

IUCN's Key Messages for the High Level Political Forum 2017

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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 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a crucial vehicle to achieving such a world. IUCN has therefore fully aligned its [Programme 2017-2020](#) to the new agenda and IUCN's Members have expressed their strong [support to the SDGs](#) at the last World Conservation Congress in Hawai'i, 2016.

IUCN is doing its part in advancing implementation of the agenda, by conducting research and generating data for the monitoring of the framework, carrying out concrete conservation projects on the ground, and by supporting/assisting governments in their efforts to implement the agenda.

IUCN is encouraged by the work carried out over the past two years and welcomes the many initiatives started at the global level and commends governments who have put in place the required governance mechanisms at the national level, as evidenced by the VNR.

- **The integration of the various dimensions of sustainable development and the indivisibility of the Agenda must be fully maintained throughout the implementation process.**
- **Implementing the 2030 Agenda is costly and funding is limited. It is therefore necessary to identify accelerators in the agenda, which will multiply the impact of the investments.**
- **Nature conservation and environmental protection constitutes such an accelerator and investments into Nature-Based Solutions lead to long term cost effective benefits, simultaneously contributing to the achievement of various goals / targets.**
- **Aware that some targets linked to the environment have a 2020 timeframe, it is essential to ensure amplified action beyond 2020 in line with any follow-up to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.**
- **Sound indicators and accurate and reliable data are essential to monitor progress. IUCN as a custodian/partner agency for a number of indicators stands ready to assist governments in their efforts to apply these indicators.**

IUCN thus recommends to States to:

- ✓ consider developing, as appropriate, **governance mechanisms, policies and laws**, relevant in individual national contexts, that reflect the comprehensive and integrative nature of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- ✓ **identify threats** to nature impacting long-term sustainable development by using global standards like the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species or the IUCN Red List of Ecosystems;
- ✓ **integrate Nature-Based Solutions** into a variety of national policies and action plans (poverty reduction, disaster risk reduction, development strategy, etc.);
- ✓ **invest in Nature-Based Solutions as a key accelerator** leading to environmental, social and economic benefits across goals thereby catalysing implementation of the 2030 Agenda;
- ✓ draw on IUCN standards, tools and methodologies to create **adequate and evidence based national policies** (such as IUCN Offsets Policy, IUCN Environment and Gender Information Platform, IUCN Red List of Threatened Species or the IUCN Red List of Ecosystems); and consider also other existing quality controlled data sources for monitoring progress on the SDGs.

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Review of the SDGs under consideration in 2017 and highlights of IUCN's contribution

SDG1 – No Poverty

Ending poverty in all its forms is central towards achieving the SDGs. IUCN believes that in order to overcome poverty sustainably, it is necessary to build the resilience of the poor to shocks, and to clarify and ensure access rights to economic resources, including land and natural resources.

Natural hazards often have an increased impact on the poor in affected areas. Nature offers some cost-effective long-term solutions to mitigate the impacts of disasters on local communities and vulnerable populations and nature must therefore be protected and restored. For example, healthy and resilient mangrove forests at the coast line are known to be a natural barrier to storm surges and evidence shows that they can decrease the impact of the disaster on the populations in the vicinity. Empirical data values storm protection and/or coastal erosion control by mangroves in Asian countries to be at least USD 3000 to 5000 ha annually. There are various other nature-based solutions that can be implemented for disaster risk reduction and IUCN is supporting a number of States in integrating such EcoDRR in their national policies. (E.g. [Nepal](#) and [Thailand](#))

In addition, as with other nature-based solutions, ensuring healthy ecosystems for disaster risk reduction has multiple benefits simultaneously contributing to water and food security, conservation efforts, sustainable tourism and mitigating climate change through sequestering and storing carbon.

The partner-led initiative [Mangroves For the Future](#) (co-chaired by IUCN and UNDP) has been working since 2006 in 11 countries across South and South East Asia to promote transformative adaptation and building resilience of ecosystem dependent coastal communities.

The 2030 Agenda also recognizes the obstacle for poverty eradication created by unequal and unclear rights and access to economic resources, such as land or natural resources. Secure tenure rights are essential for the fair and effective management of natural resources and ecosystems. Secure and equal tenure rights for women, men, indigenous peoples and local communities increase accountability contributing to a better stewardship of the land. This is a prerequisite for ensuring the restoration, sustainable management and

protection of nature and natural resource on which local livelihoods depend.

- ✓ IUCN recommends States to integrate ecosystem based disaster risk reduction (EcoDRR) into disaster management, development and poverty reduction strategies.
- ✓ IUCN urges States to invest into nature-based solutions as a cost-effective disaster risk reduction strategy with multiple benefits for sustainable development (inter alia SDG2, SDG6, SDG15).
- ✓ IUCN urges States to carry out ecosystem assessments in line with the Red List of Ecosystems standard, in order to assess risks to ecosystems, identify the main threats and mobilize investments into conservation action of threatened ecosystems to ensure their long-term support for sustainable development.
- ✓ IUCN recommends parties to clarify tenure rights and responsibilities, ensuring equal rights for men and women.

