

# IUCN position paper for UNFCCC COP28

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

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The synthesis report of the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change ([IPCC AR6](#)), released in March this year, has brought into sharp focus the irreversible losses and damages that are presently accruing from climate change, as well as the cascading and compounding risks of overshooting the 1.5°C warming level – with the most vulnerable people and ecosystems being the hardest hit.

Given that 2023 marks the year of the First Global Stocktake of the Paris Agreement, this offers the international community a vital opportunity to assess the collective progress made to date towards achieving the goals of the agreement, and to course correct.

In this context, IUCN would like to highlight the following **10 key messages** in the lead up to UNFCCC COP28:

- I. It is imperative to limit warming to 1.5°C to minimise climate-related losses and damages to people and nature. Meeting this goal is also essential for the continued provision of critical ecosystem services from natural systems that represent nature's contributions to people, such as climate regulation, carbon storage and adaptation. However, this requires – first and foremost – the rapid and equitable phase out of fossil fuels and fossil fuel subsidies without any further delay, and the accelerated and equitable deployment of sustainable clean energy systems worldwide. ***In this respect, IUCN urges all Parties to explicitly support, in COP28 decision text, the time-bound phase out of all fossil fuels, including oil and gas, within a framework that ensures a just transition.***
  - o The IPCC Sixth Assessment Report estimates that limiting warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels requires global GHG emissions to be reduced by 43% by 2030 from 2019 levels and reach global net zero CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the early 2050s. Yet the latest UNFCCC synthesis report, taking into account the implementation of all the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) submitted under the Paris Agreement as of September 2022, estimates that GHG emissions will reduce by only 0.3% below the 2019 level by 2030 ([UNFCCC 2022](#)). This underscores the major ambition gap that needs to be urgently bridged.
- II. Noting the critical function of the Global Stocktake in the architecture of the Paris Agreement, its outcomes this year must result in more ambitious climate action. ***IUCN urges Parties to agree on strong and clear outputs of the 2023 Global Stocktake and to reflect those in relevant decisions at COP28, in accordance with [Decision 19/CMA.1, para 34](#), also taking into account the [key findings](#) of the technical dialogue.*** Furthermore, IUCN urges Parties to be informed by the outcomes of the Global Stocktake when updating and enhancing, in a nationally determined manner, their actions and support, in particular when preparing their successive NDC to be communicated in 2025, and in enhancing international cooperation for climate action in accordance with Articles 4.9 and 14.3 of the Paris Agreement.
- III. Combating the climate crisis effectively demands simultaneously addressing the biodiversity loss crisis in an integrated and synergistic manner. ***IUCN urges Parties to strongly reinforce the interlinkages between the climate and biodiversity crises in COP 28 decisions, including those related to the Global Stocktake, the Sharm el-Sheikh Mitigation Ambition and Implementation Work Programme (MWP) and the Glasgow–Sharm el-Sheikh Work Programme on the Global Goal on Adaptation (GlaSS-GGA).*** These should clearly recognise, support and provide

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pathways for the protection, restoration and sustainable management of the world's ecosystems, bearing in mind that these nature-based solutions<sup>1</sup> provide immediate and cost-effective benefits for both mitigation and adaptation simultaneously, while also supporting biodiversity conservation and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is also consistent with Article 5.1 of the Paris Agreement, which states that "Parties should take action to conserve and enhance, as appropriate, sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases as referred to in Article 4, paragraph 1 (d), of the Convention, including forests".

- IUCN also highlights the importance of ensuring greater operational synergies across all the key international policy processes that govern the world's terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems, in particular, inter alia, the three Rio Conventions. It stresses the importance of establishing and strengthening appropriate functional connections between the key instruments and mechanisms of these policy processes, for instance between the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the NDCs of the Paris Agreement, taking into account the 23 action-oriented global targets for 2030 that Parties to the CBD recently adopted under the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#).

IV. ***IUCN urges Parties to reflect their highest possible ambition while developing future Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), including by incorporating more concrete and ambitious nature-based solutions within them.*** IUCN also encourages Parties to include these nature-based solutions within their National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and their Long-Term Low Emission Development Strategies (LT-LEDS).

- At COP27, Parties were explicitly encouraged "to consider, as appropriate, nature-based solutions or ecosystem-based approaches, taking into consideration United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 5/5, for their mitigation and adaptation action while ensuring relevant social and environmental safeguards" ([Decision 1/CP.27](#), para 52 and [Decision 1/CMA.4](#), para 81).

