



## **Contribution of the International Union for Conservation of Nature to the High-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) 2024**

Following the letter of the President of the ECOSOC dated 16 November 2023, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is delighted to provide its inputs to the 2024 HLPF on its theme and on the SDGs under in-depth review.

### **Impacts of multiple crises on the implementation of SDGs 1, 2, 13, 16 and 17 from the vantage point of your intergovernmental body.**

IUCN welcomes the theme of the 2024 HLPF and the opportunity to contribute to this process, including on the review of the above SDGs. It is well known that the world is facing multiple crises at the moment, referred to by many as a 'polycrisis'. These multiple crises have halted, slowed or reversed progress in many areas of sustainable development. Two of these global-level crises that IUCN has drawn particular attention to in recent years are the interlinked crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. Unless addressed in a comprehensive, synergetic, ambitious and timely manner, these twin interlinked long-term crises threaten to undermine the achievement of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. For example, climate change is estimated to push up to 130 million people into extreme poverty by 2030 (World Bank, 2020), and adversely impact food production and security (IPCC, 2023). Similarly, it is estimated that 1.2 billion people, or 30% of the population across tropical countries, are highly dependent on nature for their basic needs (Fedele, 2021). Moreover, with 80 percent of the world's poorest living in rural areas, and being especially dependent on ecosystems, the growing loss and degradation of nature being witnessed today can have a particularly negative impact on their livelihoods, wellbeing, and food security.

Indeed, food and agricultural systems underpin many developing and emerging countries' economic stability and billions of people livelihoods through mainly informal and fragmented local food crops markets as well as large, concentrated and global commodity markets. Approximately 2.7 billion people derive their livelihoods from small-scale food production, while at least 4.5 billion people, almost six out of ten people in the world, rely on agrifood systems for their incomes (FAO, 2022).

Likewise, at the macro level, World Bank modelling has shown that in a scenario where just a few ecosystem services collapse, low-income countries could forego 10 percent in real GDP annually by 2030, compared with global losses of 2.3 percent. Hence the impacts of both the climate change and biodiversity loss crises, taken individually and in combination with each other, can severely hamper the delivery of SDGs 1 and 2, for instance. Addressing both these crises requires urgent action to fully deliver the targets agreed to under SDGs 13, 14 and 15, as well as the full implementation of the Paris Agreement and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Protection, restoration and sustainable management of the world's ecosystems need to be prioritised as they play an essential role in the global fight against poverty, hunger and climate change. They are critical for ensuring sustainable development and a healthy and prosperous future for both current and future generations. For example, on climate change, in addition to deep emission reductions in other sectors, investing in healthy ecosystems and nature-based solutions can save around 10 GtCO<sub>2</sub>e per year, while also providing a range of adaptation and other economic, social and environmental benefits (Girardin et al., 2021; UNEP and IUCN, 2021). But successfully addressing the climate and biodiversity crises – and indeed the other crises – will require strong, effective and inclusive institutions (SDG 16), as well as sufficient means of implementation and suitable partnerships (SDG 17) across all levels.



**Three key areas where sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions for achieving the SDGs are being effectively delivered, especially related to the cluster of SDGs under review in 2024, bearing in mind the three dimensions of sustainable development and the interlinkages across the Goals and targets.**

**1. Food systems:** With global population projected to reach 10 billion in 2050 and with greater wealth per capita, demand for food and other agricultural products will grow under changing climatic conditions. Today, agriculture occupies about 38% of the world's total land area and more than 40% of agriculture soils are degraded, while agriculture drives up to 90% of global deforestation and consumes 70% of the world's water. With widespread unsustainable agricultural expansion and production practices, if nothing is done, food and agricultural systems will continue to be the leading drivers of natural resource and biodiversity loss, GHG emissions, and land and water pollution. Small producers are those who suffer most from the degradation of ecosystems and natural resources, including soils. Nonetheless, farms are also modified ecosystems that closely depend on nature for nutrient supply, water supply, pest control, pollination and other services, which if lacking can affect their resilience in the long run. Hence, if we want to accelerate progress towards achieving SDGs 1, 2 and 13, and many other SDGs, it is key to mainstream biodiversity in food and agricultural systems to achieve sustainability and resilience.

At the 2021 IUCN World Conservation Congress, IUCN [Resolution 7.003](#) urged the transformation of food and agricultural systems to align with the UN SDGs. The 2021 UN Food System Summit, presented many solutions and created coalitions of action to transform those systems. Agroecological practices are one of several innovative and sustainable approaches to achieve sustainable agriculture – also highlighted in Target 10 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework – and have been recognized by IUCN [Resolution 7.007](#) as Nature based Solutions. Increasing soil and landscape biodiversity is at the heart of sustainable agriculture practices, and directly impacts most ecosystem services.

**2. Ocean governance:** A further point to stress is the urgent need to take immediate action to conserve our Global Ocean. An equitable, fair, environmentally oriented, and just ocean governance and effective management is essential to achieve the SDGs under review, especially ahead of the third UN Oceans conference.

In line with the IUCN [Resolution 7.128](#), we must ensure that biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction is conserved and sustainably used. Hence, IUCN is working to support the swift ratification of the BBNJ-High Seas Biodiversity Treaty. It is also important to develop a clear pathway for the Marine Protected Areas proposals at the first COPs. Lastly, IUCN calls for a moratorium on deep sea mining, and will continue to work with delegates attending ISA to build their capacity to be effective negotiators at the ISA sessions.

