

Unite for Nature on the path to 2045: A 20-year Strategic Vision for the Union

Congress Document CGR-2025-2.5-1-[Rev42](#) Annex 1



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Foreword

IUCN is the world's largest and most diverse global environmental network, and a powerful, collective, and influential voice for nature.

At its founding in 1948, IUCN was one of the first international organisations committed to the protection of nature. From then on, the Union has created the fertile ground that links governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and Indigenous Peoples under one roof working together to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature.

By harnessing the experience, resources and reach of over 1,400 Member organisations and the input of some 18,000 experts in its Commissions, as well as its National and Regional Committees, Secretariat and Council, **IUCN is THE global authority on the status of nature and the measures needed to safeguard it.** The power of the Union comes from its convening power, scientific expertise, evidence-based approach and policy innovation to unite behind our vision of a ***“just world that values and conserves nature.”***

Over the past 75 years, IUCN has catalysed and delivered upon the global conservation agenda. It has supported policy and legal frameworks around the world to take root. It has also nurtured the conservation movement globally, pooling the world's scientific knowledge to set the global conservation agenda. However, **the world is changing**, and IUCN now aims to position itself in a way that will safeguard nature and inspire all of society to act.

This ambitious 20-year Strategic Vision for the Union sets our direction for the future and suggests how IUCN will respond to the urgent planetary crisis. There is opportunity and hope, however that window of opportunity is closing. **IUCN is ready to set a powerful direction to inspire transformational change, with urgency and purpose.**

IUCN has carefully considered a wide range of stakeholder views as part of the consultation process for the **20-year Strategic Vision**. The process has listened to many voices, their harmony, nuance and occasional discord equally enriching this strategy.

Dovetailing into this high level 20-year Vision document, the IUCN Programme 2026–2029 will define an implementation plan for the next four-year timeframe, including **specific goals and targets**. This separate document will give the reader more specific detail of what IUCN will do to achieve its vision and mission.

This 20-Year Strategic Vision document inspires confidence in the Union. It is a high-level strategy that articulates our ambition and direction of travel. We thank all contributors around the world for their time and commitment to this strategy process. **These transformations are only possible when we act together.**

The next 20 years must be nature's time. With the state of our planet under threat, and the impacts of over-exploitation of nature, species loss, ecosystem degradation and health risks increasing, IUCN will deploy all its resources to safeguard nature and ensure an equitable approach to conservation action.

Let us unite for nature on the path to 2045.

Key messages

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KM.1 IUCN is a unique, multilateral conservation network, THE trusted voice for nature, that brings together more than 1,400 government and civil society Members from 170 countries, as well as over 18,000 conservation experts in its Commissions, *“to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and ensure that any use of natural resources is both equitable and ecologically sustainable” (IUCN Mission).*

KM.2 There is an urgent need to make transformative global change to address the interlinked crises of biodiversity loss and the multiple changes facing the planet. Rising resource consumption, increasing pollution, climate change, and persistent inequality are placing stress on nature and biodiversity, and their resilience like never before. Solutions lie in addressing biodiversity loss and the impacts of other change processes in a more integrated manner.

KM.3 This member driven 20-year Strategic Vision outlines how IUCN can play a vital part in delivering transformative impact in three areas: conserving nature and biodiversity effectively; addressing the drivers of nature loss; and advancing a more just and equitable society. It will do this by scaling up existing conservation action, addressing root causes of biodiversity loss and environmental degradation, and evolving the roles IUCN plays to address this.

KM.4 IUCN is uniquely positioned to play a leading role in delivering these global transformative impacts. Building on critical achievements for nature over the last 75 years and mobilising its extensive knowledge and network of nature experts, it can align with the other global targets and ambitions, such as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework¹ as well as future global targets as they are agreed, to make vital change for nature.

KM.5 We will scale up our core resilient and sustainable conservation action in five key areas: species-level conservation; effective area-based conservation; ecosystem conservation and restoration; addressing the nexus of nature and the multiple global changes facing the planet; and a rights and equity-based approach to environmental justice.

KM.6 We will focus nature conservation in eight transformational areas to address drivers of biodiversity loss: climate change adaptation and mitigation; aligning financial and economic systems with nature; food systems and sustainable agriculture; One Health; green, just energy transition; sustainable cities; regenerative blue economy; and water security and stewardship. This is fundamental change in our business model.

KM.7 We will deliver these changes by enhancing six catalytic roles IUCN plays in nature conservation: convening and networking; science, knowledge and data; policy and advocacy; capacity strengthening; mobilising resources for conservation action on the ground; and advancing education and awareness building. Clear, collective communication will be key.

KM.8 We will lead and adapt. We will become more adaptable, agile, united, innovative and inclusive in our work together across the Union. We will engage more with the private sector and education sector to drive change.

¹ Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity

162 **KM.9 IUCN will develop a stronger, more resilient financial model.** Diversifying funding beyond
163 official development assistance, raising more flexible and unrestricted funds to reduce risk,
164 increasing sustainability, and investing in this vision for the Union. We will work more effectively
165 across the Members, Commissions and Secretariat to achieve this.

166 **Executive summary**

167
168 The world is changing rapidly and there is an **urgent need to respond to the interlinked global**
169 **crises of biodiversity loss and the multiple global changes facing the Planet.** Rising resource
170 consumption, over-exploitation, persistent inequality, increasing pollution and accelerating climate
171 change are placing stress on the planet like never before.

172
173 These drivers have caused the extinction of many species and have driven a further quarter of all
174 remaining species to the brink of extinction. Yet, humans have the opportunity to change the course
175 of our actions. **IUCN will bring about transformational change for nature and people,** and our
176 human relationship with nature, so that nature will continue to thrive into the future.

177
178 IUCN is a unique, multilateral nature conservation Union that brings together over 1,400
179 government and civil society members from 170 countries, as well as over 18,000 conservation
180 experts in its Commissions, Regional and National Committees, and the Secretariat.²

181
182 The Union has catalysed collective change for over 75 years – creating a living legacy for the
183 preservation of nature. Established in 1948 IUCN was one of the first international organisations
184 committed to the protection of nature and played a leading role in setting up the environmental
185 movement.

186
187 IUCN established The Red List of Threatened Species™, an essential global tool for monitoring
188 biodiversity and guiding conservation priorities. It has helped establish and manage many of the
189 world's protected areas through the World Commission on Protected Areas. IUCN has been
190 instrumental in developing many international environmental standards, including the Nature-based
191 Solutions (NbS) standard (seen as a gold standard in nature conservation). We have also helped
192 pioneer many initiatives focused on Indigenous Peoples and social justice.

193
194 IUCN has been a driving force behind international environmental policy and legislation across a
195 range of topics, from the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna
196 and Flora to the World Heritage Convention and beyond. More recently, IUCN has been a leading
197 voice in the Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction treaty³ and has contributed to
198 the increasingly critical realm of ecosystem risk assessment and ecosystem accounting.

199
200 IUCN has committed to providing knowledge and data to all these and many other global initiatives,
201 demonstrating the critical need to preserve biodiversity for a safer and more secure planet for
202 nature and people, notably through IPBES.⁴ We will continue to do so in these domains and others
203 that will arise, such as chemicals, waste and pollution⁵, and will ensure that responses remain
204 integrated and interconnected.

² IUCN One Programme Charter

³ *Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction*

⁴ Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

⁵ In 2025, the UN will seek to establish a third scientific policy platform – the Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution, forming a comprehensive scientific support system on three planetary crises.

As it approaches its centenary, the Union has an opportunity to reaffirm its direction and recommit to bring about the needed global transformations for both people and nature. ***Unite for Nature on the path to 2045: A 20-year strategic vision for the Union*** is a guide for the Union toward its long-term vision of a “just world that values and conserves nature”.

Over the next 20 years, IUCN will continue to deliver its core work focused on its mission “to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and ensure that any use of natural resources is both equitable and ecologically sustainable”.

This vision also clearly identifies that, to rise to the challenges of our time, we need to examine the ways that people impact nature, as well as how people depend on nature and conserve it. People and nature are inextricably linked. It is this delicate and critical balance that will guide new directions for the Union in the coming decades. We must live within the planetary boundaries, which are already threatened, while leaving no-one behind.

We will continue to lead and influence the global environmental agenda. This is not business as usual. The ever increasing and interlocking crises of biodiversity loss, climate change, ocean acidification, environmental degradation, desertification, health, water shortage, **environmental crime**, and pollution (among many others) pose a fundamental threat to the well-being and health of people and planet, now and for future generations. The world is currently **not on track to meet the Paris Agreement 1.5°C target**, which means there is a significant risk of irreversible adverse impacts for both nature and people. This will drive conflict as accessing limited resources becomes ever more pressing. Ambition and action are therefore needed to address this overshoot and to manage and mitigate its anticipated negative consequences. Climate change will make nature conservation and resilience both more pressing and more difficult as it impacts species and habitat losses ever more deeply. **The Union will respond and act urgently in this fast-moving context.**

We will do so by striving to place nature at the heart of global social and economic systems, to change the relationship between people and nature, so that nature offers solutions to people, and people steward nature more equitably and effectively. This approach calls on the Union to both protect nature and **respond to the root causes that drive its loss**. It is informed by the scientific consensus that nature is *essential for human existence, economic prosperity, human rights, and good quality of life*.⁶

We cannot do this alone and will work in partnership with others, using our collective strengths as a Union to achieve this.

In our drive towards profound, positive change, **IUCN’s diversity of Member organisations and Commissions are, and will remain, the beating heart of our collective action**. We will continue to grow, expand and scale our core work and influence, coming together to produce new standards, critical data sets and policies to advance our work. We will scale up and accelerate our action to

⁶ IPBES (2019). *Summary for policy makers of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*. S. Díaz, J. Settele, E. S. Brondizio, H. T. Ngo, M. Guèze, J. Agard, A. Arneth, P. Balvanera, K. A. Brauman, S. H. M. Butchart, K. M. A. Chan, L. A. Garibaldi, K. Ichii, J. Liu, S. M. Subramanian, G. F. Midgley, P. Miloslavich, Z. Molnár, D. Obura, A. Pfaff, S. Polasky, A. Purvis, J. Razzaque, B. Reyers, R. Roy Chowdhury, Y. J. Shin, I. J. Visseren-Hamakers, K. J. Willis, & C. N. Zayas (eds.). IPBES secretariat, Bonn, Germany. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3553579>

protect and conserve biodiversity, including genes, species, ecosystems and linked geodiversity, with an **urgency and ambition** that the environmental and social crises demand.

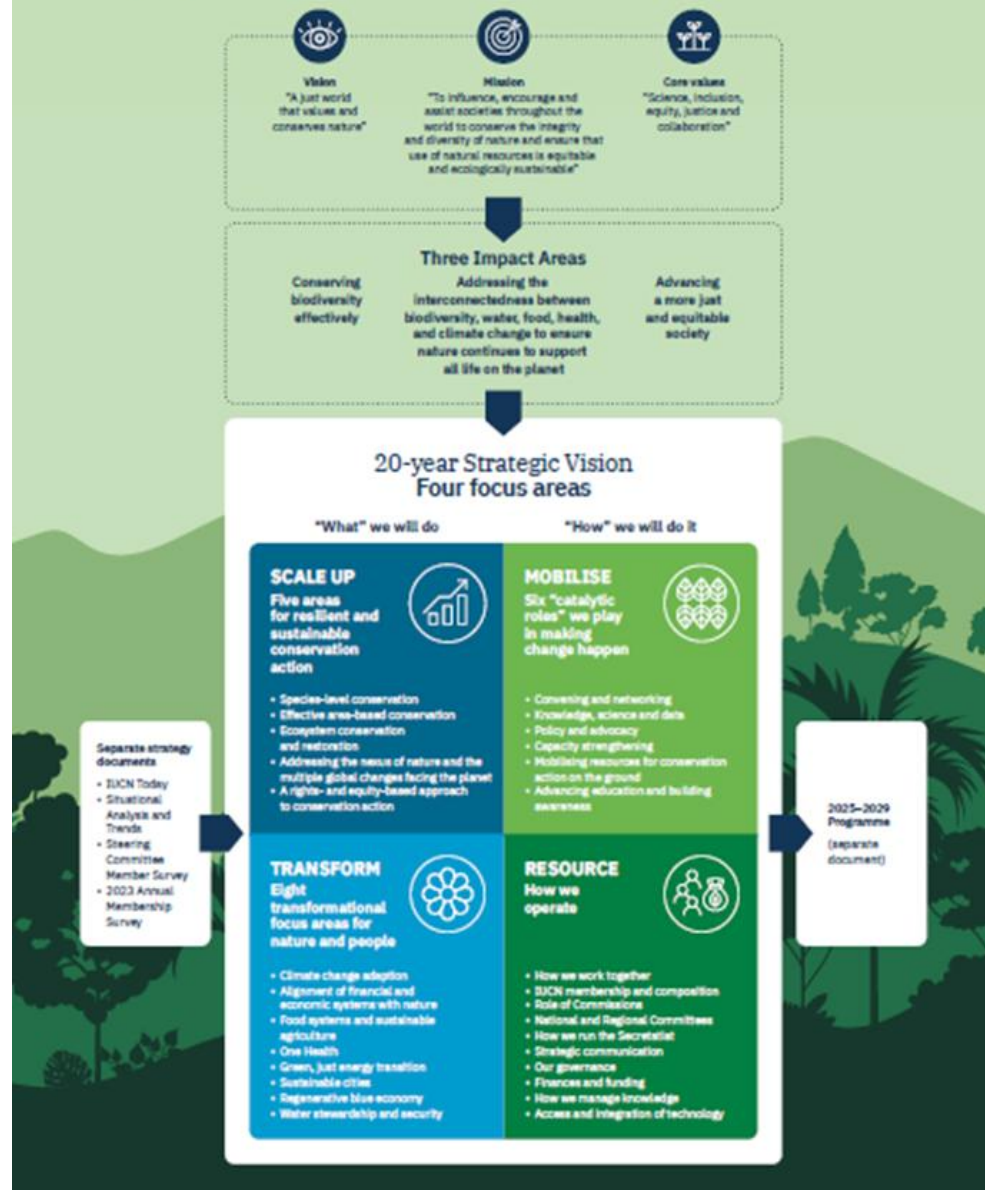
Our collective action will remain founded in our **statutory core values of science, inclusion, equity, rights, collaboration and impact**. It will be guided by principles of social and environmental justice and fairness, while embracing cultural and community-based knowledge, which is necessary to make our mission a reality. We will continue to place human rights and dignity, particularly for those most marginalised, at the centre of our action for nature and people, employing gender-responsive approaches, empowering youth, and recognising and promoting the rights and **traditional** knowledge of Indigenous Peoples. We will maximise the ethical use of new technological innovations across our work to achieve our mission. **IUCN will be compelling, adaptive and agile. It will, as a Union, work to unite its Members and experts around the world.**

We will improve our science, continually learning from our evidence-based approach, and having the ambition to be the **consolidator of science, data and local knowledge** from which to take action.

To achieve our vision and mission in the coming decades, we see **three key focus areas that are essential to our success**: (1) conserving biodiversity effectively; (2) addressing the interconnectedness between biodiversity, water, food, health, and climate change to ensure nature continues to support all life on the planet; and **promoting synergies among conservation responses to each; and** (3) advancing a more just and equitable society. Solutions lie in addressing biodiversity loss and the impacts of other change processes in a more integrated manner. This is the basis of this 20-year Vision and the four-year Programme that flows from it. See Figure 1.

These ambitious changes build on and influence IUCN's four-year Programme and continue to align our work closely with the United Nations **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**, **and the "30x30" target set by** the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other major global objectives. IUCN also has an eye to the future and we will need to help shape and deliver on future targets as they are developed in the next 20 years.

Figure 1. Context of IUCN 20-year Strategic Vision
Source: Authors



CHANGE 1 → SCALING UP

Five areas of resilient and sustainable conservation action

IUCN will focus on scaling up conservation action to protect and conserve species, ecosystems and territories. To do so, we will bring biodiversity conservation to scale in land, freshwater and oceans, underpinned by an unwavering focus on people, equity, rights and stewardship, in five key areas:

1. Species-level conservation;
2. Effective area-based conservation;
3. Ecosystem conservation and restoration;
4. Addressing the nexus of nature and the multiple global changes facing the planet; and
5. A rights- and equity-based approach to conservation action.