SDG2 – Zero Hunger

Food can't be produced without functioning ecosystems and water, yet at the same time, unsustainable agricultural and food production practices have a significant impact on nature. For example, intensive agriculture often leads to land degradation which has dire consequence; not only jeopardizing long term food security but also destroying the adaptive capacity of the ecosystem, leading to increased environmental risks, as well as, water and energy insecurity.

Avoiding land degradation and restoring nature is fundamental to maintaining healthy lands. IUCN has made a commitment to supporting the achievement of Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) in its Programme 2017-2020. IUCN is encouraged by the work carried out in multiple international fora on this topic and commends the Science Policy Interface of UNCCD for developing the "[Scientific Conceptual Framework for Land Degradation Neutrality](#)". This framework provides a strong foundation for achieving LDN in an environmentally sound and socially acceptable manner.

Realizing LDN is essential for sustainable development and for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals with an immediate benefit for food security through improved soil fertility

and many other benefits, such as disaster risk reduction.

- ✓ IUCN recommends States to fully integrate LDN considerations into their national development strategies and plans and in so doing they may consider following the [recommendations published by IUCN, and the recently published UNCCD report “Scientific Conceptual Framework for LDN”](#).
- ✓ States are encouraged to ensure that their national plans respect the value of different ecosystems and biomes and avoid trading-off one ecosystem against another.
- ✓ IUCN recommends that States take a comprehensive approach to restoring, protecting and sustainably managing all types of land in order to ensure long term food security.

IUCN is currently carrying out [assessments of species that are critical to global food security](#), such as crop wild relatives. These relatives are a source of genetic material for new and existing crop species, allowing for increased disease and drought resistance, fertility or nutritional value. Ensuring adequate protection of crop wild relatives is therefore essential for long term food security. Through various global assessments and regional projects ([Mesoamerica](#) / Europe), IUCN already assessed a large number of species, including wild relatives of some of the world’s most used crops, such as corn, cotton, avocado and squashes. The information gathered allows understanding the main threats to species important for food security (which includes unsustainable livestock farming and ranching, growing tourism and recreational use of rural areas and urbanization) and can help identify targeted conservation actions.

- ✓ IUCN encourages States to refer to the [IUCN Red List](#) in order to identify the status of crop wild relatives in their country, understand the main threats and mobilize informed conservation action, in order to maintain genetic diversity.

There are many innovative ways on how agriculture can be done more sustainably. A number of selected examples on how this can be achieved can be found in the [IUCN Factsheets on Mainstreaming Biodiversity](#). There are additional factsheets that go beyond agriculture and present examples of integrating nature into other cross sectoral strategies and plans.

SDG3 – Good Health and Well-Being

IUCN recognizes the interdependency between environmental health and human health and wellbeing. This is highlighted in the IUCN Programme 2017- 2020.

IUCN highlights the profound impact on human life and wellbeing from species loss, ecosystem decline and climate change and that human health and wellbeing depend on healthy ecosystems. In addition, the importance of healthy nature (including wildlife health) for people’s health and wellbeing, and more specifically the opportunities that parks, protected areas and other areas of importance for biodiversity can play as nature-based solutions to the rapidly accelerating global health problem of non-communicable diseases, is increasingly recognized.

IUCN reiterates the need for cross-sector partnerships on the interlinkages between health and nature as recently called for in IUCN Resolution 64 “[Strengthening cross-sector partnerships to recognize the contributions of nature to health, well-being and quality of life](#)”. Such partnerships will contribute to the collective progress on SDG 3.4 (Promoting mental health and well-being), SDG 3.9 (Pollution) and 3.d. (risk reduction). Existing interlinkages between the goals and targets, e.g. the links between 11.7 (urban green spaces) and SDG3.4 (promoting mental health and well-being), should also be taken into consideration in this work.

IUCN avails itself to work closely with governments, the WHO and other stakeholders to further explore the interlinkages between nature (biodiversity/ecosystems) and health, and build a more comprehensive, strategic and collaborative engagement by IUCN on this important topic.

SDG5 – Gender Equality

Achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls is a pivotal issue for the advancement of sustainable development and conservation. Gender gaps and inequalities jeopardize effective, efficient and equitable strategies, whereas propelling gender equality has been shown to be a powerful driver of action and impact across sectors. IUCN recognizes that women and men must both—equally and in tandem—be empowered as agents of change to reach a just and sustainable world.

In supporting its Members, both government and non-governmental alike, towards meeting the gender dimension of targets across the SDGs, IUCN, prioritizes contributing through new knowledge and data creation and dissemination; capacity building across sectors; and technical support at policy level, internationally and nationally.

IUCN's [Environment and Gender Information \(EGI\) platform](#) aims to convey the value of gender-responsive environmental conservation and sustainable development. The EGI is a source of new knowledge creation and dissemination and reveals progress and challenges in meeting commitments to women's empowerment and gender equality in environmental spheres. In addition to SDG5, the EGI also contributes to other SDGs including 3, 6, 7, 11, 13 and 15.