- IUCN welcomes the efforts made by Parties to date but notes that considerable potential remains for them to raise their ambition further, especially considering the multiple societal benefits that healthy ecosystems provide. For example, the [Blue Carbon and Nationally Determined Contributions: Guidelines on Enhanced Action](#), co-published by IUCN in July 2023, provides updated guidance on how countries may concretely include blue carbon ecosystems – mangroves, sea grasses and tidal marshes – within their future NDCs.

V. Delivering on finance is indispensable to achieving climate objectives. There is widespread consensus that the funding needed to meet the adaptation and mitigation goals of the Paris Agreement is far greater than existing flows. ***IUCN calls for an ambitious scaling up of global climate financing and funding to support meaningful action across the entire continuum of mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage, including through the scaled-up implementation of high-integrity nature-based solutions, with an increased proportion made directly available to Indigenous peoples and local communities.***

- IUCN calls for the agreed climate financing goal of mobilising US\$ 100 billion per year by 2020 to be urgently met, and for Parties to also make meaningful progress on the new collective quantified goal (NCQG) on climate finance. In particular, it calls for a rapid increase in adaptation finance to achieve a balance between mitigation and adaptation financing as called for in Article 9.4 of the Paris Agreement, noting that adaptation finance flows to developing countries are 5-10 times below estimated needs ([AGR 2022](#)). IUCN also calls on Parties to ensure the rapid and substantial operationalisation of the new funding arrangements for loss and damage that were agreed to at COP27 in [Decision 2/CMA.4](#).
- UNEP's *State of Finance for Nature* reports estimate 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 (UNEP [2021](#) and [2022](#)).

<sup>1</sup> According to [United Nations Environment Assembly \(UNEA\) Resolution 5/5](#), nature-based solutions 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". This directly builds on and incorporates the definition adopted by IUCN's 1,400+ State and NGO Members at the *2016 IUCN World Conservation Congress* in Hawaii, USA ([WCC-2016-Res-069-EN](#)).

- Indigenous peoples and local communities are among the first to face the direct consequences of climate change, due to their dependence upon, and close relationship, with the environment and its resources. Despite being custodians and stewards of the world's most intact ecosystems, including over a third of the world's remaining irrecoverable carbon, Indigenous peoples and local communities have received less than 1% of climate change funding to date ([Noon et al 2022](#), [CI and IUCN 2023](#)). This must change.
- VI. ***IUCN calls on all actors that are implementing nature-based solutions, whether through market or non-market mechanisms, to adhere to a high-integrity approach in the design, verification and scaling up of such initiatives by applying the IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions.*** Furthermore, IUCN stresses that nature-based solutions must not be used either as a substitute for or as a means to postpone ambitious GHG emission reduction efforts that science tells us are required today.
- The [IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions](#) offers 8 specific criteria and 28 indicators to enable the coherent design, execution and evaluation of nature-based solutions. The application of such a framework is essential to increase the scale and impact of nature-based solutions, prevent any unanticipated negative outcomes or misuse, and help funding agencies, policy makers and other stakeholders to assess the effectiveness of interventions.
  - IUCN 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 emission reduction efforts, and must be governed by robust accounting systems to prevent any double counting, and follow adequate social and environmental safeguards.
  - IUCN also underscores the need to ensure the highest levels of environmental and ecosystem integrity in the operationalisation of Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, particularly of those elements pertaining to sinks and removals. In this respect, it highlights 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 and improve the integrity of ecosystems and nature-based solutions.
- VII. ***IUCN urges Parties to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy generation and distribution systems, including community-based renewable energy systems and micro-grids.*** In doing so, it calls on Parties and other actors to ensure a just transition by avoiding any detrimental impacts on communities, ecosystems and species and by actively pursuing net positive impacts aligned with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. This will require, inter alia, effective spatial planning, rigorous assessment of associated cumulative impacts and actively building sustainability goals into policy and regulatory frameworks.
- As pointed out jointly by IPBES and IPCC, technology-based measures that are effective for climate change mitigation can sometimes threaten biodiversity and should be evaluated in terms of their overall benefits and risks ([IPBES and IPCC 2021](#)). Recent studies have documented that, in the absence of adequate risk mitigation measures, renewable energy systems can have negative population-level impacts on avian and marine species that extend well beyond the immediate vicinity of the installations ([Conkling et al 2022](#), [Madsen et al 2006](#)). Furthermore, the growing demand for minerals and metals required for the energy transition is placing increased pressure on protected areas ([Whieldon et al 2022](#)).
  - IUCN, together with its members and partners, has developed guidance for mitigating the biodiversity impacts associated with solar and wind energy development for project developers ([IUCN 2021](#)). This guidance provides a practical framework for managing risks and improving overall outcomes related to biodiversity and ecosystem services by deploying the mitigation hierarchy during planning and implementation. IUCN is also currently developing guidance for optimal spatial planning and cumulative impact assessment for the renewable energy sector.
- VIII. ***IUCN urges all Parties to collectively avoid overshooting the temperature rise targets agreed to under the Paris Agreement, and particularly cautions against reliance on the deployment of unproven, untested and unregulated geoengineering technologies to reach net-zero emission goals.*** It notes the high risks that these technologies can pose for human and natural systems, and the adverse and potentially irreversible impacts that overshoot entails.

