



IUCN intervention in Talanoa Dialogue discussion session on “Where are we?”

Sunday 6 May 2018, 09:30-12.30, Talanoa Group ‘Bua’

Thank you Madam Facilitator – and Bula Vinaka to all.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) – on behalf of its 1300+ State and NGO members – is pleased to participate in the Talanoa Dialogue.

As we heard during the opening session, the impacts of climate change can be seen everywhere today. Vulnerable communities and nations are facing its worst impacts.

The world’s ecosystems – on which millions depend for their survival and livelihoods – are not being spared either.

IUCN’s experts, for instance, have found that more than 80% of the ecological processes that form the foundation for life on Earth are being impacted by climate change today.

Last year, at COP23, we released the World Heritage Outlook report, which found that the number of natural World Heritage Sites threatened by climate change has nearly doubled over the last 3 years – with 1 in 4 sites being impacted currently.

There is a clear need, therefore, for ambitious and early global action on climate change. One that involves all sectors and levels of society – and especially the reduction of fossil fuel-based emissions.

In today’s Talanoa Dialogue, IUCN would however like to draw particular attention to the critical role that conserving, restoring and sustainably managing the world’s ecosystems can play in providing practical nature-based solutions for both climate change mitigation and adaptation.

A recent analysis – led by one of our members – has estimated that natural climate solutions can provide up to 37% of the mitigation needed between now and 2030 to meet the 2°C Paris goal.

Another recent study estimates that wetlands helped to avoid over US\$ 600 million in direct flood damages during Hurricane Sandy in 2012.

Moreover, investing in the world’s ecosystems also provide a range of other benefits, including water regulation, livelihood support, and biodiversity conservation.

The Paris Agreement explicitly recognises the importance of appropriately conserving and enhancing natural sinks and reservoirs of all types, including forests, biomass, oceans and all other terrestrial, coastal and marine ecosystems. It calls upon UNFCCC Parties to take action in this regard.

A number of Parties – including several IUCN State Members – have included a range of ecosystem-based mitigation and adaptation measures in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

This is to be warmly welcomed. But more can be done.

A recent analysis of NDCs that IUCN did shows that even though 77% of NDCs submitted to date contained references to forests, only 20% of those include quantifiable targets, and only 8% include targets expressed in terms CO2 reduction or avoidance.

This suggests that considerable potential remains for countries to further enhance the ambition of their future NDCs.

A practical nature-based solutions initiative that IUCN has championed in recent years is the Bonn Challenge. This is a multi-partner initiative which aims to bring 350 million hectares of deforested and degraded land into restoration by 2030.

Achieving the Bonn Challenge target is a real opportunity for unlocking the untapped mitigation potential of ecosystems. Estimates suggest that meeting this target could sequester between 1 to 3 billion tonnes of CO2 each year and generate annual benefits worth US\$ 170 billion from other ecosystem services.

To date, the Bonn Challenge has secured over 160 million hectares in restoration pledges from around 40 countries.

Yet, we are conscious that success cannot be measured in terms of pledges alone. How to move from pledges to action remains the key question? And how can we ensure the necessary enabling conditions – including appropriate policies and financing – so that countries feel confident to incorporate these pledges into their NDCs?

In conclusion, I would like to also like to draw everyone's attention to the vital role that local communities – particularly women and indigenous peoples – are playing as stewards of these valuable natural resources on the ground.

Nearly 25% of the world's tropical forest carbon is estimated to be managed by indigenous peoples and local communities.

As they are the ones most often at the frontline of climate change impact and action, it is critical that their needs and concerns be always taken into account.

Thank you once again for this opportunity to participate.

Delivered by:

Dr. Sandeep Sengupta

Global Coordinator – IUCN Climate Change Portfolio
International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)