IUCN’s Key Messages for the Intergovernmental Negotiations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda
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IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, envisions sustainable development as a path that leads to a just and prosperous world which values and conserves nature by ensuring, through effective and equitable governance, that its resources are used sustainably. The post-2015 development agenda with the proposed Sustainable Development Goals, as they currently stand, represent a step towards such a world. IUCN has engaged actively in the discussions on the Sustainable Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda since they started in the aftermath of the Rio+20 conference and we are encouraged by the progress made to date towards a comprehensive framework that takes account of most of the critical elements needed in order to chart a path towards a sustainable future.

In 2015 the international community will be focusing on three main streams of the post-2015 development agenda, namely: the outcome document, its means of implementation and the review and monitoring framework to measure progress. The quality of these mechanisms will determine the level of implementation and success of the framework by 2030.

IUCN believes that it is essential to get this framework right to ensure a successful implementation and positive impact on the world we live in by 2030. We therefore recommend governments, inter alia, to take actions to:

✔ maintain the integration of biodiversity and ecosystem services considerations in the Sustainable Development Goals and targets
✔ include more prominently the concept of Nature Based Solutions in the framework, as for example in its declaration
✔ establish a rigorous accountability mechanism
✔ create a scientifically sound indicators framework to allow for a universally applicable follow-up and review process, characterized by the below mentioned characteristics
✔ ensure an adequate level of financial resources for the achievement of the SDGs
**Background**

IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, envisions sustainable development as a path that leads to a just and prosperous world which values and conserves nature by ensuring, through effective and equitable governance, that its resources are used sustainably. The post-2015 development agenda with the Sustainable Development Goals, as they currently stand, represent a step towards such a world. The discussions and negotiations resulted out of the Rio+20 Conference and since then a proposal of a comprehensive set of Sustainable Development Goals and targets was drafted by the Open Working Group for Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations General Assembly. While the outcome document could benefit from some improvement, it does reflect a significant level of integration of the different dimensions of sustainable development (social, economic and environment). This integration represents one of the key transformative elements of this new framework.

In his synthesis report ‘The road to dignity by 2030’, Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon brings together the different parts of the post-2015 development agenda and proposes six essential elements to deliver on the SDGs: Dignity, Prosperity, Justice, Partnership, Planet, People. He further stresses the importance of “technically rigorous indicators” to realize the SDGs by allowing the international community “to collect, compare and analyse reliable data” as of 2016.

In 2015 the international community will be focusing on three main streams of the post-2015 development agenda to allow for its adoption in September 2015: the outcome document (the declaration, the SDGs and targets), its means of implementation and the review and monitoring framework to measure progress. The quality of these mechanisms will determine the level of implementation and success of the framework until 2030.

**IUCN’s main messages stressed in the discussions on the SDGs since Rio+20**

IUCN believes that nature needs to be strongly reflected in the framework. Through nature based solutions our natural environment can contribute significantly to human well-being and help overcome some of the current societal challenges. Healthy and productive soils/lands, forests, oceans and fresh water ecosystems, achieved through conservation, sustainable use and restoration of natural resources are important building blocks toward poverty eradication. Biodiversity, the variety of life on earth, ecosystems and their services provide a cost effective complement to engineered solutions to overcome some development challenges. Furthermore, in order to ensure the fulfilment of basic human rights, such as the right to water, it is essential that the natural infrastructure providing these basic services be preserved and restored. Read more about nature’s contributions here.

In its involvement in the discussions on the Sustainable Development Goals, IUCN thus continuously stressed that the Goals and targets needs to be established in such a way as to ensure:

- Integration of the different dimensions of biodiversity: throughout the goals and targets;
- Recognition of the need to protect biodiversity and ecosystem services as nature based solutions: by including one or more stand-alone goal on this matter;
- Policy coherence: should be ensured by building on already made commitments such as the Aichi Biodiversity Targets;
- The inclusion of a goal addressing governance as an enabling mechanism for sustainable development.