A key focus will be to **ensure that the use of natural resources is both ecologically sustainable and equitable**, as per the IUCN statutory objectives.

The Union will continue to play an important role in the CBD's ambitions, including "30x30", to help shape the post-SDG environment after 2030 and will advocate for whatever solution has the greatest positive impact for nature.

CHANGE 2 → TRANSFORMING

Eight key transformational areas affecting biodiversity conservation

Leveraging the deep expertise and excellence across the Union, we will focus nature conservation in eight transformational areas in response to key global trends and drivers of biodiversity loss.⁷ These are areas where we will strengthen and develop key expertise, data and knowledge to advocate and mobilise for nature and people:

1. Climate change adaptation and mitigation;
2. Alignment of financial and economic systems with nature;
3. Food systems and sustainable agriculture;
4. One Health;
5. Green, just energy transition;
6. Sustainable cities;
7. Regenerative blue economy; and
8. Water security and stewardship.

IUCN will work collaboratively within these transformational areas for the greatest impact for nature and planet. This will mean, over the next 20 years, intensifying efforts in historically less prominent areas of work, such as sustainable agriculture, 'One Health', energy, and nature in financial and economic systems.

In doing so, IUCN will engage more closely with **new economic sectors and partners, including the private sector and education sectors**, where it can have maximum impact for nature and our planet.

⁷ Annex 2 provides an overview of how each area was identified.

CHANGE 3 → MOBILISING

Six key ‘catalytic’ roles to deliver ambitious solutions

IUCN will continue to identify, support and accelerate ambitious solutions to the most pressing environmental and development challenges facing the planet. We will focus our delivery through six catalytic roles the Union plays to make change happen:

1. Convening and networking;
2. Science, knowledge and data;
3. Policy and advocacy;
4. Capacity strengthening;
5. Mobilising resources for conservation action on the ground; and
6. Advancing education and awareness building.

IUCN will continue to be **THE trusted voice for nature**, built on the authoritative science, evidence-based approach, knowledge and data generated through the Members, Commissions and the Secretariat, and using new technology and innovation.

Convening and networking will be a key focus for IUCN, at multiple levels, to build a stronger and progressive global movement for nature conservation. Similarly, we will build on our global policy and advocacy work, and strengthen our influence at the regional, national and local levels, also boosting the role of Regional and National Committees.

IUCN will continue to focus on capacity-strengthening services for Members, and partners, such as the private sector, closely linked to our knowledge tools and products.

We will also continue to mobilise resources for conservation action on the ground, prioritise the engagement of our Members, particularly in the eight transformational areas, for joint action across the Union.

IUCN will play an enhanced role in creating demonstrable impact through **advancing education and awareness building** within and outside the Union. We will support the leadership and creativity of youth for conservation to embed IUCN’s vision into future communities. We will collaborate with formal and informal education systems through the sharing of inter-generational and Indigenous Peoples’ knowledge to make a powerful change for nature. We will also emphasise the importance of Nature-based Education (NbE) to sustain conservation action and solutions.

The Union should not only be a leading knowledge generation hub, but also a catalytic force to activate a broader movement towards conservation action through engaging NbE. We will build high-impact partnerships to make urgent change happen across the Union and communicate more clearly to achieve this.

CHANGE 4 → RESOURCING

Changes to how we operate, manage and fund IUCN

To fully realise its potential, IUCN will evolve into a more flexible, responsive and influential network, which will require resources from all sources – and not just funding.

We will continue to promote one message and one voice through ‘One Union’– as defined in the One Programme Charter, enabling us to **work together more effectively** to drive conservation action and provide critical data sets for science and policy.

The Union will become an expert communicator to jointly and exponentially lift our messages. We will strengthen diversity, inclusion and effective democratic processes amongst membership, including by strengthening and leveraging the role of the National and Regional Committees.

We will document the **contributions and key responsibilities of different parts of the Union with real clarity**, recognising the roles of: the membership on conservation action; the Commissions on science, evidence and knowledge generation; and the Secretariat on the implementation and coordination of IUCN’s policy, Programme and strong governance, across all components of the Union. We will also look to develop and diversify the Union’s membership and continue to expand engagement.

As we seek to mobilise new and significant resources from all sources for nature, IUCN will build new relationships with existing partners, including **the private sector and education sector** as integral parts of the solution. In addition, we will explore creative and sustainable models of resource generation that both generate impact and contribute to IUCN’s Mission, such as nature-based business.

However, to ensure that the funds and resources get to the ground and to those communities that really need them, we will closely track these funds and resources. This also involves challenging existing power dynamics of money flowing from the global North to the global South. Our work sits in complex operational environments, and we will determine the best approaches and levers to pull, to make the greatest change for nature and also align with financial and donor priorities.

Key to all these changes is the better integration of new technologies and innovation, both in conservation and how IUCN is managed. **Technologies – including but not limited to artificial intelligence (AI) and large data models – offer both significant opportunities and risks for conservation.** Technology also brings real opportunities to enhance collaboration across IUCN as a Union, including by accelerating research, collaboration and communication. IUCN will work on improving the equitable access to the use of technology across the Union.

As all parts of the Union develop, IUCN will **manage its knowledge more effectively**, including investing in new systems and technologies, and by aligning its systems. Similarly, **the Secretariat will invest in long-term organisational efficiency and effectiveness** to improve delivery on our mission and minimise risk.

In support of a strong Union, the IUCN Secretariat also requires a strong, resilient financing model. This will mean diversifying funding beyond official development assistance (ODA), raising more unrestricted funds to reduce risk, increasing sustainability, and investing in this vision. To do so, we will invest in fundraising and bring new fundraising talent into the organisation, as well as strategic capacities to strengthen our thinking. We will employ good financial stewardship, growing the Secretariat’s reserves to ensure that the Union has a strong bedrock from which to evolve.

Implementation, impact and targets

This Strategic Vision sees that we have created a huge amount of science and evidence, and that there is more to achieve. We have supported a large number of robust policies and tools. **We will become more results orientated and with greater urgency.** Our Members value the delivery of conservation action on the ground. **We should always use the best placed organisation across our membership to deliver the impact needed – be those solutions on the ground, advocacy or education.**

The 20-year vision provides an overarching direction, complemented by a four-year Programme, which will provide targets, impacts, and outlining how it will be implemented. Readers should consult that document to see how we will operationalise our ambition in the next four years.

We also recognise that the long-term priorities set in this 20-year Strategic Vision will be regularly updated and tailored to the realities of each region – this is part of the richness and diversity of our Union.

We should also keep quality at the heart of what we do and be seen as a gold standard for the work we perform. In that way, we can maintain our leadership as an effective and trusted partner.

By 2045, we see the world as having shifted to recognising the value of nature as key to the well-being of people – an asset that is truly valued. We see an IUCN that has played a core part in that transition.

Urgent action is needed ...

The future of life on earth depends on the decisions we make today, and IUCN has a key role to play in this ambition.

- **Conservation works.** With proper conservation and protection measures, nature can recover and rebound and become more resilient.
- **A healthy natural world is essential for humanity's health, security and resilience.** Nature plays a key role in addressing the interrelated biodiversity, health and pollution crises. Nature and conflict based around access to natural resources is too often overlooked.
- **The world needs IUCN's powerful Union and leadership now more than ever.** Global issues need global, regional, national and local cooperation, expertise and delivery. IUCN's global reach, diversity, knowledge and experience make it the world authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it.

Table 1: Core definitions

1. **Nature** is defined as encompassing both the non-living components (including geodiversity) and the living components (i.e. biodiversity) of the natural world.
2. **Biodiversity** means the variability among living organisms; this includes diversity within species, between species, and of ecosystems.
3. **Geodiversity** is the variety of rocks, minerals, fossils, landforms, sediments and soils, together with the natural processes which form and alter them.
4. **People** refer to human beings; this includes communities, institutions and civil society.

This 20-year Strategic Vision calls on us all to **renew our commitment to nature**, devote our energy, creativity and persistence to new challenges to bring about lasting positive change, and create together a just world that values and conserves nature.

We ask you to unite for nature on the path to 2045.

1 Introduction

1.1. What is IUCN?

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN or the Union) is a multilateral membership association, uniquely composed of both government and civil society organisations. By harnessing the experience, resources and reach of over 1,400 Member organisations and the input of some 18,000 experts in its Commissions, as well as its National and Regional Committees, Secretariat and Council, **IUCN is THE global authority on the status of nature and the measures needed to safeguard it.**

The role of IUCN is best defined by its mission *“to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and ensure that any use of natural resources is both equitable and ecologically sustainable”*, in order to realise its vision, a *“just world that values and conserves nature”*.

1.2. Why do we need a 20-year Strategic Vision?

The world is rapidly changing. There is an **urgent need to respond better to the multiple interlinked global crises – including biodiversity loss, climate change and consequent disasters, ocean acidification, land degradation, health, inequality, water shortage and pollution** - that are placing stress on the planet and livelihoods like never before.

The Union must act in this rapidly changing context and **sharpen its focus and targets to protect nature and address the root causes driving its loss.** Therefore in 2021, through the Marseille Congress Decision 147, IUCN Members requested the IUCN Council to develop a new 20-year Strategic Vision for the Union, for adoption by the next Congress in October 2025.

The 20-year timeframe enables IUCN's strategy to be more aligned with the longer-term ambitions of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) and to prepare for future agreements.

Dovetailing into this high level 20-year Vision document, the four-year Programme will define an implementation plan for the next four-year timeframe, including **specific goals and targets.** The Programme gives the reader more specific detail of what IUCN will do to achieve its vision and mission.

This 20-year Strategic Vision was developed through a process that followed an iterative strategic framework, including the development of three background studies to underpin our work and identify global trends which IUCN needs to address for the future of nature. The assessment of global trends led to the identification of eight transformational areas which we will address in the next 20 years. A more detailed summary of this process is provided in Annex 1.

Aligned with the four-year Programme development process, this document will be refreshed every four years to ensure that it is adapted to the fast-changing contexts in which we live.

1.3. Structure of the document

The proposed IUCN 20-year Strategic Vision is divided into four main sections, all linked to our vision, mission and values (explored in Section 2).

Section 3 (the ‘**what**’) outlines the proposed contribution that IUCN will make to the key transformative changes that are urgently needed for the planet.

Section 4 (the ‘**how**’) describes how IUCN sees itself in 20 years’ time, and how it will help make these transformative changes happen, focusing on the **six key ‘catalytic’ roles** it will play in its different work areas following IUCN’s Statutes and Regulations.

Lastly, Section 5 (the ‘**Union**’) looks at ways IUCN will operate and be organised to be most effective, including the composition of its membership, the role of the Commissions, governance structure, and how it will be funded and financed.

2 Vision & Strategy

2.1 Our vision, mission and Programme

The 20-year Strategic Vision is driven by IUCN’s vision, mission and core values, and provides strategic guidance for the four-year Programme (as seen in Figure 1). It is also firmly aligned with the IUCN Statutes and Regulations.

The **vision** of IUCN was framed to be timeless. Its rallying call continues to be highly relevant, aligns well with the eight key drivers identified, and hence will remain unchanged. Likewise, the **mission** of IUCN remains extremely pertinent and will not change.

IUCN will pursue its **core conservation values** centred on science, inclusion, equity, justice, rights, collaboration and impact, founded on the fundamental principle that humanity must learn to live within the bounds of nature, while **leaving no one behind**.

IUCN will continue its key role in ensuring that the use of nature is sustainable and equitable for all peoples. This includes supporting the emergence and use of more inclusive action and language on nature to be rooted in the broad cultural contexts in which we work.

2.2 Delivering impact and our part in the global transformation for nature

Transformative change is defined by IPBES (2019) as “*a fundamental, system-wide reorganization across technological, economic and social factors, including paradigms, goals and values*”.⁸ The interlinked global crises we are facing require society-wide and global transformative change to address the pressure placed on our planet.

⁸ IPBES Summary for policymakers of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services, Nov 2019.
<https://zenodo.org/records/3553579>

The key to this transformation is to reshape the relationship between people and nature. There is a need to position nature at the heart of global social and economic systems and thereby offer sustainable solutions to people, allowing them to steward nature effectively.

The key change IUCN is therefore making in this new 20-year Strategic Vision is the **strengthening of its thinking about people's impact and dependence on nature** as both are inextricably linked.

Within this drive towards greater balance, **IUCN will continue to be THE voice for nature.** This vision is therefore focused on **three ambitious impact areas:**

- **Conserving nature and biodiversity** effectively.
- **Addressing the interconnectedness between biodiversity, water, food, health, and climate change, to ensure nature continues to support all life on the planet;** and
- Advancing a more **just and equitable society.**

To deliver on our vision and mission, we will develop and resource four transformations:

- 1) **Scaling up** our existing conservation action in five areas, to protect and conserve species and ecosystems, deal with the drivers of nature loss, and strengthen our rights-based and equity-based approach;
- 2) **Transforming** eight key areas in order to address the root (human) causes of biodiversity loss;
- 3) **Mobilising** behind six key catalytic roles that the Union can play to drive these changes, including mobilising resources on the ground, capacity-building and advancing education; and
- 4) **Resourcing** how changes can take place, and focusing on how all the constituents of IUCN will work better together, how to be best organised, and how to be financed.

This is a fundamental shift in our business model – addressing the core drivers of threats to nature and biodiversity, rather than just responding to them.

3.Towards 2045

3.1. Scaling up IUCN's core existing work in five areas of resilient and sustainable conservation action

This section outlines the five areas of conservation action that IUCN proposes to scale up. It is recognised that the areas are interlinked, thus a **holistic, integrated, evidence-based and inclusive approach to scaling up** will be adopted. The approach will be designed to be adaptable and resilient to changes in the external environment, **identify the linkages with**

global crises and recognise regional and local diversities around the globe. It will endeavour to be **more rooted in local knowledge**, leveraging the extensive expertise of local communities and conservation on the ground. Detailed implementation strategies, goals and targets are outlined in the four-year Programme.

We will scale up five core areas of IUCN's work, the first three of which sit under the umbrella impact of conserving biodiversity effectively: 1) species-level conservation; 2) effective area-based conservation; 3) ecosystem conservation and restoration; 4) addressing the nexus of nature and the multiple global changes facing the planet; and 5) a rights- and equity-based approach to conservation action.

In all five scaling-up areas of conservation work, IUCN will have a clear link to **effective governance** which sits as a cross-cutting theme.

IUCN's science, data and evidence must be captured across genes, species, sites, ecosystems and processes so that we have the fullest picture of nature on which to base our action.

Species-level conservation

Safeguarding against habitat and biodiversity loss is essential to conserve nature. It is also critical to recognise that the diversity of genes, species and ecosystems will help support adaptation to global changes impacting the planet, and equally important to acknowledge that conservation strategies and tools need to account for these changes to ensure sustainable results. In conjunction with in situ conservation, ex situ conservation will increase at pace to ensure that the most threatened species can thrive in nature again.⁹

Secondly, the unsustainable and illegal use of wild and commercially exploited species is a major driver of extinction risk, imperilling just under one-third of threatened species. Ending illegal and unsustainable use, and ensuring any remaining use is fully sustainable, is our vision in this 20-year strategy. We recognise that for some species, it may not be possible for any use to take place sustainably.

Thirdly, invasive alien species drive biodiversity loss, impact food and water security, and pose risks to human health and economies. Integrated governance, international collaboration and effective management can halt introductions and reduce impacts.

Species-level conservation: IUCN will bring species-specific conservation action – in particular for species in the wild – to scale by: supporting and advocating for ambitious biodiversity policy, plans, action and legislation at all levels; supporting the work of frontline organisations; and advancing ex situ conservation practice through its strong membership of zoos, aquaria and botanical gardens.

