



Why 2020 matters

In the 1980s, climate change was considered a matter for the future. In 2019, we faced the harsh reality of climate change. Studies and reports have indicated that we are almost at the brink of a planetary crisis. The results of the 25th United Nations Climate Conference of the Parties (COP25) appeared grim. Most people involved in these negotiations and climate action feel as if it is another year of failure. Even though the nations fail to come to a consensus on climate action, there is still hope as they agree that there is an urgent need for action. When we look back at the major conferences and reports (e.g. IPBES, Global Resources Outlook, etc.) of the past year, pointing to climate breakdown and biodiversity loss, we can feel that 2020 will determine the fate of our 'earth'. The word 'earth', and not 'humanity', as we must not concern about ourselves but in fact ALL other living organisms' survival. However, we are the sole responsible species for the current status of Earth.

The IUCN Red List update published earlier last year shows that extinction now threatens a third of all assessed species. The IPBES Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services reveals the health of ecosystems on which we and all other species depend is deteriorating more rapidly than ever. IPBES Chair, Sir Robert Watson cautions that 'We are eroding the very foundations of our economies, livelihoods, food security, health and quality of life worldwide'.

During the last ten years, the carbon dioxide gas in the atmosphere [has raised by 4%](#) to 410.27 ppm: the highest level for the last several million years. This is despite all commitments made during since the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol and up to the Paris agreement. The year 2019

concludes a decade of exceptional global heat, retreating ice and record sea levels driven by greenhouse gas emissions from human activities. Average temperatures for the five-year (2015–2019) and ten-year (2010–2019) periods are almost certain to be the highest on record. 2019 is recorded the second or third warmest year on record, according to the [World Meteorological Organization](#). The report said the global average temperature in 2019 (January to October) was about 1.1°C above the pre-industrial period (1850–1900).

About 41 per cent of the landmass worldwide is prone to degradation, directly affecting about two billion people and it can worsen due to climate change. Curbing desertification is as crucial as measures to mitigate climate change. Land Degradation Neutrality is a target for the Sustainable Development Goal 15. Even though over 100 countries have committed to achieving the LDN goal, most have not set numerical targets, and no holistic approach has been developed.

We consider this decade as the one which will determine the fate of humanity considered as the ‘Decade of Action’ — the Sustainable Development Goals —set to make a future where nobody is left behind. But without considering all species on earth and our physical environment, SDGs cannot be achieved. To say it is only last year that most of us started valuing the importance of SDGs we now need to value our ecosystems, species, soil and water.

‘Humans depend for their very survival on stable and healthy ecosystems and urgent action is needed in 2020 to get the World on track to a more sustainable future. Rightly as the UN Environment points, [this is a super year for the environment](#)—a make or break year in which key international meetings will set the tone and agenda for environmental action in the decade ahead’. This year, the 196 [Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity](#) will negotiate a new global framework to safeguard all life on Earth.

What the World should now realise and appreciate is that none of the goals or conventions can be accomplished without the active participation of the youth. The World is at present having the largest youth population. It is estimated at 1.8 billion between the ages of 10 and 24. It should be recognised that not mere beneficiaries of the 2030 Agenda, young people are active architects in its development and continue to be engaged in the frameworks and processes that support its implementation, follow-up and review. A wave of change started to appear last year with the voice of youth being listened to in the major forums. However, they are still not been

made part of negotiations and actions for achieving the goals. The World leaders should listen to the new year message by the UN Secretary-General [António Guterres](#), which holds the key, recognising the role the youth have to play for a better world and should involve youth in the process of shaping the future. It is to remember that the youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow.

We enter 2020 with uncertainty and insecurity all around. Persistent inequality and rising hatred. A warring world and a warming planet. Climate change is not only a long-term problem but a clear and present danger. And we cannot afford to be the generation that fiddled while the planet burned. But there is also hope. This year my new year message is to the greatest source of that hope: the world's young people. From climate action to gender equality to social justice and human rights, your generation is on the frontlines and in the headlines. I am inspired by your passion and determination. You are rightly demanding a role in shaping the future. We are launching a decade of action for the sustainable development goals, our blueprint for fair globalisation. This year the World needs young people to keep speaking out, keep thinking big, keep pushing boundaries and keep up the pressure.— António Guterres, UN Secretary-General.

The idea of youth and intergenerational partnership placed into action by IUCN in the start of last century for engaging young people and collaborating across generations for supporting the sustainability movement and the IUCN mission of biodiversity conservation should be considered as a model and adopted by all. And more needs to be done even within IUCN.

What the present generation does will determine the future of the youth. We should generate the momentum now. Engaging young people and collaborating across generations is essential for supporting the sustainability movement and to equip the next generation in the fight for a better world.

[Start now; together, we can achieve it.](#)