- The IPCC Sixth Assessment Report makes it clear that in pathways with overshoot, societies face higher risks to infrastructure, low-lying coastal settlements and associated livelihoods. Also, as it clearly states, overshooting 1.5°C will “result in irreversible adverse impacts on certain ecosystems with low resilience, such as polar, mountain, and coastal ecosystems, impacted by ice-sheet, glacier melt, or by accelerating and higher committed sea level rise” ([IPCC 2023 AR6 Synthesis Report SPM](#)). Other recent scientific studies also warn that exceeding 1.5°C of global warming can trigger multiple climate tipping points, including collapse of the Greenland and West Antarctic ice sheets, die-off of low-latitude coral reefs and widespread abrupt permafrost thaw with their consequent adverse impacts ([Armstrong McKay et al 2022](#)). This also highlights the need to invest in long-term observation, data recording and early warning systems.
- There is growing interest today in exploring new geoengineering technologies such as solar radiation modification (SRM), ocean fertilisation and alkalisation, and other novel carbon dioxide removal (CDR) methods in combatting the climate crisis. However, it is important that a precautionary approach be taken with respect to these emerging technologies, including to ensure that they do not delay or lower national ambition on the GHG emission reductions that are urgently required across all sectors today. This is essential given their unproven nature, the significant social and environmental risks that they pose, the moral hazard that they can drive and – most importantly – the critical unresolved issues around their ethics, consent, equity and governance ([UNEP 2023, Smith et al 2023](#)). Likewise, carbon capture and storage (CCS) technologies should not be used to delay rapid decarbonisation.

IX. ***IUCN strongly underscores the importance of inclusive and equitable climate policy and action that takes into account the core priorities, concerns, needs and rights of the most vulnerable, particularly Indigenous peoples, women and youth.*** It urges Parties to ensure their full and meaningful integration in both international and domestic climate policy development and implementation across all levels.

- IUCN welcomes the progress made to date in the delivery of the second three-year work plan of the UNFCCC Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP) and

calls on Parties to continue supporting all its activities in consultation with the LCIPP Facilitative Working Group. Furthermore, IUCN encourages governments to concretely and systematically support the meaningful engagement of Indigenous peoples and local communities in all national and sub-national climate policy development, planning and implementation processes, and to fully acknowledge and support Indigenous and traditional knowledge systems and rights, especially in relation to the management of natural resources and ecosystems. It also highlights the increasing risks that vulnerable communities around the world are facing today from climate-related displacement and migration and the importance for these to be systematically addressed.

- IUCN also welcomes the progress made to date under the enhanced five-year Lima Work Programme on Gender (LWPG) and its Gender Action Plan. Noting the continued relevance of gender-differentiated impacts of climate change, IUCN calls on Parties to strongly support the mainstreaming of gender-responsive climate policies and actions across all levels in the implementation of the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement with a view to closing existing gender gaps as soon as possible.
- IUCN emphasises the importance of ensuring intergenerational and intragenerational equity while addressing the interlinked climate and biodiversity crises. It especially underscores the importance of meaningfully integrating youth voices and concerns in climate policy development and decision making across all levels in an equitable manner.

X. ***IUCN encourages all other stakeholders, including within the private sector and civil society, to do their utmost to effectively and ambitiously address the interlinked climate and biodiversity crises, and to support an equitable and just transition.***

- IUCN particularly welcomes the efforts of the UN Climate Change High Level Champions and the Marrakech Partnership in strengthening collaboration between Parties and non-Party stakeholders across different sectors, especially the nature-related thematic areas of land use, ocean and coastal zones, water and resilience, in support of the mitigation and adaptation goals of the Paris Agreement.