IUCN acknowledges and endorses the value of the third kingdom, **Fungi**. Fungi play critical roles in our ecosystem function yet have barely been acknowledged to date. Fungi maintain the

⁹ Bolam, F. C., Ahumada, J., Akçakaya, H. R., Brooks, T. M., Elliott, W., Hoban, S., Mair, L., Mallon, D., McGowan, P. J. K., Raimondo, D., Rodríguez, J. P., Roe, D., Seddon, M. B., Shen, X., Stuart, S. N., Watson, J. E. M., & Butchart, S. H. M. (2023). Over half of threatened species require targeted recovery actions to avert human-induced extinction. *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, 21(2), 64–70. <https://doi.org/10.1002/fee.2537>

necessary broad biodiversity, in ecosystems ranging from grasslands to forests and estuaries to oceans.

Sustainable use of species: Establishing social, economic and policy mechanisms to ensure that any use of nature is sustainable (and legal, equitable and safe) is a priority for IUCN. Education, sound governance and communication are essential in bringing about the behavioural change necessary to ensure that all uses of species are sustainable, legal and safe. To advance needed knowledge and practice, expertise across IUCN's Commissions and Members will be critical. This Vision sees the end of over-exploitation of biodiversity – there is a need to be bold and change our relationship with nature.

Responding to invasive alien species: Over the next 20 years, IUCN will continue to use its world-leading data, knowledge and guidance to support policies, plans and their implementation to prevent the introduction and manage the impacts of invasive alien species. The Union will also convene key stakeholders, including the private sector, at all geographical levels to advance integrated governance processes, improve policy coherence, and share data and best practices.

Effective area-based conservation

Effective area-based conservation is fundamental to restoring and conserving the richness and abundance of life on Earth. Scaling effective area-based conservation through effective management and networks of protected areas, other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs), and Indigenous and traditional territories, help protect the intrinsic rights and values of nature, IUCN will also use Nature-based Solutions (NbS) to address societal challenges facing humanity, and provide benefits to Earth's climate, human health and well-being.

Expanding the protected and conserved area estate: Currently, only 17% of terrestrial areas and 8% of marine areas are protected, and many of these areas are either managed ineffectively or not situated well enough to achieve lasting and effective biodiversity conservation. IUCN will continue to develop and provide scientific, technical and policy advice, and advocate for scaling up global and national systems of well-connected and effective marine, inland water and terrestrial protected and conserved areas that result in successful outcomes for the conservation of biodiversity and the well-being of humankind. IUCN will do this based on principles of sound design and science, effective management and equitable governance.

Guiding the protection of the right places for biodiversity: IUCN will also focus on protecting those terrestrial, inland water and marine areas that have the best chance of halting and reversing biodiversity loss. IUCN will continue to develop and use tools and data to help countries focus on the areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, such as Key Biodiversity Areas. Effectively conserving and managing these areas through ecologically representative, and well-connected and equitably governed systems will be fundamental to meeting the ambitious goals of the KMGBF, particularly the “30x30” target, and future global commitments.

Building capacity for conservation:

Expanding area-based conservation also means expanding the workforce required to manage them effectively and fairly. Park rangers are responsible for managing large tracts of the planet's lands and waters yet are often underutilised, under-recognised and under-equipped. Recognising

that this strategic document extends to 2045, accepting the GBF's target of conserving global area of 30% by 2030, will require a workforce six times bigger than it is today. These staff also need to be equipped, trained, deployed and supported to ensure that they do their work effectively, ethically and fairly, in cooperation with local communities. Over the next 20 years, IUCN will help mobilise the resources necessary to support these essential workers.

Ecosystem conservation and restoration

Restoring degraded habitats enhances biodiversity and geodiversity, bolsters resilience against global change crises affecting the planet, supports livelihoods and protects cultural values. More targeted action – with adequate finance and the right tools and approaches – will be needed to conserve ecosystems, water, fisheries and forestry ecosystems, and take priority landscape restoration to scale.

Ecosystem conservation: This will be achieved by leveraging and improving current tools and standards and applying new technologies, while honouring and supporting the rights, knowledge and contributions of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. It will require mobilising the rich and vast expertise across Commissions and Members, working with partners to address shortfalls, and enhancing partnerships to transform how Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women and youth are engaged in achieving equitable area-based conservation at scale.

It will be vitally important in ecosystem conservation to acknowledge the appropriate and considered use of nature's assets as identified in our mission as well as to address unsustainable extractive activities.

Ecosystem restoration: In the next 20 years, building on our role in the Bonn Challenge and other restoration commitments, IUCN will serve as the engine to drive ambitious global restoration targets at the national, regional and local levels, unlocking investment, as well as supporting just, equitable and measurable implementation on the ground.

Addressing the nexus of nature and the multiple global changes facing the planet

Global change processes such as climate change and the consequent disasters, ocean acidification, desertification and land degradation (to name but a few) pose a fundamental threat to nature and people. Without a positive shift in addressing the impact of these global changes on nature, the risk of dramatically missing environmental targets will continue to increase. This will engender numerous feedback loops that accelerate biodiversity loss, trigger tipping points and cause irreversible and adverse planetary impacts, and will become a significant driver of conflicts around the world.

It is also increasingly clear that acceleration in biodiversity loss is deeply connected to these multiple global change processes. We must act to slow down the impacts. These global change processes impact biodiversity directly, as highlighted by IPBES and the 16th Session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC16), resulting in restructuring of ecological communities as species adapt, move or are extirpated, and directly and indirectly impact human health and well-being.

Five aspects of this nexus are particularly consequential.

1. While biodiversity enhances resilience against the global changes impacting our planet, **greenhouse gas emissions from the conversion of natural ecosystems and unsustainable land and water use and management** remain major contributors, accounting for nearly a quarter of greenhouse gas emissions.
2. Global change processes **impact biodiversity directly**, resulting in restructuring of ecological communities as species adapt, move or are made extinct.
3. Global changes resulting from greenhouse gas emissions also drive **numerous indirect impacts on ecological processes**, perhaps most severely through greater intensity and extent of fires, altered hydrological cycles and a changing ocean.
4. **Humanity's responses to the interlinked global change crises have** the potential to worsen biodiversity loss still further through uncoordinated and poorly planned sectoral responses. This could be, for example, through poorly designed and sited renewable energy infrastructure, unsustainable and unsuitable harnessing of bioenergy with carbon capture and storage, nature-based carbon removal methods with inadequate social and environmental safeguards, or via unproven and unregulated geoengineering approaches. Biodiversity action needs a global change lens, and action to address global change needs a biodiversity lens, and both need a One Health lens as well as a social inclusion lens.
5. **Inequitable approaches** that widen societal divides within and across countries can hamper efforts for realising effective pathways for biodiversity conservation.

Urgent action is needed to enhance nature's resilience and support society to adapt to the multiple global changes affecting the planet, particularly for vulnerable species, communities, ecosystems and territories. Any approach requires integrated policies, coherent laws and a just, equitable transition to solutions that reduce humanity's footprint on nature.

In the next 20 years, IUCN will play a pivotal role in bringing data, knowledge and evidence to bear on the impacts and the multiple drivers of nature loss and advocate effectively for resilient socio-ecological systems and for the most ambitious reduction in global greenhouse gases possible. It will be bold and call different bodies and the private sector to account. It will formulate policies and pathways to address the huge impact nature and people will feel – and provide and help mobilise real solutions for change. **The Union will respond and act urgently in this fast-moving context.**

A rights- and equity-based approach to conservation action

Justice and equity

IUCN will advance and evolve its rights-based approach and environmental justice throughout its work. This speaks to nature democracy and a rights-based approach, ensuring **everyone has a voice and is listened to** – a key role of the Union.

Environmental justice affirms the ecological unity, the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction. It demands that public policy be based on social,

cultural and environmental safeguards, including free, prior and informed consent, mutual respect and justice for all peoples, free from discrimination or bias. Environmental justice mandates the right to ethical and responsible access to and use of land, territories, species and renewable resources, and embeds the right to life, the right to speak, and to be heard of environmental defenders and whistleblowers.

Conservation efforts must go beyond listening to actively reshaping governance and laws to ensure equitable rights and address power imbalances in access to natural resources and their management. By embedding fairness and the rule of law into our approach, we can safeguard biodiversity and ensure that communities thrive. IUCN will support action where we see crimes that affect the environment and environmental defenders.

IUCN is committed to advancing gender equity and equality and deploying gender-responsive action, particularly through women and girls' empowerment, as a prerequisite for sustainable development.¹⁰

Indigenous Peoples

With particular focus on **Indigenous Peoples** and local communities, IUCN will act decisively to:

- promote and support the voice of Indigenous Peoples as key stewards of nature, in developing policies, regulations, and as part of global advocacy;
- promote local and traditional Indigenous knowledge in conservation practices and tools;
- generate evidence from the ground up on the role of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, highlighting particular threats to biodiversity in their territories.
- support environmental defenders and Indigenous Peoples, enhancing their visibility in public spaces at national, regional and global levels.
- empower and build the capacity of IUCN's Indigenous Peoples' Organisation (IPO) Members in the positioning of their agenda and learning from them.

Youth

IUCN will increase its focus and work on **youth as a key steward of nature**, supporting their voices in policy, public awareness and educational initiatives.

More active engagement with youth will be supported, particularly at the local level, and built on global initiatives such as the Youth Advisory Committee established in 2024. Ensuring inter-generational knowledge and innovation are shared, especially within Indigenous Peoples' groups and local communities, will be key to ensuring that youth can maximise their positive impact on nature.

3.2. Focusing on eight key transformational areas affecting biodiversity conservation

¹⁰ IUCN (2018). *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy: Mainstreaming gender-responsiveness within the IUCN programme of work*. IUCN Council. Annex 9 to C/95/8.
<https://www.iucn.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/iucn-policy-on-gender-equity-and-equality-october-2018-english-only.pdf>

IUCN will mainstream nature conservation in **eight transformational areas** in response to the major global drivers of nature loss (see Figure 1). These are areas where we aim to develop or strengthen deep expertise, data and knowledge to advocate and mobilise for nature and people.

The identified areas require a holistic and integrated approach. Four in particular – climate change adaptation and mitigation, aligning financial and economic systems with nature, water security and stewardship, and One Health – are cross-cutting agendas.

Within each of these transformational areas, the use of natural resources will be considered more fully, along with their supply chains, as invoked in our mission “to ensure that any **use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable**” (see Figure 1). The same vision highlights the need for place-based and localised approaches, where people, nature and cultural heritage are brought together to create powerful change.

Addressing these new areas will require enhancing the roles that IUCN plays and development in the areas of education, communication and technological innovation, which are covered in Sections 3 and 4. They will also require operational, organisational and financing changes across IUCN, all addressed in Section 4 and Annex 3 (the Finance Strategy).

To focus decisively on the eight areas, all parts of the Union will need additional resources and capabilities. However, we must remain on track in our core conservation and scaling-up work which implies phasing and prioritising our work and collaborating closely across the Union to avoid duplication or conflict of priorities. All the transformational areas identified are important, although some IUCN constituencies may be better positioned to lead on these areas immediately, and others may need to build up their capacity. Collectively, all of IUCN's constituents can play a role.

We have also deliberately not ranked these transformational areas because priorities change within different regions. Equally, many of these transformational areas are interlinked and any change has complexity and must be treated in a holistic way.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation

Through scaling up our core conservation work, IUCN will address deeper transformative change in support of both climate change mitigation and adaptation. How sustainably the world advances economic and social development will be key for the future of nature, and to drive each transformational area.

Nature-based Solutions (NbS) can play a crucial role in climate change mitigation and adaptation, such as through securing food and water resources and security, removing and sequestering carbon, alleviating poverty and vulnerabilities, reducing the risk of future pandemics and other crises, and contributing to One Health, among other areas.

Addressing the interconnectedness between biodiversity, water, food, health, and climate change to ensure nature continues to support all life on the planet will require the implementation of integrated solutions to deal with the impact of global changes including nature-based solutions. Standards, incentives and regulations must guide the transition.

IUCN will inform and advance action by:

- identifying and prioritising climate-related threats to nature through relevant tools and data (such as risk of forest fires, droughts, flooding, soil erosion, landslides or hurricanes, among others);
- developing and implementing practices to conserve climate-threatened genes, species and ecosystems (such as coral reefs, for example);
- expanding high-integrity NbS for adaptation and mitigation;
- reviewing and assessing emerging geo-engineering approaches and developing new models and scenarios to assess their impacts;
- mobilising conservation finance and resources, in support of ecological integrity and social justice;
- promoting and sharing best practices of integrated solutions to the dual nature-climate crisis; and
- integrating nature better into climate policy and legal frameworks at all levels.

By 2045, climate change will likely bring significant challenges, but swift action can mitigate impacts. Combining technology, policy and societal shifts with 2025 initiatives like updated climate plans offers hope for a sustainable future.

Alignment of financial and economic systems with nature

A major hurdle to the Union's vision is the realignment of financial and economic systems in such a way that they **work in tandem with nature**. This is an area that is so far-reaching that it cuts across all the other transformational areas. The transition to sustainable, equitable economies thus requires better assessment, valuation and measurement of nature's contributions to economies.

Progress is underway, spearheaded by both governments and businesses through practices, such as natural capital accounting, disclosure of impacts and dependencies on nature, and adoption of informed targets based on science, evidence and data, and changes in behaviour.

Nature is the foundation of economies. People depend on natural resources for food, water, clean air, raw materials, business investments, job generation and as a source of tax revenues. Connecting people with nature presents sound economic opportunities.

We will purposely engage with economic systems to address the **harmful economic subsidies** across many sectors, including agriculture, fisheries, forestry, plastics and fossil fuels.

Engaging the private sector

Building on our successful work, IUCN will continue to **engage the private sector effectively**, which is also a key part of any future solution. IUCN will accelerate this transition at four levels:

- **Policy level** – IUCN will inform and influence private policy and regulatory frameworks that ensure full accounting of natural capital and require businesses to mitigate, identify, disclose and address their impacts and dependencies on nature.
- **Business practice level** – IUCN will work with businesses across sectors to apply credible approaches to the identification and mitigation of their impact on nature in value and supply chains, with strong linkages to human rights and equitable distribution of benefits.

- **Finance level** – IUCN will work with partners to shift towards nature-positive investment and mechanisms as a default across financial markets and to help build and share equitable and socially fair financial models for channelling investments into conservation.
- **Scaling up** – IUCN will build on its NbS and nature-positive work, with the private sector as a partner to take the work forward at scale.

Our ambition is not only about holding the private sector to account for the damage they do to nature, but to contribute to ways that improve their practices and help to prevent and eliminate damaging practices. We want the private sector to see that investing in nature is also good business.

We also see innovation and investment from the private sector as powerful positive forces to make a difference for nature.

IUCN will purposefully engage the private sector to identify the desired changes we wish to bring about and pathways through which Members, Commissions and the Secretariat can contribute. Significant effort will be undertaken to integrate nature into public sector economic policies and measurement by strengthening existing alliances.

Food systems and sustainable agriculture

Unsustainable agricultural practices (both crops and animals) are a key driver of biodiversity loss globally, including forest cover¹¹. Agriculture and food systems – gravely threatened by multiple planetary change processes – are also a major source of livelihoods for many of the world's poorest populations and are fully interconnected to issues of equity and rights¹², particularly local empowerment and respect of livelihoods. In fact, food security is critical for society in every country.

IUCN will catalyse further implementation of sustainable, equitable agriculture and food systems, working across all its constituent parts to:

- identify and promote sustainable approaches and practices, including using local species, and promoting sustainable land management to build resilience (for example, through regenerative agriculture, agroecology and traditional Indigenous Peoples' practices;
- innovate, learn and provide evidence and guidance for NbS;
- mobilise interest and actions regarding soil conservation and soil health;
- foster good governance and dialogue between all stakeholders for sustainable landscape management – including forest management – and conservation of ecosystem services; and
- advocate for strong policies and enforcement, investments and monitoring approaches linking climate change, productivity and biodiversity conservation.

IUCN will drive forward this agenda by helping promote education around sustainable agriculture, including sustainable livestock practices and agroforestry.

