an urgent need for rapid, sustained and deep reductions in global GHG emissions from all sectors to limit the increase in global average temperature to 1.5°C, as called for by science, to address the interlinked climate change and biodiversity loss crises. Particularly important is to accelerate the phase out of fossil fuels and the deployment of clean energy systems. The biodiversity and climate crises amplify each other, neither crisis can be solved unless they are solved together.**
  - The IPCC Sixth Assessment Report (Working Group-I), [Climate Change 2021: the Physical Science Basis](#), underscores that unless there are immediate, rapid and large-scale reductions in GHG emissions, limiting warming to close to 1.5°C or even 2°C will be beyond reach.
  - The IPCC Sixth Assessment Report (Working Group-II), [Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability](#), highlights that human-induced climate change has caused widespread adverse impacts and related losses and damages to nature and people, with the most vulnerable communities and ecosystems being disproportionately affected.
  - The IPCC Sixth Assessment Report (Working Group-III), [Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change](#), estimates that limiting warming to 1.5°C requires global GHG emissions to peak before 2025 at the latest, and be reduced by 43% by 2030 from 2019 levels.
  - At COP26, Parties explicitly recognised that limiting global warming to 1.5°C requires reducing global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to decline by 45% by 2030 relative to the 2010 level and to net zero around mid-century ([Decision 1/CP.26, para 17](#)). Yet, the [latest UNFCCC synthesis](#) of all the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) submitted under the Paris Agreement to date estimates global GHG emissions to increase by 10.6% in 2030 compared to 2010 levels. This highlights the major ambition gap that still exists, which urgently needs to be bridged.

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**II. Nature-based Solutions<sup>1</sup> – centred on the conservation, restoration and management of the world's ecosystems – can make a critical contribution towards both climate change adaptation and mitigation while also supporting biodiversity conservation, health, poverty eradication, food and water security, and other societal objectives agreed to under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).**

- The importance of ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems and the protection of biodiversity when taking action to address climate change was clearly recognised in the 2015 Paris Agreement. The recently published [IUCN Global Ecosystem Typology](#) now offers a comprehensive criteria-based classification system for assessing ecosystem integrity by systematically placing all of Earth's ecosystems into a unifying framework extending from global to local scales. This is also supported by guidelines for ecosystem risk assessment in the form of the [IUCN Red List of Ecosystems](#) standard, which offers a robust foundation for establishing ecosystems goals and milestones for global policy frameworks.
- The IPCC Sixth Assessment Report (Working Group-II) concluded that safeguarding biodiversity and ecosystems is fundamental to climate resilient development. It also highlighted recent analyses which suggests that maintaining the resilience of biodiversity and ecosystem services at a global scale depends on effective and equitable conservation of approximately 30% to 50% of Earth's land, freshwater and ocean areas, including currently near-natural ecosystems.
- The adaptation benefits of investing in Nature-based Solutions are amply clear. For instance, mangrove ecosystems alone are estimated to provide over US\$ 65 billion in flood protection benefits and safeguard 15 million people against flooding across the world every year ([Menéndez et al 2020](#)). More generally, it is estimated that the protection of coastal ecosystems can benefit

upwards of 500 million people globally, bringing benefits of over \$100 billion per year ([Seddon et al 2021](#)). For inland ecosystems, afforestation/ reforestation and improved and sustainable forest management are estimated to provide climate adaptation benefits for over 25 million people ([Smith et al 2019](#)). Furthermore, as a [joint UNFCCC and IUCN 2022 study](#) points out, innovative climate adaptation approaches that integrate both technological and Nature-based Solutions offer the potential to be more robust, comprehensive, and cost-effective than either solution alone.