IUCN's flagship gender-responsive and transformative methodology combines awareness raising and capacity building across sectors and stakeholders with policy and action planning, resulting in comprehensive, innovative Gender Action Plans employed by institutions and governments. Nearly two dozen countries have partnered with IUCN to develop and launch national Climate Change Gender Action Plans (ccGAPs), while other countries have enhanced their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs). For example, national Gender and REDD+ Roadmaps (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation – a climate change mitigation action) in Cameroon and Mexico have contributed to the advancement of gender equality in the forestry sector, contributing to an improvement in tenure of land and resources for women, in line with target 5.a and SDG1.4.

- ✓ IUCN invites States to draw on the IUCN Environment and Gender Information platform (EGI).
- ✓ IUCN recommends States to fully integrate gender-responsive actions into any national development strategies.
- ✓ IUCN invites States to implement the gender mandates agreed in several decisions of the governing bodies of the Rio Conventions, and ensure policy coherence with the gender related targets in the SDGs.

SDG9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

IUCN appreciates the background paper prepared for SDG9, and would like to add two components of the environmental dimensions,

which should not be forgotten in the implementation of SDG9.

Infrastructure projects and industrialization can have significant negative impacts on nature, affecting biodiversity and ecosystems. The demands for development projects will continue due to societal demands. Given this fact, IUCN believes it is essential to have effective safeguards in place to understand and minimise impacts. Many States already have regulations requiring Environmental Impact Assessments for new projects, and it must be ensured that these are duly applied or that adequate and appropriate regulations are created. At the same time it should be ensured that all infrastructure and development projects adhere to the Mitigation Hierarchy (Avoid – Minimize – Restore – and only as a last resort, Offset) when considering and allowing any new project to go forward.

IUCN's State and NGO Members have recently adopted the IUCN [Biodiversity Offset Policy](#), which is an important standard on when and how negative impacts on nature should be assessed and addressed. It can help governments to measure their existing regulations against this standard and identify areas for improvement. In addition, IUCN, together with The Biodiversity Consultancy, is launching shortly the [Global Inventory of Biodiversity Offset Policies \(GIBOP\)](#). This online database compiles relevant national regulations and indicates adherence to the Mitigation Hierarchy.

- ✓ IUCN invites governments to fully align national regulations to this international standard.
- ✓ IUCN urges all other stakeholders to consider the IUCN Biodiversity Offset Policy in infrastructure projects and any industrial activity with possible impact on biodiversity.
- ✓ IUCN recommends the finance community to use the IUCN Biodiversity Offset Policy as a safeguard for investments.

Another element to be highlighted in respect to SDG9 is that infrastructure does not always need to be grey. So called green or natural infrastructure can complement man-made infrastructure, leading to social and environmental benefits. Academic study values societal benefits of services provided by natural water infrastructure (wetlands, lakes and rivers) at [\\$29trn per year globally](#) in 2011; due to its multiple benefits (Value estimated for wetlands, rivers and lakes, based on 2011 area and 2007

USD values. Source: R. Constanza et al./Global Environmental Change 26 (2014) 152-158). Since 2013, IUCN leads the [WISE-UP to Climate project](#). WISE-UP works to demonstrate natural infrastructure as a 'nature-based solution' for climate change adaptation and sustainable development. The project develops knowledge on how to use combinations of built water infrastructure (e.g. dams, levees, irrigation channels) together with natural infrastructure (e.g. wetlands, floodplains, watersheds) for poverty reduction, water-energy-food security, biodiversity conservation, and climate resilience.

SDG14 – Life Below Water

IUCN had prepared a detailed position paper prepared for the Oceans conference, which can be accessed [here](#).

During the conference, IUCN highlighted its work on Mangroves for the Future (MFF), Marine Protected Areas, impacts of climate change (ocean warming and ocean acidification), marine pollution (plastics/microplastics); sustainable fisheries; the need for a legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction under UNCLOS.

IUCN applauds the numerous commitments generated around the oceans conference and looks forward to working with other partners in translating those commitments into concrete

action.

SDG17 – Partnerships for the Goals

IUCN acts as custodian/partner agency and submits metadata for a number of SDGs indicators including for indicator 14.5.1 (Protected Area coverage of Key Biodiversity Areas in marine realm), 15.1.2 (Protected Area coverage of Key Biodiversity Areas in terrestrial and freshwater realms), 15.4.1 (Protected Area coverage of Key Biodiversity Areas in mountains), 15.5.1 (Red List Index), and 15.8.1 (policy responses to invasive alien species).

IUCN has a long experience of compiling these data from national sources, and stands ready to support countries in their efforts to apply the IUCN standards. IUCN is cognizant of the lack of data within national statistical offices on a number of SDG indicators and therefore strongly urges governments to also draw from existing quality controlled data from other sources.

In an effort to address the important funding gap in conservation, civil society organizations, private and public sector financial institutions and academia have joined forces at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in September 2016 in Hawaii and launched the [Coalition for Private Investment in Conservation \(CPIC\)](#). Its goal is to help preserve the world's most important ecosystems by creating new opportunities for return-seeking private investments in conservation.