



# IUCN's key messages for UNFCCC COP25

**United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change  
Twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP25)  
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UNFCCC COP25 marks an important milestone before the start of the implementation of the Paris Agreement in 2020. 2020 is also the year when Parties have been requested to communicate new or updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in support of the Paris Agreement.

As Parties convene in Madrid to finalise the outstanding rules, procedures and guidelines necessary for the operationalisation of the Paris Agreement, IUCN would like to highlight the following:

## **I. Need for urgent and ambitious global climate action**

The need for urgent and ambitious global action to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions involving all sectors and actors is clearer today than ever before.

- The latest science published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2018 and 2019 – the *IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C*, the *IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*, and the *IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Land* – underscore the seriousness of the threat that climate change poses to natural and human systems across the world.
- The latest *UNEP Emissions Gap Report 2019* also reveals the very significant gap that still remains between the current commitments expressed by Parties in their NDCs to date, and what is needed to keep global warming to well below 2°C and 1.5°C. Collective ambition must increase more than fivefold over current levels to deliver the cuts needed over the next decade to achieve the 1.5°C goal.<sup>i</sup>
- Ocean deoxygenation is one of the most pernicious, yet under-reported side-effects of human-induced climate change. IUCN's latest scientific report, to be released at COP25, *Ocean deoxygenation: Everyone's problem*, provides a clear warning that oxygen loss from ocean warming is having alarming consequences for global oceanic oxygen reserves, which have already been reduced by 2% over a period of just 50 years, from 1960 to 2010. This will adversely impact marine ecosystems and the human populations that depend on them across multiple scales.<sup>ii</sup>

## **II. Nature-based solutions are critical for addressing climate change**

Nature-based Solutions – centred on the protection, restoration and sustainable management of the world's ecosystems – have a vitally important role to play in both climate change mitigation and adaptation.<sup>iii</sup> This was clearly recognised at the *United Nations Climate Action Summit* held in September 2019 in New York, which included a dedicated thematic action track on this topic.

- The Five-Year Assessment Report on Progress on the New York Declaration on Forests (NYDF) published in 2019 by NYDF Assessment Partners, including IUCN, highlights that tropical forests need to be effectively protected

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to meet climate targets, and that the accelerated loss of irreplaceable primary forests is particularly alarming given that they serve as invaluable carbon sinks. This report also highlights that restoration of forest ecosystems must be accelerated, and that forest landscape restoration must complement efforts to halt deforestation by recovering some of the lost ecosystem functions and services of cleared forests.<sup>iv</sup> The Bonn Challenge initiative, co-led by IUCN, aims to bring 150 million hectares of deforested and degraded land into restoration by 2020 and 350 million hectares by 2030 in this regard.<sup>v</sup>

- The 2019 *IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Land* also highlights the protection of high carbon ecosystems such as primary forests as an optimal mitigation strategy. A more recent study, co-authored by an IUCN member, furthermore shows that intact tropical forests, free from substantial anthropogenic influence, store and sequester large amounts of atmospheric carbon, but the climate impact of their loss is currently underestimated by a factor of six.<sup>vi</sup> This reinforces the need for their protection.
- An analysis led and published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS)* in 2017 by another IUCN member estimated that natural climate solutions can provide around one-third of the cost-effective climate mitigation needed between now and 2030 to stabilize warming to below 2°C.<sup>vii</sup> Likewise, *UNEP's Emissions Gap Report 2017* estimates that land-based carbon removal options, including forests, wetlands and soils, offer a total annual emissions reduction potential of 4 to 12 GtCO<sub>2</sub>e.<sup>viii</sup>
- Healthy ecosystems also play a vital role in building resilience to climate change, through ecosystem-based adaptation and disaster risk reduction. A study published in 2017 estimated that wetlands avoided US\$ 625 million in direct flood damages during Hurricane Sandy in 2012.<sup>ix</sup> More generally, coastal wetlands in the US have been estimated to provide storm protection services worth US\$ 23 billion annually.<sup>x</sup>

### **III. Future NDCs should include more ambitious and concrete nature-based solutions**

As Parties prepare new or updated NDCs in 2020, they must include more concrete, quantifiable targets on nature-based solutions. A recent study jointly published in 2019 by IUCN and Oxford University, for instance, shows that:

- While over 70% of current NDCs contain references to efforts in the forest sector, only 20% of these include quantifiable targets, and only 8% include targets expressed in tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent.
- Only around 17% of NDCs with current or planned actions involving nature-based solutions for adaptation (i.e. ecosystem-based adaptation) set quantifiable and robust targets for the same.
- Only 19% of NDCs from countries with coastal ecosystems currently include them in their mitigation components, and only 39% in their adaptation components.<sup>xi</sup>

These suggest that considerable potential remains for Parties to further strengthen the role of nature-based solutions in their future NDCs. The IUCN-Oxford University study also emphasises the need to mobilise enhanced financing for effectively implementing nature-based solutions. Other specific recommendations made in the study for the consideration of policymakers are available [here](#).