¹¹ IUCN (2024). *Agriculture and conservation: Living nature in a globalised world*. IUCN Flagship Report Series No. 2. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. <https://doi.org/10.2305/AMHX3737>

¹² FAO (2022). *The future of food and agriculture – Drivers and triggers for transformation*. The Future of Food and Agriculture, no. 3. Rome, Italy: FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0959en> (Summary version available in [Arabic](#), [Chinese](#), [French](#), [Russian](#), and [Spanish](#))

In 20 years, IUCN will be a key partner of higher education institutions to evolve curricula and practices to ensure that the gap between innovative solutions and local and scientific knowledge is closed.

One Health

'One Health' is an integrated, unifying approach to balance and optimise the health of people, animals and ecosystems. It recognises that human, wildlife (plants, animal and fungi) and ecosystem health are fundamentally interconnected and interdependent. One Health seeks to combat health risks at the animal-human – ecosystems interface, including antimicrobial resistance. Animals include both wild and domestic species. It brings together actors across sectors to identify risks, innovate and act at all stages of pathogen and disease management (existing and emerging) – from prevention at source through to response and management. It offers significant benefits for people and nature.¹³

IUCN will greatly increase its contribution to One Health by:

- providing relevant data, knowledge and guidance to scale up work that addresses biodiversity, and animal and human health;
- convening dialogues for policy convergence (for example, across climate, agriculture, forestry, wildlife management, water, public health and education);
- mobilising finance to help prevent health risks and support scaling up of community-led action;
- ensuring wildlife health, by helping to prevent pathogen spillover and prevention of zoonoses; and
- maintaining strong connections with international One Health frameworks, in particular the One Health Quadripartite (FAO, UNEP, WHO, WOAHA).

Green, just energy transition

The transition to renewable energy, critical to avoiding catastrophic climate change, is picking up pace. At the same time, we know that limiting global warming is not possible without healthy ecosystems, which provide essential carbon sinks and adaptation opportunities. Therefore, it is essential that the rapid energy transition is implemented in a manner that mitigates impacts to biodiversity and contributes towards nature-positive goals. In addition, a sustainable energy transition will also need to be inclusive in respect to Indigenous Peoples and local communities. A specific focus will be mining of minerals and metals essential for future energy transition and placement of solar and wind farms and associated infrastructure.

IUCN will inform and support a just, green transition through its core conservation areas by:

- leveraging its role as a body which proposes and develops global standards and advises regulators;
- developing guidance and tools on nature conservation and renewable energies, including for biodiversity mitigation and enhancement, spatial planning and good stewardship of natural resources;
- advocating for just and precautionary approaches that respect the rights of, and ensure access and benefits for, Indigenous Peoples and local communities; and

¹³ WHO (n.d.). *One Health*. WHO. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/health-topics/one-health#tab=tab_1

- promoting integrated solutions that provide mutual benefits for nature in the development of infrastructure associated with the renewable energy solutions.

IUCN will use the full weight of its expertise across Commissions and Members by convening actors, including the private sector, to influence and set policy.

Sustainable cities

Cities are home to over half of humanity, covering only 3% of land but accounting for 75% of natural resource consumption, with urban population expected to double by 2050¹⁴, due in part to human migration and poverty in rural areas. Notwithstanding, cities offer extensive opportunities for nature and people at scale, through enhanced ecological connectivity, waste management and equitable conservation action in urban plans and investment.

IUCN will emphasise the growing significance of reaching urban publics and urban decision-makers, including access to nature and Nature-based Education (NbE). It will partner with those working on urban green spaces and institutions that educate the public about nature.

IUCN will advance conservation and NbS in urban areas through:

- dedicated guidance and tailored tools to help cities locate, manage and monitor nature;
- helping to link urban and rural areas to promote risk reduction (for example, through restoration);
- encouraging more urban green and blue spaces for people's health and well-being;
- engaging and increasing IUCN's urban membership to support increased knowledge, action and networks; and
- leveraging IUCN's policy influence to scale up action.

IUCN recognises the importance and challenges of **rural communities and those living in proximity to cities**, as the movement towards urbanisation continues, such as in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia, and where the equitable use of resources and water is critical.

Urban consumers often contribute to over-exploitation of biodiversity beyond urban areas. In the next 20 years this will be addressed through science-based-behaviour change and will link to our awareness building ambition (Section 4.2).

Regenerative blue economy

The ocean and coastal areas are important areas for biodiversity conservation and incredible geodiversity, provide food for over 3.2 billion people, and offer major economic opportunities. The blue economy¹⁵ is likely to grow significantly through shipping, mariculture and ocean-based climate solutions.

¹⁴ World Bank (n.d.). *Urban Development*. World Bank. Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/overview>

¹⁵ Blue Economy is described as "sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and jobs while preserving the health of ocean ecosystem" (World Bank, 2017, June 6.) Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/infographic/2017/06/06/blue-economy>

IUCN will influence and accelerate a shift to a regenerative blue economy, based on strong global frameworks¹⁶.

- advancing conservation and restoration of coastal and marine biodiversity;
- informing and advocating for action across major areas of economic action, including shipping, fisheries, aquaculture and ocean-based renewable energy, businesses in coastal areas and tourism.

IUCN will lead action on coastal and marine conservation (informing when and where through data and standards) and safeguarding nature, including key marine biodiversity through **Marine Protected and Conserved Areas** and conservation of marine species (which ties in with ensuring that use is sustainable and legal). It will continue to promote binding instruments on marine biodiversity – such as the Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement – the High Seas Treaty and the Antarctic Treaty System-Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources. Its expertise and action will be leveraged across Commissions and Members to set guidance for a regenerative blue economy and set, implement and monitor targets at the local, national, regional and global levels.

Water security and stewardship

Effective water stewardship preserves habitats, improves ecosystem services, protects migration routes and helps mitigate climate change and other global crises. It is also essential for the resilience of people in many places where drought is prevalent.

Mobilising the Union's expertise, policymaking roles and convening, IUCN will act to improve water security and stewardship everywhere, including by:

- improving land use planning and use of advanced NbS with hybrid infrastructure to improve water quality, quantity and flow;
- protecting and conserving areas to safeguard freshwater resources, including free flowing rivers, surface and underground water flow;
- promoting equitable river basin planning and governance, particularly for Indigenous Peoples and local communities, using a rights-based approach;
- promoting community-based approaches to freshwater fisheries management;
- advocating for improved infrastructure regulation in river systems, including dams; and
- promoting fair financial mechanisms to ensure the sustainability of water provision and conservation.

IUCN acknowledges the comprehensive value of **freshwater** environments. It will make every effort to uphold the comprehensive value of freshwater biodiversity and their ecosystems, and the roles they play in supporting natural processes within inland waters as well as connected terrestrial and marine systems.

¹⁶ Including implementation of the [Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction Agreement](#) (BBNJ)

Figure 2. Enabling transformational change
Source: Authors

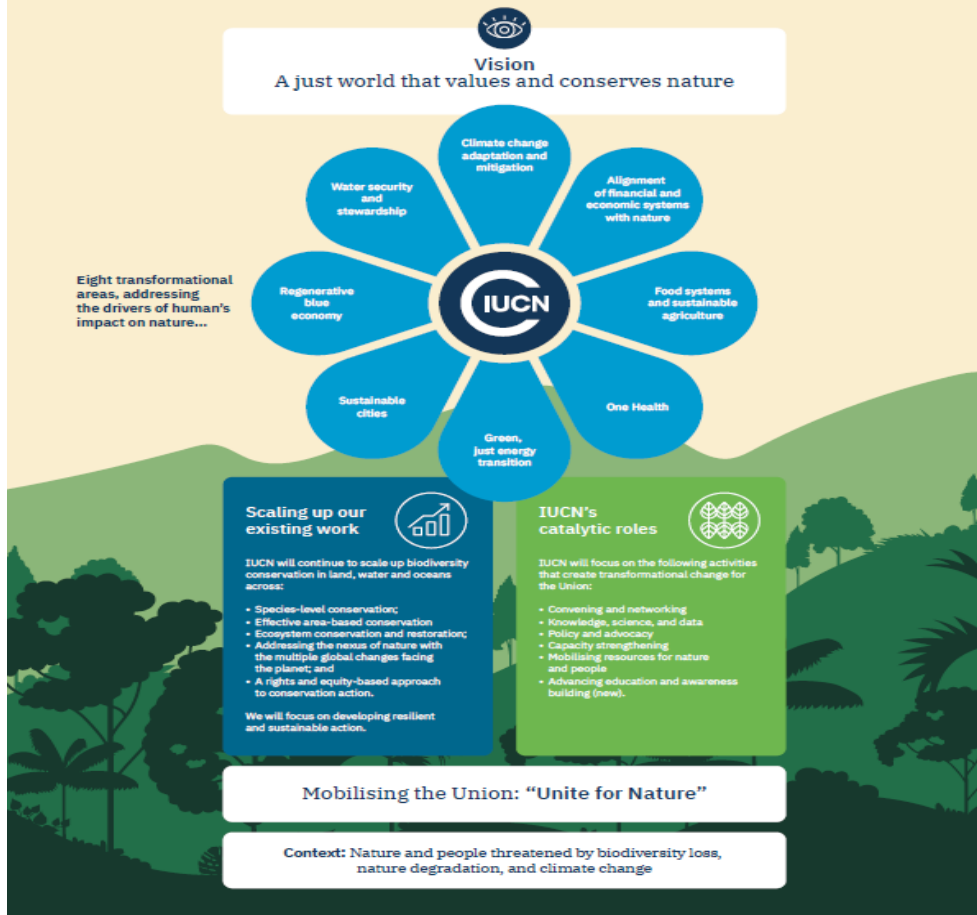


Figure 2. Enabling transformational change
Source: Authors

4. Making Change

4.1. Driving collective action

In 20 years' time, this Strategic Vision sees IUCN as:

- A **convening powerhouse**, bringing together diverse voices to achieve its vision;
- The **key source of knowledge and data about nature**, effectively leveraging technology and innovation through credible data sets and knowledge products based on IUCN standards; and
- An authoritative, agile and **integrated global network** of Members, Commissions and partners that protect nature.

By 2045, we also see a new role for the Union in advancing education and awareness building. Nature-based Education (NbE) is an entry point for cultivating the next generation of conservation activists, along with building awareness of the importance of nature with the general public.

The Union will continue to lead the influential environmental agenda, strive to place nature at the heart of global social and economic systems, maximise the power and influence of the membership and collective action, and form high impact partnerships for nature as our ambition over the next 20 years.

We will continue to promote one message and one voice through 'One Union' – as defined in the One Programme Charter. We will continue to listen closely to all voices.

The Union will work hard to define and explore the roles of IUCN's main components: Members, including the Council, Commissions, National and Regional Committees, Secretariat, and their respective contributions to governance and programme delivery (see Section 5).

4.2. Enhancing and integrating IUCN's six catalytic roles

We envision that each area of our work will broaden and grow in the next 20 years. This growth will be thoughtful and coordinated to maximise IUCN's impact and ensure financial sustainability (see Figure 3).

Roles cannot be completed in isolation – we aim to become bigger than the sum of our parts, actively listening to voices at all levels and sharing our knowledge. **Key to this change will be aligning, mobilising and strengthening Members and Commissions, but also listening more to grass roots organisations.**

We will mobilise around six key 'catalytic' roles to deliver ambitious solutions.

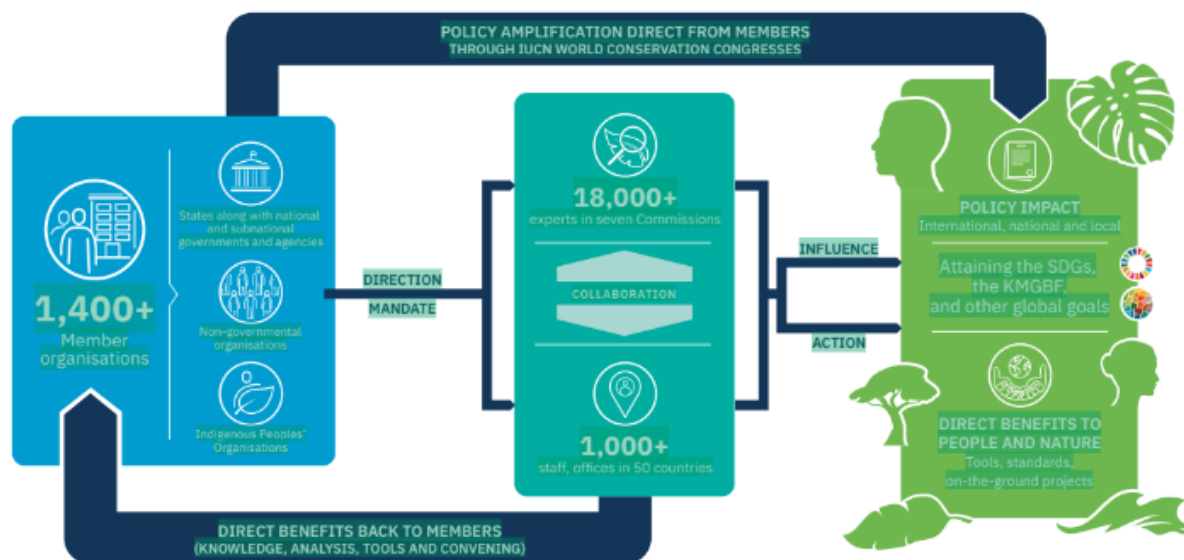


Figure 3. Amplifying the power of our knowledge
Source: Authors

Convening and networking

Bringing together a wide range of actors for dialogue, discussion and debate to address long-term transformational changes needed for nature

IUCN will continue to be a **powerful multilateral, multi-stakeholder convenor**, bringing together our membership, Commissions and diverse audiences, such as the private sector, donors and youth. This is incredibly important in an increasingly polarised world.

Key to developing our networks will be the exploration of innovative and technology-driven mechanisms to make them even more inclusive and increase the participation of under-represented groups.

Knowledge, science and data

Guiding conservation with robust science, data and evidence

IUCN will marshal the knowledge and data generated through Members, Commissions and the Secretariat, and use these to develop data sets and standards for nature. Knowledge, science and data also encompass the management and development of science-based products as well as the application and integration of the traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

1. IUCN will remain as **THE trusted voice for nature** and continue to ensure and develop robust scientific evidence and validated information, especially important in an age of social media and artificial intelligence (AI). We will keep quality and science at the heart of what we do and will be regarded as the gold standard for data and knowledge.

Commissions are key for the provision of knowledge and data. The channels for information-sharing with all Members and Commissions will be improved. IUCN will bolster its role as a **knowledge-sharing platform** at global, regional and national levels, sharing knowledge through IUCN-led partnerships and coalitions.

Growth in this area will reflect the following considerations:

- Developing new and tailored knowledge products for Members, recognizing that access to IUCN knowledge products is one of the most important benefits to Members, and that the finance and private sectors' appetite to contribute to biodiversity outcomes is increasing, requiring sound metrics and methodologies to measure impacts on nature;
- Understanding that knowledge products will be specifically targeted towards, and meet the needs of, end users to maximise impact;
- Developing educational and awareness -building partnerships;
- Developing and learning to use new technology, particularly AI, in designing tools and knowledge products, and ensuring equitable access for all users and ethical rigour in its application; and
- Exploring the greater use of citizen science.

IUCN will invest in communicating knowledge through effective case studies; this is designed to lead to action.

IUCN's science, data and evidence will be captured across species, sites, ecosystems and processes so that we have the fullest picture of nature on which to base actions. In 20 years we aim to be the definitive library for all data and standards.

Policy and advocacy

The ability to create change for nature from the local to the global level.

Members greatly value the conservation and environmental policy work that IUCN does.¹⁷ The Secretariat will aim to increase Members' engagement in global, regional and national policies, expanding influence into the transformational areas to ensure that biodiversity is effectively addressed and conserved.

The Union's advocacy and policy engagement has effectively influenced important global frameworks and targets, and advanced multilateralism, including the SDGs, Paris Agreement and KMGBF, and several multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). **IUCN will strengthen this work at the global, regional and local levels through its Members, as well as through Regional and National Committees, and Commissions.** Specifically, IUCN will use its technical and scientific knowledge and positioning to advocate for the enforcement of existing policies, adaptability and resilience of ecosystems, advocating for those local areas already beyond or approaching important 'tipping points' and where ecosystem degradation is accelerating.