- On mitigation, recent analysis published in *Nature* shows that Nature-based Solutions, when designed with ambition and for longevity, can play a powerful role in reducing temperatures in the long term ([Girardin et al 2021](#)). It estimates that protecting intact ecosystems, improving the management of working lands, and restoring degraded ecosystems can save around 10 GtCO<sub>2e</sub> per year, more than the emissions from the entire global transportation sector.
- Other recent peer-reviewed journal articles have similarly estimated that Nature-based Solutions could contribute around 30% of the global mitigation required by 2030/2050 to achieve the 1.5/2°C temperature rise goal agreed to under the Paris Agreement ([Griscom et al 2017](#), [Roe et al 2019](#)). Several articles also highlight, in particular, the importance of protecting carbon-rich, high-biodiversity ecosystems as a key priority ([Waring et al 2020](#), [Cook-Patton et al 2021](#), [Noon et al 2021](#)).
- In 2021, UNEP and IUCN published a [joint report](#) assessing the contribution of Nature-based Solutions for climate change mitigation that reviewed the available evidence. Even taking into account uncertainties and the time needed to deploy safeguards, the study estimated that by 2030, Nature-based Solutions could deliver emission reductions and removals of at least 5 GtCO<sub>2e</sub> per year (of a maximum estimate of 11.7 GtCO<sub>2e</sub> per year). By 2050, this could rise to at least 10 GtCO<sub>2e</sub> per year (of

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<sup>1</sup> In [Resolution \(UNEP/EA.5/Res.5\)](#) adopted on 2 March 2022, the *United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA)* decided that Nature-based Solutions (NbS) are 'actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems which address social, economic and environmental challenges effectively and adaptively, while simultaneously providing human

well-being, ecosystem services, resilience and biodiversity benefits' (operative para 1). This definition directly builds on and incorporates the IUCN definition of NbS that was adopted by IUCN's 1,400+ State and NGO Members through [Resolution 69](#) at the *2016 IUCN World Conservation Congress* in Hawaii, USA.

a maximum estimate of 18 GtCO<sub>2</sub>e per year).

- The IPCC Sixth Assessment Report (Working Group-III) also highlights that the largest mitigation potential of the agriculture, forestry and other land uses (AFOLU) sector comes from the conservation, improved management, and restoration of forests and other ecosystems (coastal wetlands, peatlands, savannas and grasslands), with protection measures offering the highest total and per area mitigation benefit of any action in the AFOLU sector and reduced deforestation in the tropics providing the largest share of the overall mitigation potential. It also underscored the high synergies between biodiversity protection and GHG abatement through the protection of primary forests and other primary ecosystems, the immediate mitigation benefit from their protection, and that carbon lost from carbon dense ecosystems would be irrecoverable via restoration by 2050.
- Quality assurance on the implementation of Nature-based Solutions is provided by the [IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions](#), which offers 8 specific criteria and 28 indicators to enable the coherent design, execution and evaluation of Nature-based Solutions. Such a framework is essential to increase their scale and impact, to prevent unanticipated negative outcomes or misuse, and to help funding agencies, policy makers and other stakeholders to assess the effectiveness of interventions.

**III. IUCN calls on all Parties to clearly recognise and support the enhanced implementation of Nature-based Solutions, including in formal decision text at COP27, in addition to undertaking deep GHG emission reductions across all sectors.**

- Recalling the *Glasgow Climate Pact* adopted by Parties ([Decision 1/ CP.26](#)) where they recognized “*the interlinked global crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, and the critical role of protecting, conserving and restoring nature and ecosystems in delivering benefits for climate adaptation and mitigation, while ensuring social and environmental*

*safeguards*”, IUCN urges all Parties at COP27 to further operationalise this decision by including a clear reference to Nature-based Solutions in appropriate COP27 decision text, noting that this is now also supported by a multilaterally-agreed definition adopted by the *United Nations Environmental Assembly* in March 2022 ([UNEP/EA.5/Res.5](#)) as well as the [IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions](#), which can provide quality assurance on its implementation.<sup>2</sup> The role of Nature-based Solutions in providing benefits for climate change mitigation and adaptation is also clearly recognised in the [2021 IPBES-IPCC Co-sponsored Workshop Report on Biodiversity and Climate Change](#).

- IUCN believes that the inclusion of a clear reference to Nature-based Solutions in COP27 decision text will, among other things, enable Parties to ensure greater oversight and accountability on the use and application of Nature-based Solutions and also provide greater support and confidence to the various ongoing implementation efforts of both state and non-state actors in this regard. IUCN also welcomes the leadership of the Egyptian COP27 Presidency in launching the *Enhancing Nature-based Solutions for an Accelerated Climate Transformation (ENACT Partnership for NbS)* at COP27 and calls on both Parties and non-Party stakeholders to actively support this initiative.
- IUCN also calls for the appropriate consideration of Nature-based Solutions in the *Glasgow – Sharm el-Sheikh Work Programme on the Global Goal on Adaptation* and the new work programme for urgently scaling up mitigation ambition and implementation.
- However, it is important to stress that Nature-based Solutions should not be viewed as a substitute for rapid, deep and sustained GHG emission reductions in other sectors, but rather as actions that should be done alongside them. Thus, they should not be used to delay the urgent action that is required today – across all sectors – to phase out fossil fuels and decarbonize the global economy.

