

Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM)

Draft Mandate 2026–2029

Under the Union's "One Programme Charter"¹, the Commission on Ecosystem Management's (CEM) network of volunteer conservation scientists, experts and managers will contribute to the Union's work through an array of thematic groups, specialist groups and task forces. Collectively, these volunteer specialists will provide the scientific and authoritative advice to IUCN's Programme as it relates to the management, restoration and sustainable use of the world's ecosystems. All Commission contributions shall be in the context of the Ecosystem Approach as adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

With the adoption of the IUCN Programme 2026–2029, the Commission will work closely with IUCN's regional and global programmes at project, country, regional and global levels.

Promoting synergies and collaborations with other Commissions and partners will be a strong component of the CEM strategy.

1. Mission

To develop and share expert guidance on ecosystem-based approaches to management and sustainable use of natural and modified ecosystems to achieve biodiversity conservation, address climate change and environmental impacts, contribute to human well-being and promote sustainable development.

2. Vision

Productive and resilient ecosystems worldwide that contribute to human well-being, biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.

3. Goal

Ecosystem-based approaches to management of social-ecological systems and natural resource management mainstreamed worldwide.

4. Objective

To promote the adoption and provide guidance for ecosystem-based approaches to the management of landscapes and seascapes and enhance the resilience of or transform ecosystems as deemed necessary to address global challenges.

5. Focus

In pursuit of our goal and objective, the Commission in collaboration with relevant Secretariat programmes, other Commissions and partners, will work aligned with the IUCN Programme 2026–2029, through the following:

- **Knowledge products** that respond to needs related to assessment of risk, management, restoration, conservation and sustainable use of ecosystems will be developed and shared as a contribution to the development of Nature-based Solutions and other major tools.

¹ Endorsed by the IUCN Council (76th Meeting, May 2011) and adopted by the Members at the 2012 World Conservation Congress (Decision 19).

- **Advice, guidance and tools will be provided to and from Indigenous peoples and Local communities**, where appropriate, to enable management, restoration, conservation and sustainable use of ecosystems to meet local needs and foster well-being.
- **Science-based authoritative advice and guidance** will be made available to policymakers and implementing authorities from local to global levels that pertain to the governance, management, restoration, conservation and sustainable use of ecosystems.

6. Priorities to deliver the IUCN Programme 2026–2029

The Commission on Ecosystem Management's plans for the next intersessional period are framed around the main priority areas that are aligned with, and will contribute to, the Programme 2026–2029. Around these main areas, the Commission includes specific relevant themes that have worked previously and where the Commission has expert knowledge. The main priority areas for 2026–2029 are:

- a. Ecosystem Risk Assessment** – The Red List of Ecosystems (RLE) will continue to serve as the Commission's flagship commitment to ecosystem risk assessment and documentation of the status of the world's ecosystems. Specifically, the Commission will:
 - Continue to support national and regional ecosystem assessments;
 - Maintain the Global Ecosystem Typology, including through partnerships, such as the Global Ecosystem Atlas, to facilitate communications and understanding of the status of ecosystems and support the RLE;
 - Assess the efficacy of an array of possible subsidiary benefits from the assessments, including:
 - links between human health and well-being and the status of ecosystems,
 - reporting on the United Nations 2030 Agenda on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the objectives of the Paris Agreement, and other relevant international agreements, and
 - links between natural capital accounting and ecosystem risk assessments.
- b. Ecosystem Restoration and Reversing Land Degradation** – The Commission will support efforts to restore ecosystems and reversing land degradation, particularly in relation to achieving the SDGs, as well as restoration goals advanced through the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, including the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, and other UN conventions. Emphasis will be on:
 - Facilitating the implementation of the Standards of Practice to guide ecosystem restoration; and
 - Providing guidance and technical support to policymakers, practitioners and managers regarding the design, implementation and monitoring of restoration projects, programmes and policies.
- c. Nature-based Solutions (NbS)** – The Commission will continue promoting the implementation of NbS to address societal challenges. Specifically:
 - Advise and assist the application and update of a standard approach to NbS;
 - Facilitate the development of guidelines that support the interpretation of the Global Standard for NbS in the national context; and
 - Compile, manage and share lessons learned from the application of NbS at the local, national and international levels.

- d. Ecosystem Governance** – Equitable governance of the world's ecosystems is essential to meet the objectives of the UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration, UN Decade on Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, the SDGs, the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. The Commission will:
- Develop principles for ecosystem governance that enhance resilience and transformational change of social-ecological systems;
 - Develop good practices through case studies that can provide advice and guidance to policymakers and implementing bodies on how to achieve equitable governance of socio-ecological systems; and
 - Develop guidance to be provided to ecosystem managers about governance requirements that sustainably use nature's contributions that are necessary to meet human needs.
- e. Nature and Global Change Nexus** – Considering the CBD decision on biodiversity and climate change that requires addressing both in an integrated manner, biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation and adaptation, in policies and strategies and the IPBES Nexus report (2024) which calls on addressing in an integrative manner to achieve the SDGs, the Commission will:
- Contribute with the development of policy and guidelines to ensure biodiversity conservation and ecosystem integrity in climate change mitigation and adaptation programmes and projects;
 - Continue the analysis of the linkage between biodiversity conservation, ecosystem management and climate change mitigation and adaptation;
 - Incorporate biodiversity enhancement and ecosystem integrity practices into carbon markets and biodiversity credit mechanisms, among others; and
 - Continue promoting the work on EbA Adaptation and Mitigation to ensure that biodiversity is always considered in any climate action.
- f. Health and Ecosystem Management** – Humans, as an integral component of the ecosystems in which they live, often alter their ecosystems without understanding the possible consequences of their actions. Human health and well-being can be impacted in how ecosystems respond to any type of management. As a priority the Commission will establish mechanisms to explore these One health-ecosystem relationships with the intent of advising and guiding development of appropriate knowledge products, through:
- Continuing to facilitate the development of a way to assess One Health within the RLE;
 - Further advancing the importance of considering the Biodiversity and Global change nexus in ecosystem management and impacts on health and human well-being; and
 - Continuing to develop products to improve the awareness and understanding of the link between ecosystem integrity and One health and human well-being.

7. Structure and organisation of the Commission

a. Chair, Deputy Chair and Steering Committee

The Commission is led by the Chair, who is elected by IUCN Members at the Members' Assembly of the World Conservation Congress. The Chair is supported by a Deputy Chair and Steering Committee, appointed by the Council on recommendation of the Chair. The Steering Committee provides leadership and guides the development and implementation of CEM's work through the operational structure of technical groups, regional coordination and task forces for the implementation of this mandate. CEM holds at least one presential Steering Committee meeting per year, as well as virtual meetings as required.

b. Membership

CEM's membership is composed of volunteers who are experts in ecosystem management. Membership is representative in professional, geographic and gender terms. Recruitment of young professionals is a priority. Members contribute to the Commission's work plan through thematic groups, specialist groups and task forces.

c. Relation with IUCN Secretariat

CEM will work with the Secretariat on activities relevant to the Commission's mandate. The Director General will assign the focal person for the Commission to deliver IUCN's 2026–2029 Programme.