

Input for the 2025 High-level Political Forum
International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

Your assessment of the impacts of the multiple and interconnected crises on the implementation of SDGs 3, 5, 8, 14 and 17.

The triple planetary crisis has halted, slowed, or reversed the progress of sustainable development. IUCN has drawn particular attention to the interlinked crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution in recent years, underscoring the point that our economic and social development hinges on nature. Indeed, unless addressed in a comprehensive, synergetic, ambitious, and timely manner, these interlinked long-term crises threaten to undermine the achievement of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. Climate change is estimated to push as many as 130 million people into extreme poverty by 2030 (World Bank, 2020), and adversely impact food production and security (IPCC, 2023). Nature also underpins our economies, with recent estimates that more than half of global GDP, or over US\$ 40 trillion, is dependent on nature and the services it provides (Retsa et al., 2020; WEF, 2020).

Furthermore, 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). With 80% of the world's poorest people living in rural areas and being especially dependent on ecosystems, the growing loss and degradation of nature witnessed today can negatively impact their livelihoods, wellbeing, and food security.

Business-as-usual approaches to our food and water systems are failing to protect both the environment and many communities around the world. Agriculture and food systems are the leading drivers globally of land and sea-use change, water resource depletion and pollution, and stress on biodiversity.

Three key areas where sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for achieving the SDGs and leaving no one behind are being effectively delivered, especially related to the cluster of SDGs under review in 2025, also bearing in mind the three dimensions of sustainable development and the interlinkages across the Goals and targets.

1. Ocean governance

An equitable, fair, environmentally oriented, and just ocean governance with effective management is essential to achieve the SDGs under review, especially ahead of the third UN Ocean Conference. To stop the global plastic pollution crisis in marine environments by 2030, following IUCN Resolution 7.019, it is key to build effective private-public partnerships to end plastic pollution, much of which ends up in the ocean, where it threatens biodiversity and enters and accumulates in 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 Least developed countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to negotiate effectively

under the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution and beyond.

2. Gender equality

IUCN works closely with its Members, Commissions and partners on filling knowledge gaps by reviewing and publishing data on how gender equality contributes to the achievement of environmental goals, sharpening methodologies on how the globe can monitor its gender and climate commitments and gathering and publishing new data and insights on gender-based violence as a barrier to environmental action and human rights. IUCN also co-founded and co-convenes a global alliance of nearly 100 organisations and 27 data advisors focused on gender and environment data. IUCN's flagship publication on gender-based violence and environment linkages led to the creation of the Resilient, Inclusive and Sustainable Environments (RISE) grants challenge which is building ground on how environmental organisations can better understand, identify, and account for gender-based violence risks to environmental projects and improve the more equal participation of women in environmental leadership.

Three examples of measures to accelerate progress towards SDGs through well-coordinated actions in key transitions to bring progress to scale (food security, energy access and affordability, digital connectivity, education, jobs and social protection, climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution), building on interlinkages between SDGs to ensure cohesive progress.

1. IUCN considers it essential that we scale up the implementation of Nature-based Solutions, as these play a critical and supportive role in addressing biodiversity loss, achieving mitigation and just transition objectives, nurturing resilience, safeguarding livelihoods, and empowering communities amidst the challenges posed by climate change while simultaneously addressing other societal challenges. In this regard, the IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions is a robust, voluntary and facilitatory tool that can play a role in the design and execution of Nature-based Solutions at different scales and in all sectors.
2. To accelerate progress in the achievement of the SDGs, it is key to build on projects that have been successful in the recent years. One of them is the Great Blue Wall initiative: a roadmap for the Western Indian Ocean region to contribute to a nature-positive world by scaling up ocean conservation actions, while supporting socio-economic resilience for 70 million coastal inhabitants. The Great Blue Wall looks at establishing regenerative seascapes, through a well-established link of marine protected and conserved areas and ecological corridors. This in turns provide significant climate benefits, both for mitigation and adaptation.
3. IUCN is committed to advancing gender equality, including through women's empowerment, as a Union that understands the importance of equal opportunity and inclusion, and whose policies respect and promote diversity. To increasing investments in and implementation of gender-responsive policies and programmes for full and productive employment and decent work for all women, IUCN commission the Plastic Waste Free Islands Gender Study. The study provides an analysis of plastic

pollution in the tourism, waste management, and fisheries sectors of the PWFI islands in the Caribbean.

Follow-up actions and measures being undertaken by your intergovernmental body or forum to support implementation of the 2023 SDG Summit Political Declaration and the outcomes of the 2024 Summit of the Future, to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

There are several streams of work that IUCN will undertake to support the Political Declaration of the SDG Summit, the 2024 Pact for the Future 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 World Conservation Congress covers all aspects of nature conservation, as well as many other interlinked socio-economic issues.

IUCN and its Members' work is actively contributing to the implementation of Action 10 of the Pact for the Future, for instance by supporting the implementation of the KM-GBF at the national level, including supporting Parties to the Convention in updating their National Biodiversity Action Plans and Strategies (NBSAPs) as well as by hosting four of the regional technical and scientific cooperation support centres, established to promote scientific and technical cooperation in implementing the Framework.

Recommendations and key messages to be considered for inclusion in the Ministerial Declaration of the 2025 HLPF.

The chapeau should emphasise the need to prioritise policies and investments that have multiplier effects across the SDGs. This includes a direct mention of actions geared to:

- Safeguard areas of importance to biodiversity, covering at least 30% of global terrestrial, inland water, and marine and coastal ecosystems;
- Protect, restore, and promote healthy freshwater systems and habitats;
- Implement Nature-based Solutions for climate change mitigation, resilience, and disaster risk reduction, including at different scales and in all sectors;
- Ensure gender equality as a human right, and ensuring the full recognition of Indigenous peoples' rights; And,
- Mobilise finance at scale and to facilitate synergies between climate and nature finance.

IUCN also deems it fundamental to equip institutions with the necessary tools for a sustainable and inclusive transformation. As a science-based organisation we are committed to informing policy-making to achieve the SDGs through our data, standards, knowledge, and derived metrics several of which are already deployed to support the monitoring and follow-up of progress towards SDG targets.

With regards to SDG5, it is essential that the Ministerial Declaration recognises the failure to

implement the Beijing Declaration and Plan of Action, as well as emphasises the negative impact that environmental degradation and climate change have on achieving gender equality. Second, on SDG14, as this year's HLPF is taking place after the third UN Ocean Conference, it is essential that the Declaration sends a strong political message on the need for rapid implementation of the Nice Action Plan, including through additional and concrete financial commitments.