Legal and regulatory frameworks

Interlinked global, regional and national regulatory frameworks regulate use and access to nature. These regulations can align economic, trade and social issues or bring about sometimes unintended negative consequences. Many of these frameworks do not adequately address fundamental environmental and social issues or are not fully enforced at national and local levels, hindering the achievement of conservation goals.

IUCN will look to forge stronger and more influential links, as well as reinforce compliance, monitoring and accountability with international frameworks, bodies and agreements, and support their implementation at all levels. Specifically, the Union will work through all Members to ensure accountability of the use of natural assets. This will be critical to protect and conserve nature and support equitable access to and **sharing of** benefits of natural resources, including for Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

Capacity strengthening

Empowering and helping others to change (deepen learning and making this more relevant for Members)

The Union will continue to **focus on capacity-strengthening services to Members and other partners** directly and indirectly linked to the use, restoration and protection of nature, with a particular focus on local organisations. There is a demonstrable appetite across IUCN's membership¹⁸ to both receive and provide capacity-strengthening services.

¹⁷ Demonstrated through 2023 IUCN Membership survey results (see Figure 4)

¹⁸ 2023 IUCN Membership survey results (see Figure 4)

IUCN's skill base and capacities will evolve to match constantly changing needs over the coming decades. To achieve the desired change, new partnerships will be forged with, for example, the private sector, and educational and academic institutions. Technology and tools will be used to enhance learning and share experience for Members, Commissions and partners.

Mobilising resources from all sources for conservation action on the ground

Brokering partnerships with, and through, Members and partners, to support focused and innovative conservation action

The Union has demonstrated powerful conservation action since its inception and has succeeded in mobilising greater resources for its mission with its Members and partners. IUCN will build on these accomplishments and continue to implement and identify opportunities for scaling up, especially around the eight transformational areas, and through testing and promoting innovative and joint action across the entire Union. With the facilitation of Commissions and the Secretariat, IUCN will enable, support, mobilise and partner with Members on project design, implementation and execution.

Going forward, IUCN will strive to learn more closely from the science, evidence, knowledge, data practice and impact of its Members, creating a virtuous circle focused on the five areas of conservation action and the eight transformational areas. The **ability to measure and demonstrate the impact of work** across the Union will be expanded, including that of Members, Commissions and the Secretariat, encompassing every element of our work.

Concerning resources from all sources from direct funding and financing of conservation on the ground, see Section 5. The financial strategy is discussed in Annex 3. We will focus on developing high impact partnerships to make urgent change happen.

Advancing education and awareness building

Developing the ways that people can learn more about nature and its symbiotic relationship with people.

Advancing education

The process by which individuals, organisations and communities learn underpins awareness of the intimate interrelationship between people and nature and fuels empowered action. It develops through formal education, academic systems, research, schools and universities, and other pathways, including training, and sharing traditional and ancestral knowledge critical for conservation of nature across generations. Education is an entry point for cultivating the next generation of conservation activists and leaders.

IUCN will work with partners to advance educational systems and approaches for nature, and to support leadership of youth for conservation. Advancing NBE will be a major tool to embed IUCN's vision into future communities.

Increased efforts will be made to build and strengthen connections between the Union and higher education systems, creating a dynamic capacity for education systems to adopt and respond to new knowledge being generated globally.

Awareness building

Awareness building links directly with our education agenda and both are mutually enhancing.

Awareness building through improved communications (see Section 5,6) will be key to influencing and changing people's behaviour towards sustainable use of nature. IUCN will be a reliable source of information to counteract false messages and news about nature and the environment. We will work tirelessly towards this aim.

With the support of the Secretariat, Members will be empowered to use their voices to protect nature in a deeper and more coordinated way.

5. Unite for Nature

5.1. Towards 'One Union'

Delivering on the common agenda within the 20-year Strategic Vision will require an increased effective and meaningful collaboration across and amongst all elements of the Union. To this end, IUCN will **improve operational, communication and management mechanisms** underpinned by strong leadership throughout IUCN's main governing bodies.

We will provide clarity on the roles of each part of the Union and how they engage to deliver the vision and generate change that is bigger than the sum of our parts by recognising the roles of:

- Members on conservation action and programme implementation;
- Commissions on science, expertise, knowledge generation, as well as programme implementation;
- National and Regional committees as providing a regional and national perspective, and coordination; and
- the Secretariat on programme implementation and coordination.

By providing clarity, all bodies can pull toward individual and collective action to reverse biodiversity loss.

Specifically, IUCN will:

- Pursue its objectives through integrated four-year Programmes, which will specify **key goals and targets**. IUCN's work, as approved by Members, will deliver national, regional and global results, and seek out new partners where needed – for example, the private sector and education sector – guided by the Strategic Vision.
- **Improve how the outcomes, attribution and impact of our work is measured and coordinated.**

- Endeavour to **be more grass roots led** in how we manage our work, leveraging the extensive knowledge and expertise of local communities and conservation actors on the ground.
- **Foster the emergence of the next generation of changemakers**, with a specific focus on youth, Indigenous Peoples, and women and girls, leveraging the Union's linkages with educational networks through Members and Commission members.
- **Use our UN observer status to better advantage.**
- **Be sensitive and responsive to future changes** in the complex, adaptive and rapidly changing systems.

We will passionately promote our name, build our brand profile, and work so that key stakeholders will know where to find data and evidence-based solutions to answer their questions. This Strategic Vision will be reviewed every four years as the four-year Programme is updated.

5.2. IUCN membership and composition

IUCN's diverse and multi-stakeholder membership is vibrant. **Members remain IUCN's greatest strength, its most unique asset and they bring significant opportunity for transformative impact.** They are truly the core of the Union.

It is therefore fundamental that IUCN's membership structure is fit for purpose,¹⁹ well-placed to attract and coordinate Members to deliver on its mission, and that Members receive clear benefits from their engagement in the Union. IUCN will continue to build a rich, diverse and inclusive global membership.

As IUCN's membership grows and changes, we will be intentional about how Members are engaged, leveraging different skills and perspectives, and broadening and deepening the membership – in particular State Members and sub-national governments and Indigenous Peoples' Organisations – to more directly influence policy and action. With membership at the sub-national level expected to increase, more cities and states/provinces will be included globally through sub-national representation.

To achieve its vision, IUCN will **seek to align, mobilise and strengthen its Members**, with the Secretariat acting as a catalyst, Commissions coordinating more dynamically with Members, and technology better enabling collaboration and facilitating debate and decision-making across the Union.

The 2023 membership survey shows that each element of IUCN's work is strongly valued by its Members (see Figure 4). Considering our diverse capacities, we will continue to ensure that Members contribute to and benefit from knowledge products, capacity strengthening, implementation on the ground, and advice on policy-related issues that they value.

¹⁹ See also 2019 **External Review of aspects of IUCN's governance**, which highlighted the need to consider the composition and contribution of Members to the Union, and their role between Congresses.

Figure 4. Summary of 2023 Membership Survey
Source: 2023 IUCN Membership Survey

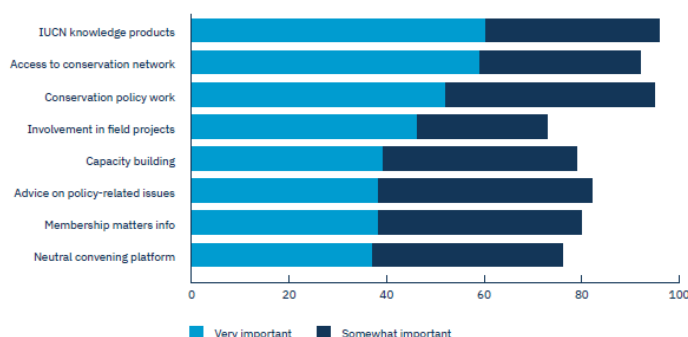


Figure 4. Summary of 2023 Membership survey
Source: 2023 IUCN Membership Survey

5.3. The role of IUCN Commissions

IUCN Commissions are core providers of data, knowledge, standards, expertise and innovation that enable the Union to influence, advocate and act for nature.

As of 2024, IUCN has seven expert Commissions:

- 1) Climate Crisis Commission (CCC), established in 2022
- 2) Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM)
- 3) Commission on Education and Communication (CEC)
- 4) Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy (CEESP)
- 5) Species Survival Commission (SSC)
- 6) World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL)
- 7) World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA).

The rapid growth and engagement of Commissions, as well as their vibrancy and energy, is a key force in the Union. Specifically, there is huge potential to generate greater knowledge and learning to underpin our work. Commissions will continue to lead on cutting-edge solutions, piloting new tools and policies, and strengthening the Union's expertise and advocacy.

Given the importance of the seven IUCN Commissions in driving the work of IUCN, delivering on this vision, and their dependence on volunteer experts, we will: (i) help volunteers build more expertise and ensure deployment is aligned; and (ii) manage expectations of volunteer work more clearly.

Feedback from Members and Commissions during this vision process ranked the role of the Commissions as being pivotal to the Union's coherent functioning in the coming two decades. **We will act more closely to align our work, reporting and sharing knowledge from the Commissions and Members, as well as the National and Regional Committees,** so they can work together more effectively in providing critical data sets, guidance, science and expertise, and in mobilising individuals and institutions, connecting IUCN to a broader public. We will also align the work of the Commissions and the Secretariat and aim to increase resources for Commission work.

We will work to evolve the composition, leadership, membership and volunteering model of Commissions to reflect the future needs of the Union.

5.4. National and Regional Committees

National and Regional Committees are central actors in galvanising IUCN's membership for impact. They play **a crucial role in connecting local action to global knowledge, policy and impact**, and are closest to the needs and views of national and regional Members.

Regional and National Committees will be strongly engaged in shaping the Union's increasing influence in the eight key transformational areas. To do so, their role in expanding and diversifying IUCN membership will be key. They will play a greater role in influencing policies and regulations, advocating for IUCN positions, and implementation of resolutions, while playing a greater role in delivering on the other catalytic roles. National and Regional Committees will also strengthen their links to encourage regional collaboration and learn from each other.

5.5. The IUCN Secretariat

The Secretariat will act as a dynamic and energetic force to catalyse, support, coordinate and drive the delivery of the 20-year Strategic Vision with Members, Commissions, as well as National and Regional Committees.

The Secretariat's central functions contribute to the work of IUCN through clear links to the catalytic roles described in Section 4, and also through the key responsibility for the implementation of the Policy and Programme of IUCN as approved by the World Conservation Congress, in coordination with Members and Commissions²⁰.

The Secretariat will support the implementation of Resolutions as approved by the World Conservation Congress in coordination with Members and Commissions.

The Secretariat acts as a knowledge hub and central point of coordination and communication across the Union worldwide, embedding justice, equity and rights-based approaches, to create meaningful change.

The Secretariat convenes and creates space for dialogue, alignment and partnership building within the conservation sector and beyond, brokering partnerships with other organisations and sectors across the Union and externally.

The Secretariat steers conservation through leadership, knowledge, data and best practices, coordinating policy development and standards setting. It also promotes empowerment and capacity-building, particularly of Members, mobilising resources and investment on the ground so the Union's work can be taken to scale with a stronger coordination and support of Members.

The Secretariat identifies innovation and prospective intelligence for the future. Finally, it communicates IUCN's work, along with advancing education and building awareness of nature.

²⁰ IUCN Statutes and Regulations (p. 54 and p. 55)

The Secretariat will help the Union manage risks, seize opportunities, and measure and make visible the results of IUCN's work, including by **supporting enhanced communications of IUCN's efforts and outcomes**. Its effectiveness will be underpinned by strong financial sustainability, requiring a diversification of income sources.

IUCN's work sits in complex operational environments, therefore the best approaches and levers to pull must be determined to make the most impactful change for nature as well as align with financial and donor priorities.

The Secretariat will carefully consider what management, administration and strategic tools will be needed to fulfil this, working hand-in-hand with our governing bodies to ensure transparency and accountability.

5.6. Strategic communication

This vision sees IUCN crafting a global communications strategy to increase the visibility of IUCN's work and impact – and link into education and public awareness building (see Section 4) to really move the needle for nature.

IUCN has become a trusted source of collective scientific knowledge and will invest in communicating that knowledge in ways that lead to action. Simply communicating that knowledge is not enough. Our increased focus on **measuring impact** will also come with a focus on **communicating our impact** directed not only to the scientific community and IUCN's existing networks, but outward towards the broader public. This involves finding and working through key influencers and with Members' voices who are already strong in different areas.

For IUCN, this is an emerging area of work, and we believe it is equally as critical as the other roles.

We will understand how to use technology to leverage and build key messages and better use the IUCN brand.

External and internal communications will be developed to build awareness of nature and our work and improve the dissemination of data and knowledge. Our global branding and work will be made more visible, with enhanced internal communications that weaves connections among topics and disciplines. It will also help prioritise target audiences and messages relevant to IUCN's Members, donors and partners.

Communications should inspire and engage, and be action orientated to continue to create a sense of urgency for change.

5.7. Governance (including statutory rules)

If we are to deliver our ambition, **sound governance will remain fundamental to ensuring that everyone has a voice, a space for discussion, and is heard**. This will be looked at

through the following specific lenses, proposed by the IUCN Council, the main body charged with oversight of IUCN delivery:²¹

- Participation and decision-making;
- Accountability and transparency;
- Responsiveness and effectiveness;
- Equity, fairness and inclusiveness; and
- Compliance within the law.

Articulating these areas has identified eight core areas which we will improve. Going forward, IUCN will place greater priority on the following eight areas:²²

- i) Improving and enhancing our strategic planning;
- ii) Enhancing monitoring, evaluation and adaptive management;
- iii) Reviewing our membership model;
- iv) Delivering healthy and sustainable finances;
- v) **Strengthening Regional and National** committees;
- vi) Strengthening Council's effectiveness and strategic thinking;
- vii) Strengthening communications; and
- viii) Ensuring the delivery of the 20-year Strategic Vision.

Rigorous and regular monitoring will ensure that IUCN's governance is fit for purpose, and that different actors are empowered to play an effective role in the Union.

5.8. Finances and funding

Financial sustainability is a key focus for IUCN's future, and a core focus of our 20-year Strategic Vision.²³ A full finance strategy is discussed in Annex 3.

The Secretariat has been shifting more to implementing its actions hand in hand with Members, Commissions and partners. This ensures the Union will build and deliver projects together, and mobilise in a way so as to ensure the best placed part of the Union delivers, while also empowering local organisations.

We will further strengthen the mechanisms to be accountable to our partners and donors and make the impact of IUCN's work visible.

Our vision is to utilise the best-placed entities across the Union in a 'whole Union' effort. However, this may further increase IUCN's portfolio risk. Subsequently, IUCN will strengthen its oversight and strengthening roles to balance risks through concrete actions such as strong due diligence processes and capacity strengthening.

²¹ IUCN (1996 & 2022). *Statutes, including Rules of Procedure of the World Conservation Congress, and Regulations*. <https://doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.CH.2021.SR.01.en>

²² Identified from the recent external review of aspects of IUCN's Governance (2023)

²³ Chapter I of the strategy process took a deep dive into IUCN's finances, and an external review of IUCN's finances, delivered in May 2023, was an important preparatory document for work on this vision.

Mobilising IUCN's resources through the Secretariat for action on the ground is also highly dependent on public funding, as most of the financial resource (80%)²⁴ comes from bilateral and multilateral sources. Much of this funding is not flexible: it must be used against the projects for which it has been given in line with IUCN's Programme, and not for the Union's general work. As costs from delivery are often not fully recovered from projects, this places an additional burden on unrestricted resources and reserves. **IUCN therefore requires significant additional free and flexible (including unrestricted) income to reduce risk, build reserves, innovate and sustainably support its core actions.** Such unrestricted, flexible funding is a limiting factor, and as we grow in this area in the next 20 years, fundraising will grow in parallel to achieve this – bringing in new skills to help and to drive additional income.