### **IV. Importance of ensuring environmental integrity**

As Parties finalise the outstanding rules necessary for operationalising Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, it is critical to ensure that the highest possible levels of environmental integrity are maintained.

Double counting of emission reduction efforts should be prevented, including through the application of robust accounting methods, in order to achieve the most ambitious overall mitigation in global emissions.

It will also be important to ensure that adequate safeguards are in place to prevent any adverse environmental or social consequences of the application of the mechanisms, rules and procedures developed under Article 6.

## V. Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples (LCIP) Platform

Indigenous Peoples and local communities are at the forefront of climate change, often facing its worst impacts. They also play a critical role as stewards and guardians of the world's ecosystems and in delivering practical and effective nature-based solutions to climate change on the ground.

It is essential, therefore, that their views, concerns, rights and contributions are fully acknowledged and taken into account while developing and implementing climate policy and action across at all levels in support of the Paris Agreement, including in NDCs.

IUCN welcomes the progress made in operationalising the UNFCCC Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples (LCIP) Platform to date, including through the timely establishment of the Facilitative Working Group. We look forward to supporting the development of the two-year work plan for implementing the functions of the LCIP Platform at COP25, and to its successful implementation thereafter.<sup>xii</sup>

## VI. Gender and Climate Change

IUCN reaffirms its commitment to the Lima Work Programme on Gender (LWPG) and its Gender Action Plan (GAP) as being critical enablers of gender-responsive climate policy and action. IUCN welcomes the progress made to date in substantively integrating gender considerations in various UNFCCC processes through the work of constituted bodies.

Going forward, it will be critical to ensure the further strengthening and continuance of the LWPG and the GAP at COP25 in order to deliver successful gender-responsive policy and action in support of the implementation of the Paris Agreement, both internationally and at the national level in 2020 and beyond.<sup>xiii</sup>

<sup>i</sup> UNEP. 2019. *Emissions Gap Report 2019*. United Nations Environment Programme, Nairobi.

<sup>ii</sup> Laffoley, D. & Baxter, J.M. eds. 2019. *Ocean deoxygenation: Everyone's problem – Causes, impacts, consequences and solutions*. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland; available at [www.iucn.org/deoxygenation](http://www.iucn.org/deoxygenation) (from 7 December 2019)

<sup>iii</sup> Nature-based solutions are defined by IUCN as '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', [Resolution 69](#), adopted by 1,300+ IUCN State and NGO Members at the *2016 IUCN World Conservation Congress*, Hawaii, USA.

<sup>iv</sup> NYDF Assessment Partners. 2019. *Protecting and Restoring Forests: A Story of Large Commitments yet Limited Progress*. New York Declaration on Forests Five-Year Assessment Report. Climate Focus (coordinator and editor); available at [www.forestdeclaration.org](http://www.forestdeclaration.org)

<sup>v</sup> For more information, see: <https://www.bonncchallenge.org/>

<sup>vi</sup> Maxwell et al. 2019. 'Degradation and forgone removals increase the carbon impact of intact forest loss by 626%', *Science Advances*, 5(10); available at: <https://advances.sciencemag.org/content/advances/5/10/eaax2546.full.pdf>

<sup>vii</sup> Griscom et al. 2017. 'Natural Climate Solutions', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS)*, 114(44):11645–11650; available at: <http://www.pnas.org/content/114/44/11645.full.pdf>

<sup>viii</sup> UNEP. 2017. *The Emissions Gap Report 2017*. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Nairobi.

<sup>ix</sup> Narayan et al. 2017. 'The Value of Coastal Wetlands for Flood Damage Reduction in the Northeastern USA', *Scientific Reports*, 7(9463); available at: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-017-09269-z>

<sup>x</sup> Costanza et al. 2008. 'The value of coastal wetlands for hurricane protection', *Ambio*, 37(4): 241-8.

<sup>xi</sup> Seddon, et al. 2019. *Nature-based Solutions in Nationally Determined Contributions: Synthesis and recommendations for enhancing climate ambition and action by 2020*. Gland, Switzerland and Oxford, UK: IUCN and University of Oxford; available at: <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2019-030-En.pdf>

<sup>xii</sup> For IUCN's submission on the LCIP platform, see:

[https://unfccc.int/files/parties\\_observers/submissions\\_from\\_observers/application/pdf/877.pdf](https://unfccc.int/files/parties_observers/submissions_from_observers/application/pdf/877.pdf)

<sup>xiii</sup> For IUCN's recent submissions on gender and climate change, see [here](#) and [here](#).