<sup>2</sup> See also <https://nbsguidelines.info/> and <https://www.togetherwithnature.com/> for the four operational caveats that need to be followed for the implementation of

Nature-based Solutions to climate change, in addition to the IUCN Global Standard.

**IV. IUCN also urges Parties to enhance the ambition of their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), and Long-Term Low GHG Emission Development Strategies (LT-LEDS) under the Paris Agreement, including by incorporating more ambitious and concrete Nature-based Solutions within them.**

- A [joint IUCN and Oxford University study](#) published in 2019 found that although 66% of Paris Agreement signatories included Nature-based Solutions in their NDCs, these were not substantive or stringent enough. A subsequent WWF study published in November 2021 reported a more positive trend with a majority of the 114 updated NDCs clearly referencing Nature-based Solutions in their mitigation and/or adaptation measures, with 85 updated NDCs showing improved integration of Nature-based Solutions compared to previous versions, 10 NDCs showing no significant change, and 19 NDCs witnessing a decline ([WWF 2021](#)). More recent analysis undertaken by [Oxford University](#) in February 2022 has found that 41% of the 122 new NDCs submitted as of December 2021, representing 50 countries, have explicitly referenced Nature-based Solutions and included strengthened commitments on them.
- However, considerable potential still remains for Parties to further strengthen the inclusion of Nature-based Solutions within their future NDCs, NAPs and LT-LEDS. For example, recent studies have identified that numerous opportunities exist for countries to recognize and strengthen the inclusion of ocean and coastal NbS in their NDCs ([Leclerc et al. 2021](#)).
- IUCN urges Parties to include ambitious, concrete and quantified targets on Nature-based Solutions in their future NDCs, NAPs and LT-LEDS, alongside enhanced targets on GHG emissions reductions across all sectors. Specific recommendations made in the IUCN-Oxford University report for the consideration of policymakers updating their NDCs are available [here](#). IUCN also urges Parties to apply the [IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions](#) to guide the implementation of Nature-based Solutions.

**V. IUCN calls upon Parties to mobilise enhanced finance, including through innovative mechanisms, to enable the successful implementation of Nature-based Solutions at scale.**

- Lack of adequate financing has been identified as a key barrier for implementing Nature-based Solutions at scale. Despite providing around 30% of the climate change mitigation required, it is estimated that only about 3% of climate financing is currently directed towards agriculture, forestry and other land uses, or what might broadly include Nature-Based Solutions ([CPI 2021](#)). UNEP's [State of Finance for Nature 2021](#) report estimates that investments in Nature-based Solutions need to at least triple in real terms by 2030 and increase four-fold by 2050 if the world is to meet its climate change, biodiversity, and land degradation neutrality targets.
- IUCN welcomes the recent discussions on the financing of Nature-based Solutions in the UNFCCC's Standing Committee on Finance (SCF), including at the [SCF Forum](#) in September 2022.
- In the context of the collective goal of mobilising US\$ 100 billion per year by 2020 to support climate action in developing countries, IUCN urges Parties to allocate an increasing share of these resources to support the implementation of Nature-based Solutions on account of their multiple benefits to society, including for climate change adaptation and mitigation, in line with the priorities and needs identified by recipient countries.

**VI. IUCN underscores the importance of ensuring environmental integrity and adequate environmental and social safeguards while elaborating the additional details and guidance for operationalising Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, including those that may govern the future use of Nature-based Solutions in achieving mitigation outcomes under this Article.**

- IUCN calls upon Parties to maintain the highest levels of environmental integrity and environmental and social safeguards while finalising any additional guidance required to operationalise Article 6 of the Paris Agreement.