The Secretariat needs greater levels of flexible and unrestricted funds to support membership action, to generate innovative knowledge and insight, and to support the work of Commissions. This funding is needed to incubate new ideas and invest in the future vibrancy of the Union.

It will be possible to partly address this through greater levels of philanthropic funding from individual donors, trusts and foundations. IUCN will get better at cost recovery. The Secretariat will invest and build opportunities that generate revenue and contribute to the IUCN Mission with (and through) Members – **mission-driven finance**. This may require use of **other funding modalities** to charge for our expertise and knowledge in a more commercial way such as incubating nature-based social businesses. We will do this carefully, while considering actual or perceived conflicts of interest.

The Union will become a better steward of existing funds, investing in creating a more efficient and effective organisation, aligning systems across the Union to enable effectiveness and efficiency, to ensure value for money.

These necessary changes can be articulated as the '**Big 5**' financial concerns (see Financial Strategy in Annex 3):

- 1) Increasing unrestricted income;
- 2) Building reserves;
- 3) De-risking the portfolio;
- 4) Increasing cost recovery; while
- 5) Controlling costs, efficiency and investing in programming that will achieve our mission and future development. We will strengthen our financial governance to achieve this.

5.9. Knowledge management

Section 3 framed knowledge as the science, evidence and data that we hold and use in our work, and how these **feed from local organisations up to global levels**. Equally, strong knowledge management is essential to continue to support and enhance IUCN's knowledge products, ensuring their quality, relevance and effective uptake.

To manage knowledge effectively as IUCN scales up and strengthens its work in new transformational areas, we will invest in sound systems, processes, skills and partnerships – which will be core to implementing the Union's mission.

²⁴ This is based on the Secretariat's figure, not that of the entire Union.

5.10. Access to and integration of technology

Technological change, including but not limited to AI and large data models, offers both significant opportunities and risks for conservation.

Access to the most advanced technology is uneven between and within developed and developing economies, requiring vigilance and investment to improve equity of access, reaching those groups it could not reach before.

Technology brings real opportunities to **enhance collaboration** across IUCN as a Union, including by accelerating research, collaboration and communication. IUCN will assess, learn, validate, harness and guard against the risks of technology to better deliver on these global transformations. Specifically, **AI will be used to help manage and learn from our data.**

6. Annexes

Annex 1: Background – The process we have followed

In 2021, through the [Marseille Congress Decision 147](#), IUCN Members requested the Council to develop a new 20-year Strategic Vision for the Union. The IUCN Council established an intersessional Council Working Group (the 20-year strategic vision Steering Committee, hereafter ‘SC’), comprising IUCN Member representatives, to lead and work with the Director General on this strategic initiative.

The Congress Decision requested the Council to:

- “develop a long-term integrated Strategic Vision that includes a Financial Strategy, and Strategic Plan and other implementation plans, that follow the four-year planning process of the Union”; and
- “establish a clear roadmap to ensure that the Union effectively and efficiently fulfils its mandated objectives, including by actively engaging its membership, while ensuring financial sustainability”.

The SC²⁵ as prescribed in the Congress Decision, is responsible for providing “overall guidance and direction and approving the final draft of the 20-year Strategic Vision for submission, discussion and adoption by the next Congress in 2025”²⁶.

The members of the Steering Committee are given in Annex 7.

The IUCN strategic mission for this process, as defined by the SC is grounded on three main areas:

- An effective “one programme approach”, driving collective efforts, alignment and cooperation among Members, Commissions and the Secretariat;
- A multi-stakeholder approach to membership, academia, multilateral policy platforms and youth networks (amongst others); and
- Empowering IUCN’s regional presence, whilst remaining cognisant of the various existing IUCN roles.

The development process followed an iterative strategic framework shown in Figure 5, which included (in separate documents):

- **IUCN Today** (Chapter I), an analysis based on an external review of IUCN’s governance, finances, relevance and programme implementation;
- **Global Situational Analysis and Trends** (Chapter II), an assessment document of the external trends impacting our work;
- The results of the annual Membership Satisfaction Survey 2023 and review of the membership model (see section 4 for details);

²⁵ Chaired by the IUCN President and comprised of 10 members of the Bureau of the IUCN Council, nine individuals proposed by IUCN Members and appointed by the IUCN Council, and the Director General (in the role of Project Manager).

²⁶ Terms of Reference of the Intersessional Council Working Group on the Development of a new 20-year Strategic Vision. Approved by the IUCN Council, 18 August 2022.

- Deliberations of the SC and Council, including a workshop in November 2023 in Fontainebleau (France), and similar discussions by IUCN's global leadership shortly thereafter.

The strategy map we used to develop this document is given in Figure 5.

Figure 5. The strategic framework IUCN has followed in this process
Source: Mark Salway

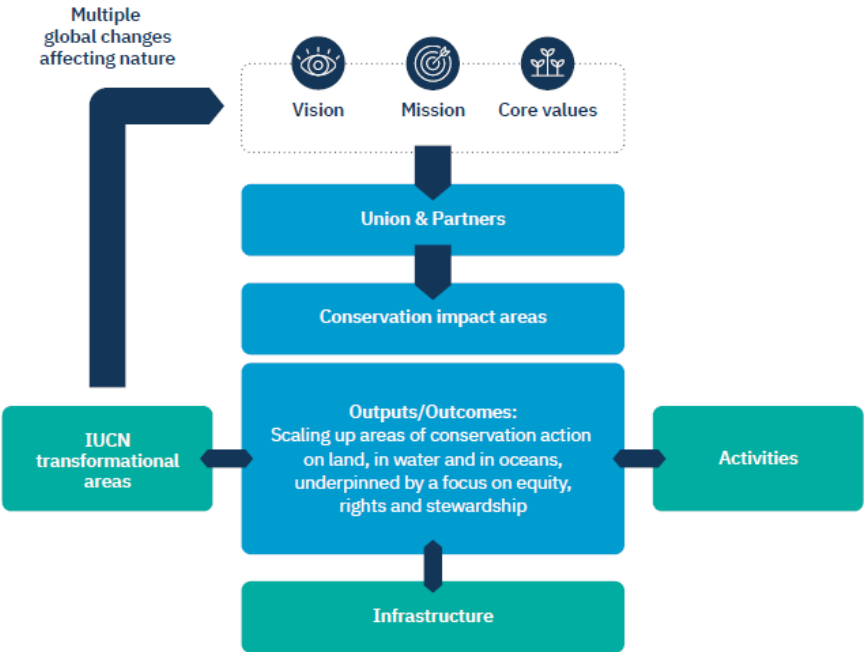


Figure 5. The strategic framework IUCN has followed in this process
Source: Authors

Annex 2: Background – The key global trends impacting nature and IUCN

The analysis of global trends impacting IUCN and its work was completed as Chapter II of the strategy process; this is available as a separate document. As we cannot respond to every trend, **this annex identifies the key global challenges that will be addressed by IUCN and our partners in the next 20 years.**

The analysis arrived at a conclusion that social, political, economic and environmental science and technology factors **continue to be poorly aligned with the promotion of nature conservation.** This key underlying issue has long been recognised by IUCN and its partners and is now being recognised more broadly by society as a whole. The current magnitude of the planetary crises and this broader recognition by society means that IUCN can, and must, make a significant difference in overcoming the challenges faced.

Of the top 10 global risks reported by the World Economic Forum (WEF) for the next 10 years, the **top ones are related to climate change and biodiversity loss.**²⁷ The issues of climate change (SDG13), water management (SDG6), ocean ecosystem management (SDG14), health (SDG3) and species conservation (SDG15)²⁸ sit at the top of humanity's concerns along with the rest of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The loss of nature – our global biodiversity – has always been and will remain IUCN's central concern. The millions of species on land, in freshwater and in the ocean form the web of life. They are the primary source of income for hundreds of millions of people and are an essential part of the history, culture and tradition of every culture on Earth. On average, across comprehensively assessed species groups, The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™ reveals that a quarter of species are threatened by a high risk of extinction in the wild in the medium term. New assessments are also now highlighting the risk of loss of genetic diversity, and risk of ecosystem collapse.

A key driver of this loss is unsustainable agricultural practices – both crops and livestock – but there are other drivers, including unsustainable harvesting of wild species, invasive alien species, urbanisation and climate change.

Population growth, consumption and waste have been identified as major factors putting pressure on nature. IUCN has contributed significantly to protecting ecosystems and species, but we aim to complement this by more comprehensively addressing drivers from agriculture and other economic activities, their impacts and corporate interests. This includes a focus on waste and pollution, which continue to grow. The importance of the circular economy cannot be underestimated.

Unless catastrophic events change the demographic transition patterns, the world population and associated consumption will continue to grow, at least until 2100, with an expected spike in Asia and to a lesser extent in Africa. As a result, we see that future demand for natural resources

²⁷ World Economic Forum (WEF) (2023). *The Global Risk Report*. 18th Edition. Cologne/Geneva, Switzerland: WEF. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_Risks_Report_2023.pdf<https://www3.weforum.org/do>

²⁸ For further information, see: Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (2023). *Thematic Assessment Report on Invasive Alien Species and their Control of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*. Roy, H. E., Pauchard, A., Stoett, P., & Renard Truong, T. (eds.). Bonn, Germany: IPBES secretariat. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7430682>

will be of a much greater magnitude unless demonstrable action toward a change of production, trade and consumption patterns takes place.

The mix of unsustainable land-use practices, climate change, pollution and over-exploitation of natural resources are only the tip of the iceberg affecting life on Earth. In the decades to come, the occurrence of **natural disasters will increase**; we are likely to witness more pandemics and displacement due to environmental degradation, the multiple complex change processes affecting the planet (including climate change), and in turn, conflict. Meanwhile, global power dynamics will continue to shift toward a multipolar world. Emerging markets will come to dominate the world's top 10 economies, and economic power will likely shift from the G7 (advanced economies) to the E7 (emerging markets).

On the productivity front, and on the current trajectory, the dominance of **intensive agriculture** is likely to prevail, causing environmental degradation at a massive scale – on land, water and oceans. Whether intensification and land sparing provide the best pathway to sustainability, or whether extensive production – seeking to allow the persistence of living nature within agricultural systems – provides a better route remains a crucial open question.

Water is intrinsically linked to industry, agriculture, energy and health. Its conservation and rational use will be a key driver of life on the planet. Similarly, scarcity of water and water usage is linked to the increasing scale and threat of drought affecting millions across the world in such places as India and the Horn of Africa. Challenges of water conservation and availability, particularly for disadvantaged communities, are immense.

Close to 72%²⁹ of all water withdrawals are used by agriculture, 16% by municipalities for households and services, and 12% by industries. A total of 2.3 billion people live in water-stressed countries, of which 733 million live in high and critically stressed countries. Currently, 80% of the world's water withdrawals is discharged untreated back into rivers, streams and the ocean, damaging **aquatic ecosystems and human water sources**. Humans withdraw about 4,000 km³ of water yearly, triple the amount withdrawn 50 years ago.

Sustainable cities. Urban populations are expected to grow to six billion by 2045, and urban areas already generate 80% of global GDP, and consume 75% of the planet's material resources. We will work closely with cities to ensure that they minimise their impact on biodiversity and incorporate nature to maximise well-being.

On the **energy** front, investment in renewables and potential important disruption from green hydrogen and fusion power are in play. We also have the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP 28 agreement to start to transition away from fossil fuels.

A key area to engage with will be **science and technology**. The conservation community should stay abreast of advances in technological change including but not limited to AI, large data models, biotechnology, chemistry and geosciences; these tools can offer both significant opportunities and risks for conservation.

However, today's great disparity of investment in innovation in developing countries calls for a significant shift on how science and technology are perceived and used by society; there is a

²⁹ United Nations (2023). *Blueprint for Acceleration: Sustainable Development Goal 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation* 2023. New York, NY, USA: UN Publications. https://www.unwater.org/sites/default/files/2023-08/UN-Water_SDG6_SynthesisReport_2023.pdf

need to ensure that not only a privileged elite receives current and potential benefits. Related to technological developments, new ways of working could include AI as a research and decision advisory tool, and the development of citizen science as a transformative approach.

Current **global financial systems** are inadequate with **conservation finance** being insufficient to halt and reverse biodiversity loss. Equally, the exponential increase in conservation and biodiversity needs will not be addressed by public resources – including international aid – alone. **New financial tools and innovative thinking for resource mobilisation will be critical** in the next 20 years. This will include the development of new financial instruments, use of green finance, and more mainstream investment tools to address funding for nature, as well as **the creation of nature-positive businesses**.

Civil and social conflict, both between and within states, will continue and likely worsen, often exacerbated by environmental crises, and contributing to them in turn³⁰. **Humanitarian aid, refugees, freedom of speech, and development** will therefore also likely contribute to the ongoing challenge of delivering sustainable development. IUCN will ensure that it can engage and stand up for nature in these conversations.

Inequality, war and geopolitics have shown us how each of the key global trends are interrelated. As such, we will develop a much more **integrated approach** to addressing the planetary crises.

We will think in a much more system-led approach, especially in a post-pandemic world. We will frame a long-term ambition for IUCN aligned with the SDGs, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the KMGBF, the UNFCCC and the United National Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), among others, as well as adopt future global targets as they are agreed.

Within this complexity, there is already a **momentum building on ‘biodiversity’**. The use of the word ‘biodiversity’ in public speeches, private sector, well-known global reports and media continues to grow. IUCN and its partners (as a global community) are progressing or succeeding in putting biodiversity higher on the global agenda. We must continue this work of giving ‘biodiversity’ a clear and distinct narrative and explain how we will address it.

³⁰ IUCN (2021). *Conflict and Conservation*. Nature in a Globalised World Report 1. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. <https://doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.CH.2021.NGW.1.en> (Available in [French](#) and [Spanish](#).)

In summary, the key global trends that IUCN urgently needs to respond to are as follows:

- **Population growth, production, consumption and waste.** Part of this is needing to disrupt the current economic model and to place nature at the heart of global economic and financial systems.
- **Food security and sustainable agricultural systems** also linked to water, poverty, genetic resources, climate change, one health and justice.
- Equally important is addressing *inequality* associated with the use of natural resources. This asks IUCN to ensure **stewardship and care of nature**, while protecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities and ensuring environmental justice.
- **Sustainable cities** as an area of concern within population growth and consumption also overlaps with health and reduction of greenhouse gases, as well as disaster risk reduction and water shortages.
- **Energy transition**, linked to mining, pollution and resource supply and looking towards the use of water, solar energy and the effective use of scarce resources.
- **Water security** as humanity approaches a tipping point related to quality and fair access to this critical resource.
- **Science, technology and climate finance** will be powerful tools we can use to counter these global threats.

This list does not tie up exactly with our eight transformational priorities, but it forms the basis of this.

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1829

Annex 3: Financial strategy

A3.1 Introduction

The vision urges IUCN to respond **urgently** to the biodiversity crisis and address the underlying drivers of loss. We will adopt the same urgency in changing our financial strategy, if we are to deliver on this ambition.

Our financial model will evolve and innovate to carry IUCN on the journey over the next 20 years. We will change, using all the financial resources and tools at our disposal – modernising our approach to fundraising, working with the private sector, aligning our financial change with the ambition and plans of the SDGs and KMGBF and future conservation-focused frameworks as they are agreed, while becoming more efficient as an organisation.

To achieve this change, we will **rethink our ways of working and modernise our approach**. Equally, money is not our only resource and is just one of the critical assets that make Members, Commissions and the Secretariat so important and effective; we also have a vast network of knowledge and experience, tools, data and a well-earned reputation and trust. This 20-year Strategic Vision addresses ways to strengthen them all.

The Secretariat will provide capacity strengthening to ensure that all our Members can develop their own financial strategies and remain vibrant organisations. We could be a broker, to facilitate stronger Members helping those with less resources.

We will align the Union's resources more effectively, complementing more mainstream development and humanitarian finances.

Finally, we will more closely monitor and track the flows of money and ensure that resources for conservation action get to where they are needed most. The Union will aim to simplify the flow of money and ensure no community is left behind.