To stop the global plastic pollution crisis in marine environments by 2030, following IUCN [Resolution 7.019](#), it's key to build effective private-public partnerships to end plastic pollution ending up in the ocean, threatening biodiversity, and its entry into the food web. IUCN urges all governments and other stakeholders to ensure that an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution has biodiversity at its core. IUCN is thus supporting delegates from LDCs and SIDs to negotiate effectively during the discussion under the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution and beyond.

**3. Protected areas:** IUCN sees Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework as an area in which innovative solutions can advance the achievement of the



SDGs. IUCN supports the conservation of at least 30% globally of terrestrial, inland water and marine and coastal ecosystems, including all key biodiversity areas, in effective and equitable, representative and connected systems of protected areas and OECMs, including territories and areas conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities with their free, prior and informed consent.

**Three examples of specific actions, policies and measures that are most urgently needed to effectively deliver sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions to eradicate poverty and reinforce the 2030 Agenda, building on interlinkages and transformative pathways for achieving the SDGs.**

In 2023, in the context of the SDG summit, IUCN published the report "Seven years to save nature and people: a proposed set of policies and actions for the SDG Summit". The essence of the report can be encapsulated in nine actions that can be grouped under three main clusters.

Firstly, we must prioritise policies and investments that have multiplier effects across the Sustainable Development Goals, these include actions to:

- Urgently safeguard highly threatened species;
- Ensure that the use of wild species is sustainable;
- Safeguard areas of importance to biodiversity, covering at least 30% of global terrestrial, inland water, and marine and coastal ecosystems;
- Invest in soil and land health to support a sustainable food system;
- Protect, restore, and promote healthy freshwater systems and habitats;
- Implement Nature-based Solutions for climate and disaster risk reduction;
- Ensure gender equality as a human right.

Secondly, it is key to secure a surge in SDG financing and an enabling global environment for developing countries. Under this cluster, IUCN proposes to scale up and repurpose finance for biodiversity and climate, as well as making trade and the circular economy work against pollution and for nature.

Thirdly, IUCN deems fundamental to equip governance and institutions for sustainable and inclusive transformation. As a science-based organisation, we are committed to inform policy-making aimed at achieving the SDGs through our data, standards, knowledge products and derived metrics. Their use can not only support the monitoring and review process of goals and targets, but also support the enhancement of synergies across several multilateral environmental agreements.

**Follow-up actions and measures being undertaken by your intergovernmental body or forum to support implementation of the Political Declaration of the SDG Summit.**

There are several streams of work that the International Union for Conservation of Nature will undertake to support the Political Declaration of the SDG Summit, and more broadly the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The mandate derived by the resolutions democratically adopted by our members every four years at the IUCN World Conservation Congress covers all aspects of nature conservation, as well as other interlinked socio-economic issues.

To tackle the triple planetary crisis, it is insufficient to implement sectoral actions or addressing environmental issues with a siloed approach. That is why, IUCN believes in the potential that nature-based solutions (NbS) have in addressing jointly major societal challenges, while



delivering benefits for biodiversity and human wellbeing at the same time. Following the IUCN definition, NbS are “*actions to protect, sustainably manage and restore natural or modified ecosystems that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits*”.

To guide their implementation, IUCN developed in 2020 the IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based solutions. Building on the principles from its earlier publications, this standard can be understood as a user-friendly framework for the verification, design and scaling up of NbS. It is both facilitative and voluntary, co-created through an inclusive process, with inputs from more than 100 countries. Finally, it can be adapted to the national context and different sectors.

IUCN, with its Members, Commissions, and Secretariat, will continue to work to ensure that the full potential of Nature-based Solutions is unleashed for the benefit of people, planet, and the economy.

### **Recommendations and key messages for inclusion into the Ministerial Declaration of the 2024 HLPF.**

At a critical time for our planet, IUCN would like to stress the need to swiftly implement the plethora of commitments that have been endorsed and undertaken in different international processes. In particular, those under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement, under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and those under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. IUCN further wishes to see the swift ratification of the High Seas Treaty, and the agreement on an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution with biodiversity at its core.

In conclusion, IUCN would like to highlight in this submission six recommendations in the field of sustainable food systems, stemming from its "Common Ground" report. These are:

1. Prioritise soil and landscape biodiversity for food and nature
2. Mainstream agroecological and regenerative approaches for managing agricultural landscapes
3. Establish targets and indicators at national and global levels
4. Reward ecosystem services to incentivise sustainable farming
5. Promote change throughout the global food system
6. Build consensus and intensify dialogue between the agriculture and conservation communities

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For further information, please contact: [IUCN@un.int](mailto:IUCN@un.int)



### **Supplementary materials**

[Seven years to save nature and people: a proposed set of policies and actions for the SDG Summit, IUCN 2023](#)

[Common Ground report \(IUCN, 2020\)](#)

[The Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions \(IUCN, 2020\)](#)

[Land health monitoring framework \(IUCN, 2022\)](#)

[Approaches to Sustainable Agriculture \(IUCN, 2020\)](#)

[International policy framework for blue carbon ecosystems: Recommendations to align actions across international policy processes for the conservation and restoration of coastal blue carbon ecosystems. \(IUCN and Conservation International, 2023\)](#)

[The High Seas Biodiversity Treaty: An Introduction to the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. \(Kachelriess, D., In M. Epps & C. Chazot, 2023\)](#)