- In particular, it calls on Parties to ensure that adequate safeguards are in place to prevent any adverse environmental or social consequences of the application of the mechanisms, rules and procedures developed under Article 6, especially on existing natural ecosystems and biodiversity as well as on local communities and Indigenous Peoples.
  - In the event that Nature-based Solutions are used by Parties or other authorised public and private entities to deliver mitigation outcomes under Article 6, IUCN calls for these to adhere strictly to the [IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions](#), and other related safeguards, guidance and best-practice available, including those already agreed to by Parties.
  - IUCN also stresses that any use of Nature-based Solutions for offsetting purposes must be limited to compensate only for those residual emissions that cannot otherwise be abated through GHG emission reduction efforts, and must be governed by robust accounting systems to maintain environmental integrity and prevent double counting. It also reiterates that Nature-Based Solutions are not a substitute for ambitious GHG emission reduction efforts and must not be used to delay the urgent action required to phase out fossil fuels and decarbonize the world economy.
- and adaptation; (ii) the extent to which Nature-based Solutions are being incorporated by Parties under their NDCs, NAPs and LT-LEDS in support of the Paris Agreement; (iii) the means of implementation and support that is presently available for Nature-based Solutions; (iv) the best practices and barriers that need to be supported and overcome to increase their future ambition and implementation at scale; and (v) the need for robust accounting systems (like UN SEEA-EA, for example) that can help reduce current discrepancies in emissions reporting from the land sector improve the integrity of ecosystems and Nature-based Solutions.
- The Global Stocktake can also offer an important avenue to assess progress on issues such as Ocean and Climate Change that are not yet being fully considered, and for which IUCN and its partners have provided [additional guidance](#).

**VIII. IUCN welcomes the progress made to date in the operationalization of the second three-year workplan of the UNFCCC Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP), and calls for its further strengthening to ensure more inclusive and effective participation of local communities and Indigenous Peoples in climate policy and planning processes across different levels.**

- VII. IUCN welcomes the participative process that has been put in place for the ongoing technical dialogues of the first Global Stocktake under Article 14 of the Paris Agreement and calls for the full consideration of Nature-based Solutions under this process**
- Noting that the Global Stocktake is crucial for enhancing the collective ambition of action and support necessary for achieving the purpose and long-term goals of the Paris Agreement, IUCN welcomes the opportunity provided to non-Party stakeholders to participate and contribute to this process.
  - In particular, IUCN encourages Parties and other stakeholders to use the Global Stocktake to systematically consider and assess (i) the contribution that is both being and can be made by Nature-based Solutions towards climate change mitigation
  - Indigenous Peoples and local communities continue to remain at the forefront of the climate crisis, often facing its worst impacts. They also play a critical role as stewards and guardians of the world's biodiversity and ecosystems and in delivering practical and effective Nature-based Solutions on the ground. As the Paris Agreement explicitly recognizes the rights and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the context of climate action, the establishment of the *UNFCCC Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP)* has been critical to moving that agenda forward.
  - IUCN encourages more meaningful engagement of governments in the LCIPP's activities, particularly to help support the participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in national and sub-

national climate policy-development and planning processes.

- IUCN also supports the active engagement of local communities and Indigenous Peoples in all relevant agenda items, bodies, and processes of the UNFCCC and urges full facilitation of the same.

**IX. IUCN reaffirms its commitment to the Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender (LWPG) and its Gender Action Plan (GAP), and calls – as part of the mid-term review – for building greater coherence with other international fora related to gender equality and climate change to jointly raise collective ambition in closing gender gaps and enhancing rights-based and gender-responsive approaches to climate change.**

- IUCN welcomes Parties' discussions and guidance on the GAP mid-term review, recalling that it is critical to ensure the further strengthening and continuance of these efforts in order to deliver successful gender-responsive climate policy and action in support of the Paris Agreement's implementation, both internationally and at the national level.

- IUCN draws attention to the agreed conclusions of the sixty-sixth session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 66) held in March 2022 on [“Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes”](#) and encourages Parties and observer organizations to consider these in the context of the GAP mid-term review. In particular, it draws attention to Para 62 (uu), which highlights the need to *“support and finance gender-responsive, equitable and sustainable transition ... taking into account the potential of ecosystem-based approaches or nature-based solutions with gender-sensitive and age-inclusive social protection and care at the centre”*, also acknowledging the leadership role that women play in advancing Nature-based Solutions to climate change on the ground.

- IUCN also calls on Parties and observer organizations to take into account, under the mid-term review of the GAP, the vision and objectives of the *Action Coalition on Feminist Action for Climate Justice (FACJ)* under the Generation Equality Forum. IUCN recalls and reaffirms its commitments to the Forum as a co-lead of the FACJ Action Coalition.