

State Visit by French President François Hollande to the Philippines

Round Table on Climate Change

Theme 2: Green Economy: resilience and finance

Thursday, 26 February 2015

Remarks by IUCN Director General, Inger Andersen

Ministers,
Excellencies,
Special Envoy of the French President for the Protection of the Planet, Mr. Nicolas Hulot,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be here and I am grateful to the President of France for inviting IUCN to participate in today's round table. This state visit by President François Hollande is a timely opportunity to underline the seriousness of climate change and the importance of reaching an ambitious agreement in Paris at the end of this year, so that we may keep the planet on a trajectory to limit temperature rise to 2°C or less.

Few countries are more vulnerable to climate change than the Philippines, and this country's experience with extreme climate events underlines why ambitious and early action on climate change is crucial.

IUCN's own work around the world, and that of its members and partners, has shown that healthy marine and terrestrial ecosystems play a vital role in climate mitigation, adaptation and disaster risk reduction and offer effective nature-based solutions to climate change.

Initiatives to better manage, conserve and restore forests such as the Bonn Challenge to restore 150 million hectares of degraded and deforested lands by 2020 and the NY Declaration on Forests which extends this goal to restoring 350 million hectares by 2030 can play a significant role in lowering emissions/sequestering carbon.

In addition, these initiatives enhance the productivity of degraded forest and agricultural lands and can also be included within the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) that countries have been invited to prepare and submit in the lead up to COP-21. They therefore serve to contribute both to national development priorities such as sustainable agriculture and environmental rehabilitation, as well global efforts to curb climate change.

Better management, conservation and restoration of ecosystems also can help vulnerable communities in better adapting to climate change and reducing risks from natural disasters.

Healthy, well-functioning ecosystems enhance natural resilience to the adverse impacts of climate change and reduce the vulnerability of people. Ecosystem based Adaptation offers a valuable yet under-utilised approach for climate change adaptation, complementing traditional actions such as infrastructure development.

The co-benefits of this approach not only help communities in addressing their climate adaptive deficits but also contribute towards enhancing local economies which are mostly based on natural resource use in low income countries.

A cost benefit analysis (CBA) of sustainably managed coastal resources on Olango Island illustrated that sustainably managed coral reefs and wetlands yielded annual incremental benefits from fisheries and tourism of up to US\$ 1.45 million.

Coral reef valuation studies, for example, indicate that the Philippine's reefs are contributing an estimated US\$1.35 billion to the national economy, and that "one square kilometre of healthy reefs with some tourism potential produces annual net revenues ranging from US\$ 29,400 to US\$ 113,000."

These are striking examples based on evidence from the field, yet we do not have thorough knowledge of such benefits at a national scale. In 2014, IUCN released a study which identified the extent of remaining knowledge gaps for six countries, including the Philippines.

In order to fill these gaps, IUCN, through its strategic partnership with the Government of France, will conduct a study appraising the economic effectiveness of Ecosystem-based Adaptation in the Philippines, to be released at the upcoming COP in Paris, in December.

We are eager to work with our Filipino partners and will involve all the stakeholders through a consultative process to maximise the value for decision-making at the local and national levels.

As a former Vice-President for Sustainability at the World Bank, I am keenly aware that any meaningful mitigation and adaptation efforts will require financing. We therefore welcome the fact that at least two of the eight strategic objectives the Green Climate Fund is aiming towards are well-aligned with our ecosystem approach. We acknowledged that ecosystems are only one part of the overall equation, but consider that they should be fully recognised.

IUCN is committed to supporting the French presidency and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in delivering a successful outcome in Paris. We stand ready to assist countries in ways that align with their national priorities, especially our hosts today, the Philippines.

Thank you.