These main points continue to be the foundation for IUCN’s key messages for the negotiations of the post-2015 development agenda, adapted to the new focus of the discussions in 2015: a) the outcome document, b) the follow-up and review framework, and c) its means of implementation.
IUCN’s main messages for the discussions in 2015

a. Outcome document and the Sustainable Development Goals

✓ Maintaining the integration of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

Re-opening the framework could compromise the integrated approach reflecting the three dimensions of sustainable development which the Open Working Group had tried to reflect across all goals and within each goal. On this line, IUCN only supports a “technical proofing” to the extent that such exercise could add more precision to those targets that are currently vaguely formulated or perceived to be more aspirational than technically measurable. IUCN would also be in support of such exercise if the expected result is to harmonise the targets with other commitments already agreed by the international, such as the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

✓ A clustering of goals or targets should be avoided as this might create de-facto silos.

In keeping the integrity of the framework, IUCN recommends to avoid clustering of goals or targets as proposed by a few, if such clustering reduced the clarity and coherence of the framework as a package or runs the risk of creating de-facto silos. If the goals are to be clustered, this should only be used for communication purposes and not condition the design of the monitoring framework.

✓ The concept of Nature Based Solutions should be included more strongly in the framework, as for example in its declaration.

Environment and nature needs to be considered more strongly as part of the solution for some of societal challenges and the dilemmas of the current economic development trajectories, rather than only a part to be protected from the negative impacts thereof. Specifically biodiversity and ecosystem services are the life support system of our planet and provide for many nature-based solutions that can be deployed for disaster risk reduction, food security or water security, as well as for contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Hence, investing in nature is investing in human wellbeing and sustainable development. Furthermore, the conservation of nature enhances the fulfilment of human rights such as right to food. Without the natural infrastructure that ensures food supply, its access cannot be guaranteed.

b. Follow-up and review framework

✓ A scientifically sound indicators framework should be created to allow for a universally applicable follow-up and review process. The discussions on indicators are taking place under the auspices of the UN Statistical Commission which set up an Inter-Agency Expert Group that will build the indicators framework from now until 2016. To ensure a scientifically sound indicators framework that is universally applicable, IUCN recommends that it be designed based on the following principles:

- Indicators should be specific to the SDG targets
- One target may need many indicators
- Indicators should link multiple targets across the different goals
- The indicators framework should be built on existing indicators and processes currently designing indicators
- Indicators should rely on scientifically sound data
- Standardized processes for gathering and analyzing data need to be put in place so that indicators applied at the national level allow for aggregation globally
Data deficiency and lack of technical capacity of national statistical institutions and other relevant stakeholders should be addressed.

For more details see our position paper on indicators, available at www.iucn.org/SDGs.

- Establish a rigorous accountability mechanism.
  The design of appropriate and science-based indicators is an essential part of the accountability mechanism. The accountability mechanism or the mechanism for review and monitoring of the SDGs should be as robust as possible. There are innovative mechanisms for reporting and monitoring in other areas that can be replicated for the SDGs. Among various key elements, IUCN believes that the High Level Political Forum (the transformed Commission on Sustainable Development) should become the global platform to review progress towards the achievement of SDGs at the global level. A peer review at regional levels could also be part of the mechanism to strengthen the regional instance of global governance and contribute to the local-to-global to local dynamism. IUCN will soon avail a more detailed position paper on this matter.

c. Means of Implementation

- Ensure an adequate level of financial resources for the achievement of SDGs.
  To have an impact, the SDGs framework will require adequate financial resources for implementation. The search for innovative financial mechanisms is welcome in this respect. Some proposals have been made, including the idea of a financial transaction tax, as one such innovative mechanism and other additional mechanisms that could be articulated around the concept of valuation of ecosystem services and natural capital.

- Governments need to prioritize support to the SDGs framework.
  In addition to innovative mechanisms, governments should allocate public funds to the achievement of the SDGs. Hence, in terms of financing for development, IUCN calls on developed countries to honor their commitment to allocate 0.7% of their gross national income (GNI) for Official Development Assistance (ODA). Delivering on this pledge would give a boost to the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda by reflecting the confidence of developed countries in the effectiveness of the SDGs framework to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development. Governments should also adopt additional public policies, such as phasing out subsidies and perverse incentives and redistribute those funds to respond to the SDGs fulfilment.