A3.2 Our ambition

The [Marseille Congress Decision 147](#), requested Council to develop a new 20-year Strategic Vision for the Union that includes a Financial Strategy. This annex articulates a financial strategy that dovetails with the vision developed in the rest of this document.

In 20 years' time, IUCN:

- **will be a more responsive, efficient and agile organisation** that uses its resources for programme implementation more effectively and maximises the impact of its funds.
- **will be a respected authority and voice in the eight transformational change areas** defined in Section 3, and use its knowledge, tools and convening power to create demonstrable change for nature in these areas.
- **will have improved and strengthened its existing business model**, providing a platform to develop new and sustainable revenue streams and mission-driven finance opportunities. This is not just about generating greater revenue, but linking our financial workflows to the

1880 impact they create and ensuring these financial flows are directed to the part of the Union
1881 that is best placed to deliver. It is also about mobilising around our catalytic roles to create
1882 even greater change.

- 1884 • **will strengthen how it implements funds and the IUCN Programme on the ground,**
1885 working more effectively with its Members. This includes strengthening the capacity of
1886 Members, mobilising their talent and voice, building alliances for conservation, more
1887 coordinated planning, and ensuring the more effective flow of funds to Members on the
1888 ground.
- 1889 • **will have created a better balance between restricted project-based funds and**
1890 **unrestricted resources.** IUCN will be more innovative, flexible and invest thoughtfully and
1891 purposefully in achieving the 20-year Strategic Vision. Greater levels of unrestricted income
1892 from a wide range of sources will also mean we can follow our own organisational priorities
1893 and intuition.
- 1894 • **will have invested wisely in AI, technology** and large data models which we will leverage
1895 successfully to have a much greater voice for nature and people.

1896 **But above all, in 20 years' time we will see that Members and Commissions deeply**
1897 **acknowledge IUCN's value and remain powerful, dynamic advocates on behalf of the**
1898 **Union.**

1900 **Our current business model will not provide us with sufficient resources to deliver on the**
1901 **20-year Strategic Vision** and this will compel us to challenge the limits (and red lines) we put
1902 on ourselves and our organisation.

1903 There are three steps to change in our finance strategy which we explore fully below:

1904 **STEP 1** Improve and strengthen our existing model;

1905 **STEP 2** Expand our income-generating activities and broaden our approach to growing our
1906 unrestricted revenues; and

1907 **STEP 3** Use mission-driven finance to innovate and grow our impact.

1908 The transformational change in finance will involve prioritisation of resources, as well as **real**
1909 **cultural and organisational change**, to transform our ambitions into reality.

1910 The 20-year Strategic Vision will require funds and resources to implement, and we will be clear
1911 who is the best part of the Union to undertake work, leveraging our Members where possible.
1912 We will also pool complimentary resources within the Union, while addressing perceived and
1913 actual conflicts of interest.

1914 There is a concern that engagement in new areas of work will require reduction in other critical
1915 roles that IUCN plays. We will carefully phase our work, and ensure we scale up our existing
1916 work, while building our investment in the eight transformational areas in parallel.

1917 **A3.3 IUCN's current model**

1918 The current finance model was explored in Chapter 1 (a separate analysis on IUCN Today) and
1919 sees IUCN primarily financed by project funding (official development assistance, or ODA),
1920

which is not flexible and must be used for a specific purpose (80%)³¹, supported by more flexible framework funding from donors (8%), and Membership funds (8%). In addition, there are modest levels of funding from philanthropy and other sources (4%).

ODA funds are important as they enable the delivery of the IUCN Programme, as mandated by its Members. The ODA funds also pay for the majority of IUCN's regional and central infrastructure that, in coordination with Members, implement the IUCN Programme. However, IUCN will be responsive to the considerable shifts in this funding landscape that has made future ODA, particularly for nature conservation, far less certain. This further emphasises the urgent need for this shift.

However, similar to other large non-profit organisations, the portfolio does not always fully cover project costs and certainly does not cover all funds needed for innovation, business development or core functions. Equally, it does not provide money for IUCN's statutory functions, such as the Council, support to Commissions, Regional Conservation Fora, membership engagement and other specific governance areas, or to fund the gaps donors cannot fund. **The framework and flexible funding, philanthropy and membership funds are therefore critical as they provide the unrestricted funds which support the governance, space for innovation and knowledge generation allowing us to operate.**

As such, **as we continue to grow, we need** new ways to increase unrestricted and flexible funds so that this will not continue to be our limiting factor. We will address the pressure on this in several ways:

- 1) Managing our portfolio growth and cost recovery in a deliberate and measured way;
- 2) Investing in fundraising activities, particularly with philanthropic organisations, to generate greater levels of unrestricted and flexible funds;
- 3) Driving efficiency through the organisation to make the best use of existing funds; and
- 4) Using unrestricted funds thoughtfully to leverage greater restricted resources and invest in our transformation.

In the medium and long term, we will diversify our income streams because of the global pressure on the public purse and on project funding. ODA is at significant risk of diminishing or being refocused away from conservation by such issues as direct response to climate change, wars, economic crises and humanitarian aid; we are already feeling this pressure. ODA is primarily given from Western donor governments, and we will have to **adjust our funding model in different regions to be more reflective of contextual differences.**

We will explore philanthropy and fundraising, as well as the potential for nature-based businesses, to diversify our income streams. We will also **explore access to offset and carbon credit mechanisms** which will not only create impact but will allow any surplus to come back to IUCN, enabling more action in support of our mission.

Similarly, we will prioritise the use of our precious core and unrestricted funding to those areas that are not covered by projects, but which allow us to create huge impact, e.g. the IUCN Red List and specialised research in protected areas. We aim to **use unrestricted resources to 'seed fund' new ideas, innovation, and find new solutions.**

³¹ This is based on Secretariat figure, and not that of the entire Union.

A3.4 IUCN's future finance strategy

IUCN has grown gradually over its 75-year history with a recent rapid increase, in part associated with IUCN's relatively new role as a Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Green Climate Fund (GCF) agency. We need a certain size and a strong portfolio to implement the IUCN Programme, generate knowledge, work with our Members and Commissions, and leverage our other activities. We have the strength and the capacity to deliver.

This Strategic Vision sees IUCN growing its presence and portfolio, while:

- carefully managing the growth of the portfolio, by focusing on the eight transformational change areas;
- working more with, and through, Members to deliver our Programme, as approved by the Members;
- increasing our work with Commissions to generate knowledge; and
- capitalising on the catalytic roles we play, making efficient use of these to scale up our work.

Our approach allows us to demonstrate what works, and to learn from this, collecting powerful data to turn into knowledge tools and standards tailored to different audiences.

In the period from 2019 to 2024, 65%³² of all projects included at least one Member or Commission in its delivery. We have an ambition to move towards **a future where all projects will include local Members and Commissions (wherever possible) and with real demonstrable engagement**³³. Where we have the opportunity to work more closely with our Members and Commissions, we will do so. However, this will also change the risk profile of our work. Ensuring the quality of our work, due diligence, capacity-building and oversight will grow in importance.

We will work more with Indigenous Peoples and their communities, specifically those who can share their culture and learning for the future and strengthen civil spaces. This will also help us to inspire youth, recognising that they will be the future leaders and decision-makers.

A3.5 Finance underpinning the vision (p.56)

In the next three to five years, we will stabilise our finances and pilot new ideas that will then allow progressively more innovation and risk-taking over time. The reward is a **financially sustainable Union** that is able to develop and implement new tools to have greater impact for nature.

If we are to make real transformational change for nature in the next 20 years, we will use all the financial tools and mechanisms at our disposal. These spread from purely philanthropic tools to more commercial tools ensuring a fair and equitable approach. While many Members are already using these, some Members may still feel uncomfortable with the tools. We will help Members see the opportunity, so they can see if these tools are right for them or not.

³² Source: Author (created for this document, 2024).

³³ According to IUCN Regulations the Council, the Commissions, the National and Regional Committees, the Secretariat, and the Members whose organisational priorities and capacities permit them to align with the IUCN Programme, shall work together for coherent delivery of the IUCN Programme to achieve the best conservation results.

Articulating the three steps in more detail gives the following:

STEP 1: Improve and strengthen our existing model. This will involve stabilising our existing model and focusing on the path to financial sustainability, including building reserves.

We will maximise and grow our current revenue streams from:

- 1) ODA
- 2) membership income, and
- 3) philanthropy

in a planned and thoughtful way.

We will invest in systems and technology and drive greater efficiency throughout the Union as well as **maintain a greater focus on cost recovery.**

We will begin development of mid- and long-term revenue sources, as well as any associated standards and guidance for Members. New income sources will be explored and our visibility as a Union will be increased through better communications, which in turn will promote increased fundraising.

There is a significant opportunity to provide a platform for State Members to invest in local projects through our Members. This could also include a regranting mechanism. One-third of our existing programme exists around the regranting model and this interest is growing. We will explore this further.

We will step into exploring other ideas or services from later years which could be brought into play earlier.

STEP 2: Expand our income-generating activities and broaden our funding base to grow our flexible and unrestricted reserves. We will aim to:

- 1) grow our flexible and unrestricted philanthropy and fundraising income from trusts, foundations, and high net worth individuals;
- 2) explore developing financial instruments, such as an endowment for specific projects, and green bonds, e.g. for developing Red List tools and knowledge; and
- 3) develop new sources of income from the private sector or explore greater shared opportunities to partner with them. We could also develop income-generating activities through such areas as nature-based accreditation or as a certifier of Nature-based Solutions (NbS). We will increase the number of services and tools that IUCN will offer.

Fundraising: We simply have not invested enough in fundraising and philanthropy in the past; a clear and directive approach will be created as part of the four-year Programme. Investment will be aimed at those areas that are easiest to fundraise from, and where collaboration and partnership already exist. We will challenge our red lines to bring greater unrestricted funds to the Union and invest in the envisioned transformational change.

The private sector: IUCN already works with the private sector, and we will leverage this for our future ambition, while ensuring appropriate standards and due diligence in:

- investing in promising research and development;
- strengthening the investment in NbS;
- ensuring appropriate restoration mechanisms; and

- solving shared challenges.

Working with the private sector is not just about raising money for conservation alone. It also affords us the opportunity to build powerful networks, and to align our interests, expertise and knowledge into partnerships focused on solving environmental challenges. We will leverage our knowledge effectively – developing standards, data and credibility with the private sector.

The private sector is wide and goes from large multinationals to tiny local businesses. Many are already involved in nature. We need to understand the diversity of the sector and what they want from us. We will develop strong communications and capacity to work with them. We will pilot new ways of working to create win-win opportunities (a win for business and a win for nature).

As the commercial world wants to know more about the impact it is having on the planet, there is a real risk that commercial companies will start to consolidate and monetise nature and biodiversity data. Much of IUCN data is a public good, and should remain so, but we can add value to this conversation through our standards, tools and data. We will package this in ways that will meet commercial needs, stay ahead of the competition, and generate funds for the Union. **We have first mover advantage** and deep knowledge, allowing us to take prime position in these spaces.

There is a demand from many Members to **develop revenue-generating IUCN services**. These will be aligned with IUCN's goals and strengths, and include technical advice, applied research, or the development of innovative conservation solutions.

STEP 3: Use mission-driven finance to innovate and grow our impact. We will use mission-driven finance to invest and/or provide technical expertise to help:

- 1) establish and develop nature-based social businesses that create impact as well as financial returns in a sustainable way; and
- 2) explore, pilot and develop the potential for Member access to offset mechanisms and carbon or biodiversity credits, through concessionary finance and social investment. We will work tirelessly to make these equitable and ethical for nature.

The three steps will require a change in culture, as well as the need to develop an investment mindset, to drive impact for the future. We will phase this over the next 20 years as we become more financially sustainable and able to build on this platform. We will work with, and through, Members wherever possible on this ambition.

It is our aim to align all our work and catalytic roles against the eight transformational areas, focusing on programmatic lines of work rather than standalone projects. This will enable IUCN to align complementary resources, and to create programmes of change in these areas. It will be critical to co-create this change with Members, donors and other key stakeholders to ensure that we are all pulling in the same direction.

A3.6 The Secretariat and the Big Five

For the Secretariat, Council is articulating our finance sustainability in both the short and long term as the 'Big 5' financial concerns:

- 1) Increasing unrestricted income and diversifying our revenue streams to ensure flexibility;
- 2) Building reserves and ensuring sufficient reserves to manage through a crisis and invest in our future;
- 3) De-risking the portfolio and proactively addressing long-term risks;

- 4) Increasing cost recovery; while
5) Controlling costs, efficiency and investing in programming that will achieve our mission and future development. We will also strengthen our financial governance to achieve this.

The need to build greater unrestricted income has been addressed previously. It will come from greater levels of fundraising from trusts, foundations and high net-worth individuals, as well as from governments (as framework funding). We will invest here and build new capacities to drive it.

We will look towards greater levels of gifts-in-kind, and not just monetary income. We aim to work closer with partners who can bring skills and knowledge to partnerships that drive solutions to our shared challenges.

Cost recovery will certainly be maximised, ensuring that donors and funders pay a fair proportion of infrastructure costs and all necessary direct project costs. We have started on this journey but can do more. We can advocate for this on behalf of our membership also.

We will use our reserves wisely, to manage budgetary uncertainty, including budget gaps during economic downturns and other unforeseen emergencies, invest in new areas such as technology, AI, better systems and processes, and fundraising, as well as seed-fund new nature-based business.

We will fine tune and make better use of our reserves, while maintaining a sufficient buffer to cover risk. Reserves will be held specifically for future investment, with the option to reduce the level needed by de-risking the portfolio. This can be achieved through thoughtful portfolio growth, solid due diligence, and effective oversight of implementation and execution.

The Big 5 will take considerable effort to achieve, requiring a balance to hold reserves for our security versus the investment needed to ensure transformational change. **It is a real balancing act, which demands aiming with precision.** Without investment, our unrestricted income cannot grow to allow us future flexibility, or to invest in efficiency savings. On the other hand, without enough funds as a buffer of protection in bad times, then this places the Union at undue risk. This balance must therefore be ensured in the short and longer term.

We will invest in integrated, powerful systems that enable the organisation to operate efficiently and take advantage of the digital dividend through working with better technology. We will build better processes and procedures, and the right people with the right skills to support the membership and Commissions to do their work in an outstanding manner.

A3.7 Financial principles of working together

To achieve the articulated transformational changes, and for the future of the Union, we will use all existing capacities in the Union, working together to achieve conservation goals.

At the end of our next 20 years, we will ensure that the conception and implementation of all projects include Members and/or Commissions. Secondly, the Secretariat will establish the added value that each element of the Union provides and by articulating what each brings, build trust and confidence in improving partnerships.

We will collaborate across sectors and with funders to improve the funding tools available to better match funds with gaps in the system and improve the flow of funds to work on the ground, as well as harmonise and reduce the administrative burden in donor reporting requirements.

Private and public investment will be brought to environmental hotspots, making demonstrable change to fragile environments and 'emblematic' ecosystems.

We must have the flexibility to identify and deliver diversified income streams, philanthropy and fundraising. **Our ambition is to improve the Union's impact and increase the overall size of funds flowing to conservation and nature.** Government funds alone cannot meet the scale of investment needed to address current environmental challenges and philanthropy is also not nearly enough, so private investment will also be required. There is an opportunity here, for example, by driving the amounts of investment projected via 'green' investment (pooled investments are rapidly growing).

The Union is unique in that it promotes enhanced cooperation between its governmental and non-governmental Members. We will leverage this to become bigger than the sum of our parts.

A3.8 Timescales: the short, medium and long term

We see the finance strategy as playing out over three different time periods:

- short term, between 0 and 3 years;
- medium term, between 3 and 10 years; and
- long term, between 10 and 20 years.

In the short term, we will address the risk to unrestricted reserves and increase unrestricted funds. Investing in fundraising, nature-based business, use of technology to run operations, and innovation will be started.

In the medium and long term, we will accelerate our fundraising efforts and start developing more nature-based business. We will seek to develop an endowment for use against specific programmes such as the IUCN Red List.

In the longer term, we will explore and start to pilot and support Member access to concessionary finance, biodiversity, and carbon credits and offset mechanisms which will allow Members to maximise the impact they can have for nature and ensure the equitable and ethical use of these. Some Members have already started using these tools such as carbon credits; we will learn from their experience and share this before embarking on any expansion.

The changes in the Strategic Vision cannot be implemented overnight, with only a modest investment to achieve it. As such, we will meticulously phase and plan growth and new initiatives in the financial model, with alignment to funding flows and how each will be funded. Where we see opportunity, we will accelerate our plans.

Because the changes cannot happen without sound financial governance, the improvements needed will be linked to our main governance mechanisms more effectively.

A3.9 Nature-based business and concessionary loans

The final area of the finance strategy is the most forward thinking, and perhaps the area in which the greatest change can be made.

As we look towards greater alignment of finance and socio-economic systems with nature, several excellent opportunities emerge:

- **Firstly, our existing knowledge and standards can be leveraged to create more impactful and revenue-generating opportunities.** This could involve innovative use of, for example, the IUCN Red List, or accreditation mechanisms. Data can also be used to benchmark and hold commercial organisations to account for their impact on nature.
- Taking it a step further, **IUCN could establish funds and help set up new nature-based businesses through our capacity strengthening work.** This has been previously done by setting up funds³⁴ that leverage private sector finance and could accelerate the distribution of capital as well as the development of new businesses focused on nature. Nature-based businesses can be powerful tools for nature in that they create both money and impact in a financially sustainable way – they re-invest any surplus.
- **Finally, such tools can be used as social investment and concessionary loans to open opportunities for nature.** One such example is mangrove plantations. When emissions cannot be avoided, or reduced by taking other actions, commercial carbon credit and biodiversity programmes can be used to create impact in a financially sustainable way.

We will learn from our existing knowledge and share in the best possible way. It includes identifying the mechanisms IUCN could adapt to ensure successful deployment, for example, in strengthening standards and practices to improve uptake, or perhaps as a role in packaging projects into financeable initiatives, or as an investor. Time and money to explore these fields will be needed.

Many Members are ready to go with these ideas now, others are unsure, and yet some feel this is not their path. We will listen to all our Members, through consultation, training and capacity development to enable them to further strengthen their capacities, share knowledge and recognise potential opportunities. Such ideas may require IUCN to bring in external resources and partner with organisations outside of its orbit. **We will learn the language of investment and business.**

It could also allow IUCN to help youth develop and lead nature-based businesses as entrepreneurs for the future of the planet. Linking to universities, the UN and incubators could provide a profound step change for nature, and one already being noticed and exploited by academic institutions.

We will learn from other organisations and Members and develop clear ethical practices to underpin their use.

However, this will be done on a commercial basis and may need to be established in a separate entity. This will give it the best opportunity to be successful, while insulating the risk from IUCN's other business.

The new tools and different ways of thinking will certainly deliver greater opportunity for IUCN to create positive change for nature and people, while using all the tools at its disposal.

³⁴ Note: (i) Blue Natural Capital; and (ii) the New Blue Carbon Accelerator Fund are good examples.

Annex 4: Challenges and risks

In delivering on our goals, we will identify, mitigate and manage the challenges and risks to achieving our vision, among them:

- **Geopolitical turmoil:** How will IUCN continue to advocate for nature against other equally important agendas, such as humanitarian aid? As donor budgets are spread thinly, and with current geopolitical changes and declines in ODA, how do we advocate successfully on behalf of nature at every level – global, regional, national and local?
- **Issues, such as inequality, poverty and social disruption, can hinder us from meeting our agenda:** How can we find solutions for nature which are compelling, adaptable and contribute to equity and inclusion?
- **Funding risk:** IUCN may fail to generate sufficient unrestricted funding for investment or innovation or need to use this against our portfolio rather than for innovation and change. This will be key to any future change.
- **Increased complexity:** There is a risk related to the increased complexity of the transformation challenges, and narrowing space for humanity and nature as we cross planetary boundaries. This will become more difficult to navigate in a context of a potentially shrinking space for civil society.
- **Relevance:** How can the Union stay relevant and proactive as a central actor in finding solutions to issues? How can we manage competition and collaboration to maximise our impact for nature?
- There is also a key risk that **Members, Commissions and the Secretariat fail to work effectively together** and therefore deliver less than the sum of the parts.
- **Narrow range of revenue sources:** How can these be diversified for future financial sustainability?
- **Inconsistent programme quality versus urgent and constant demands:** How will the Union guard against a mismatch in expectation of what we can provide as a Union?
- **Technology risk:** IUCN may fail to respond appropriately to the risks of emerging AI and mass data models, or that we fail to capitalise on their benefits. Likewise, we may fail to implement effective systems and processes. How can we stay on top of these risks?

IUCN will strengthen its ability to identify global trends and themes and link these together, acting as a core responder and coordinator. It can also identify trends and give voice to issues as global change occurs for nature. IUCN will develop greater flexibility and agility to spot these global trends and respond to these effectively. To achieve this, IUCN will work more closely with partners where we do not have a skill base.

We will manage and mitigate these major risks in both the short and medium terms.

IUCN has the ambition to meet these risks and challenges. In the context of increasingly complex, interconnected crises, to do so will take effort, coordination, consistent horizon scanning and a listening ear, leveraging all parts of the Union.

Annex 5: Glossary of major terms and acronyms

2326		
2327		
2328		
2329	30x30	30% of nature protected by 2030 ambition (CBD/KMGBF).
2330	AI	Artificial Intelligence.
2331	Biodiversity	The variability among living organisms, including diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems
2332		
2333	CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity.
2334		
2335	CCC	Climate Crisis Commission.
2336		
2337	CEC	Commission on Education and Communication.
2338		
2339	CEESP	Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy.
2340		
2341	CEM	Commission on Ecosystem Management.
2342		
2343	Commission members	the 18,000+ expert individuals who belong to one or more of IUCN's seven Commissions (separate from IUCN Members, but there is overlap).
2344		
2345		
2346	COP	Conference of the Parties.
2347	Equity	The quality of being fair and impartial.
2348	FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
2349		
2350	GCF	Green Climate Fund.
2351	GDP	Gross Domestic Product.
2352		
2353	GEF	Global Environment Facility.
2354		
2355	Geodiversity	The variety of rocks, minerals, fossils, landforms, sediments and soils, together with the natural processes which form and alter them.
2356		
2357		
2358	IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.
2359		
2360	IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.
2361		
2362		
2363	IPOs	Indigenous Peoples' Organisations.
2364		
2365	IUCN or "the Union"	All the constituent parts: Member organisations, Commission members, National and Regional Committees, and the Secretariat.
2366		

2367 2368	IUCN Commissions	The seven expert Commissions of IUCN made up of 17,000 volunteers (see Section 5.3).
2369	IUCN core values	Science, inclusion, equity, justice, rights and collaboration.
2370 2371 2372	IUCN mission	“To influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and ensure that any use of natural resources is both equitable and ecologically sustainable”.
2373 2374	IUCN Secretariat	Consists of the staff of IUCN, the Director General being the chief executive of IUCN and the head of the Secretariat.
2375	IUCN vision	A “just world that values and conserves nature”.
2376	IUCN 20-year Vision	This document.
2377	KMGBF	Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.
2378	MEAs	Multilateral Environmental Agreements.
2379	Members	The more than 1,400 Members of IUCN.
2380	Membership	The IUCN Member organisations.
2381	Mission	IUCN mission.
2382 2383 2384	Nature	Encompassing both the non-living components (i.e. including geodiversity) and the living components (i.e. biodiversity) of the natural world.
2385	NbE	Nature-based Education.
2386 2387 2388	NbS	Nature-based Solutions.
2389 2390	NGOs	non-governmental organisations.
2391 2392	ODA	official development assistance.
2393 2394 2395 2396 2397 2398	One Health	An integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimise the health of people, animals and ecosystems. It recognises that the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants and the wider environment (including ecosystems) are closely linked and interdependent ³⁵ .
2399 2400	Partners	(Also Boundary Partners) organisations which work with IUCN but are not part of IUCN.
2401	People or human	

³⁵ World Health Organization. [One Health](#)

2402	beings in general	Considered collectively, including communities, institutions and civil
2403		society.
2404	Programme	The four-year strategy and Programme agreed by IUCN Members
2405		every four years.
2406	Red List	The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™.
2407		
2408	Rights	Rights are legal, social or ethical principles of freedom or entitlement;
2409		that is, rights are the fundamental normative rules about what is allowed
2410		of people or owed to people according to some legal system, social
2411		convention or ethical theory. According to the United Nations: Human
2412		rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex,
2413		nationality, ethnicity, language, religion or any other status. Human
2414		rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and
2415		torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and
2416		education. Everyone is entitled to these rights, without discrimination.
2417		
2418	SC	20-year Vision Steering Committee.
2419		
2420	SDGs	17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.
2421		
2422	SSC	Species Survival Commission.
2423		
2424	UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.
2425		
2426	UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
2427		
2428	Virtuous circle	A complex chain of events that reinforce themselves through a
2429		feedback loop leading to favourable results. [...] Virtuous circle events
2430		are designed to identify the ideas and the actions that can set circularity
2431		in motion. (https://commission.europa.eu/ec-events/circular-economy-
2432		virtuous-circle-tour-2019-01-11_en).
2433	WCEL	World Commission on Environmental Law.
2434		
2435	WCPA	World Commission on Protected Areas.
2436		
2437	WEF	World Economic Forum.
2438		
2439	WHO	World Health Organization.
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Annex 6: Implementation roadmap

The implementation roadmap consists of twelve high-level changes that need to be put in place to deliver on the 20-year Strategic Vision. The roadmap will fold into the Programme document, and will be broken down into tasks, plans and targets therein.

The implementation roadmap will enable IUCN to strengthen the Union and its partners and ensure it is fit for purpose to fight for nature in the next 20 years.

Vision building areas

- **Change 1: Alignment.** Ensure high level alignment of resources and engagement across the Union, to create powerful change for nature. Inspire the Union to fight for nature. Focus on the value proposition for IUCN and ensure this meets Member, Commission and partner needs.
- **Change 2: Mobilise the Union.** Identify the best placed capacities and entities across the Union to deliver our ambition. Mobilise the Union, working more with, and through, Members and Commissions to achieve this. Work to strengthen the capacities of Members and Commissions, not only working through them. Increase capacity to work more closely with Members and partners.

Our impact areas

- **Change 3: Maintain IUCN's position as THE trusted voice for nature.** Build on our robust pipeline of science, data, tools and standards to create relevant and critical insights. In turn, develop processes and structures that will allow IUCN to synthesise knowledge and create new insights that will allow us to advocate for nature in the most powerful way. Identify from this the most powerful levers we use to create change and place resources behind this to scale our conservation work. Continue to maintain IUCN's position as THE trusted voice for nature.

Scaling up

- **Change 4: Scale up.** Understand how to scale up our existing work in our five core conservation action areas to respond to the urgent biodiversity crisis and bring in further resources to support the Programme. Ensure that the Union becomes more action orientated and imbued with a greater sense of urgency to achieve this.
- **Change 5: Address the interconnectedness between biodiversity, water, food, health and climate change more clearly to ensure nature continues to support all life on the planet.**
- **Change 6: Youth.** Leverage and inspire youth and young adults (gender) for the future and foster the emergence of the next generation of changemakers and conservationists. Drive forward in advancing education and awareness building to inspire future generations.
- **Change 7: Indigenous Peoples and local knowledge.** (1) strengthen the influence and 'voice' of Indigenous Peoples and local communities; (2) support and incorporate Indigenous and local community knowledge and science into our programmatic thinking.

Transforming

- **Change 8: Eight transformational focus areas.** Integrate the eight transformational focus areas into our work, to address the drivers of nature loss, specifically:

- 2489 ○ Establish a unique role for IUCN to help align societal financial and economic
2490 systems with nature. Specifically, **work more closely with the private sector** to
2491 address this, along with consumption and pollution threats, and find innovative
2492 solutions and investment for the future.
- 2493 ○ Build strong intersectoral partnerships, including of the conservation sector with
2494 the development community, agriculture sector, energy sector, etc.
- 2495 • **Change 9: Connect local action to global knowledge with a “ground-up” approach.**
2496 We provide a crucial role in connecting local action to global knowledge, policy and
2497 impact. Manage our knowledge, stories and data better to ensure we learn from the local
2498 communities and local knowledge, integrate that knowledge with science, and take this
2499 knowledge and science to advocate at a global level. Prioritise raising awareness of the
2500 importance and value of nature to multiple audiences.
- 2501 • **Change 10: AI and large data models.** Integrate AI and large data models to strengthen
2502 our core business areas of nature conservation, data and advocacy on behalf of nature.
- 2503 **Mobilising**
- 2504 • **Change 11: Improve communications.** Significantly improve communication of our
2505 core messages, both to internal and external audiences.
- 2506 **Resourcing**
- 2507 • **Change 12: Develop IUCN’s finance and funding model.** Develop and implement our
2508 future financial model so that it is able to produce revenues at the time, scale and type
2509 needed for the transition to, and growth of, the organisational capabilities envisioned; use
2510 our changing financial model to more effectively service our Members’ needs, and
2511 continue to build the capacity of Members and Commissions:
- 2512 ○ **Step 1:** Improve and strengthen our existing model and invest in long-term
2513 organisational sustainability, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 2514 ○ **Step 2:** Expand our income-generating activities and broaden our funding base.
- 2515 ○ **Step 3:** Use mission-driven finance to innovate and grow our impact.

Annex 7: Steering Committee and Working Group of the 20-year Strategic Vision

Council Members (Role within the Steering Committee)

- H.E. Razan Al Mubarak, UAE (Chair, and President of IUCN)
- Mr Ramiro Batzin Choj, Guatemala (Vice President of IUCN)
- Ms Imèn Meliane, Tunisia (Vice President of IUCN)
- Mr Nihal Welikala, Sri Lanka (Treasurer)
- Mr Rick Bates, Canada (Councillor and Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee (FAC))
- Ms Susan Lieberman, USA (Councillor and Chair of the Programme and Policy Committee (PPC))
- Mr Vivek Menon, India (Councillor and Chair of the Governance and Constituency Committee (GCC))
- Mr Jon-Paul Rodriguez, Venezuela (Chair of SSC)
- Mr Samad-John Smaranda, Romania (Councillor)
- Mr Jong Soo Yoon, Republic of Korea (Councillor)

Nominated by IUCN Members for the Project

- Ms Swetha Stotra Bhashyam, Chair of IUCN CEESP Intergenerational partnerships working group. Youth Affiliate, Synchronicity Earth
- Mr Alejandro A. Imbach, Senior Independent Evaluator and International Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist.
- Ms Zdenka Piskulich, Managing Director, Enduring Earth
- Dr. John Robinson, Chief Conservation Officer, and Executive Vice President of Wildlife Conservation Society (Ret.)
- Dr Kanyinke Sena, Director of The Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee. Lecturer at the Faculty of Law, Egerton University
- Dr Dedee Woodside, Managing Director and Principal, Corporate & Community Sustainability International. Independent Researcher
- Ms Linda Wong, Deputy Secretary General of the China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation (CBCGDF)
- Ms Monique Yigbedek, Regional Coordinator of African Women's Network for Sustainable Development (REFADD)

SC Members of the Bureau for the period December 2022–January 2024

Ms Bibiana Sucre
Venezuela (Mesoamerica and South America Councillor)

Dr Said Ahmad Damhoureyeh
Jordan (West Asia Councillor)

Mr Peter Michael Cochrane
Australia (Vice President) (Oceania Councillor)

Dr Hilde Eggermont
Belgium (Vice President) (West Europe Councillor)

2570 Ms Kristen Walker Painemilla
2571 USA (CEESP Chair)

2572
2573

2574 **Secretariat**

- 2575 • Dr Grethel Aguilar, Director General of IUCN
2576 • Mr Mark Salway, Chief Operating Officer, IUCN
2577 • Ms Tania Ammour, Senior Advisor, Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean
2578 (ORMACC), IUCN

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