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WK 15039/2021 INIT

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REQUEST FOR CONTRIBUTION

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Working Party on International Environment Issues (Global)

Subject: WPIEI (Global): 5th meeting of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-5): Draft EU+MS resolution proposal on "Nature-based Solutions for supporting sustainable development" - CALL FOR COMMENTS

Delegations will find attached a draft EU+MS resolution proposal for UNEA-5 entitled "Nature-based Solutions for supporting sustainable development", as well as a supportive document, prepared by UNEP, on the definitions of Nature-based Solutions which provides an overview on their use and origins.

Delegations are invited to send comments on the draft to the Presidency

[REDACTED],
[REDACTED], with a copy to the Council
Secretariat [REDACTED];
[REDACTED]), by tomorrow, 8 December 2021, cob.

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5th meeting of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-5)

“Nature-based Solutions for supporting sustainable development”

Draft EU+MS resolution proposal

The United Nations Environment Assembly,

a) *Underlining* the importance of strengthening actions for nature for achieving the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement as well as the ultimate objective of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, addressing the planetary emergency and welcoming the Leaders’ Pledge for Nature: United to reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 for Sustainable Development.

b) *Recognizing* the importance of ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems as well as the interdependencies between biodiversity loss, climate change and human wellbeing, including health, and the interlinkages with pollution and the need to address these issues in a holistic and integrated manner in national and local policy and planning decisions, including in the context of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

c) *Emphasizing*, as a key area for cooperation and for strengthening actions for nature is the implementation of nature-based solutions which simultaneously deliver multiple benefits for biodiversity protection and climate change adaptation and mitigation, as well as for water security and management, sustainable land management, wellbeing of people, food security, sustainable food systems, improving risk management and building resilience, preventing, reducing and managing impacts from natural disasters, both in rural and urban context.

d) *Stressing* the urgency of tackling multiple sustainable development related challenges, especially biodiversity loss, terrestrial and marine ecosystems degradation, climate change and its related disasters, deforestation, forest degradation and fragmentation, pollution and the emergence of new zoonotic diseases, as well as increasing poverty, injustice and instability of our economic systems.

e) *Stressing the importance of* the post-2020 global framework for biodiversity to achieve sustainable development, fully aware of the necessity of resilient ecosystems for securing biodiversity, human wellbeing, including health, as well as promoting ecosystem functions and for adapting to impacts of and mitigating climate change and *stressing* the need to scale up and use nature based solutions.

f) *Recognizing* the cost-efficient and effective nature of nature-based solutions to provide solutions to the interlinked global crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, while ensuring social and environmental safeguards.

g) *Supporting* the need for stepping up the implementation of nature-based solutions as a vital component for jointly achieving the objectives of UNFCCC, UNCCD, CBD and UNDRR.

h) *Reaffirming* the need for having green and resilient COVID-19 recovery plans that support sustainable management of the environment and nature.

1. *Agrees* that nature-based solutions are actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems, which address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being, ecosystem resilience and biodiversity benefits. They are designed to address major societal challenges, such as biodiversity loss, climate change, food security, disaster risks, urban development, water security, social and economic development as well as human health, while applying social and environmental safeguards.

2. *Underlines* the need for enhancing the understanding and stepping up the application of nature-based solutions, on land as well as at sea.

3. *Requests* the Executive Director of UNEP, building on existing work, initiatives and platforms by collaborating closely with relevant organizations and institutions, (i) to map best practices and lessons learned of nature-based solutions at local, national, regional, global levels and share innovative solutions, including green and blue infrastructures, that are scalable, replicable and adaptable to a variety of urban and rural environments; (ii) to address the role of gender equality and empowerment of women, youth and indigenous and local communities, as well as local application of the nature-based solutions, (iii) to provide guidance to Member States on possibilities to integrate nature-based solutions into sectoral policies at all levels, including as regards to urban and rural development and planning, (iv) to raise awareness for nature-based solutions, by including innovative methods, and building capacities for effective implementation, (v) and provide further evidence on the economic case of the development of Nature-based Solutions and *requests* the Executive Director to submit a report on the findings for the consideration of the Members States by [UNEA-6].

4. *Calls upon* the Executive Director, in collaboration with other relevant UN agencies, to develop recommendations for Member States for accelerating nature-based solutions implementation, mainstreaming and interdisciplinary collaboration, building on already existing guidelines and UN resolutions and best practices, taking into account the cross-cutting nature of nature-based solutions, and to propose these recommendations at [UNEA-6]. Also *requests* the Executive Director in collaboration with other relevant international organizations and agencies, to develop further a global knowledge platform for sharing Nature-based Solutions innovation and best practices that builds on existing nature-based solutions platforms¹ by [UNEA-6].

5. *Calls upon* the Member States and the Executive Director, in collaboration with other relevant UN agencies, to support the uptake of relevant knowledge and methods of indigenous peoples and local communities that have proved effective in maintaining a balance between biodiversity protection and human wellbeing, with free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples and local communities.

6. *Invites* Member States to invest in education, research and development, and enhance regional cooperation for leveraging innovation in nature-based solutions, particularly with regard to multi-scalar planning for functional green and blue infrastructure, including replacing grey infrastructures by green and blue ones and integrating urban and rural planning and infrastructure management.

¹ UNEP has a Nature-based Solutions contribution platform (<https://www.unenvironment.org/nbs-contributions-platform>)

7. *Invites* the Executive Director to propose criteria for supporting sustainable financing investments in nature-based solutions and *calls upon* UNEP and Member States to map possible economic and financial instruments (subsidies, grants, investment schemes) to promote widespread implementation of nature-based solutions, including collaboration with financial mechanisms such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF), Green Climate Fund (GCF), Adaptation Fund (AF), as well as with the private and the finance sector, for the development of nature-based solutions enabling tools.

8. *Recognizes* the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use and the corresponding emerging mechanism Global Forest Finance Pledge (GFFP) for supporting climate change mitigation and adaptation and enhancing collaboration to halt and reverse biodiversity loss and land degradation by 2030, including by addressing the systemic drivers of forest loss, and enabling the conservation, sustainable management, and restoration of forests in ODA eligible countries through, *inter alia*, funding for results-based payments, technical and financial cooperation for capacity building, that support and strengthen: i) Forest and land governance and clarifying land tenure and forest rights for Indigenous Peoples and local communities; ii) Deforestation-free and sustainable agricultural supply chains including systems for transparency, traceability and integrity, the development and effective implementation of sustainability standards and certification and increasing the availability of finance for smallholders and community forestry, to improve livelihoods and support a transition to sustainable practices; iii) Deforestation-free and sustainable financial markets and leveraging significant private investment in sustainable forest management, forest protection and sustainable deforestation free agriculture; iv) Large-scale landscape restoration and forest conservation; and v) Actions to reduce forest crime and forest fires, all of which are critical for protecting people and livelihoods and preserving critical ecosystems.

9. *Stresses* the importance to improve nature-based solutions monitoring to assist applying cost-benefit and other relevant assessments and methodologies that fully capture environmental, societal and economic benefits, in synergies with existing environmental and climate change monitoring systems, and invites UNEP, all relevant UN agencies, scientific institutions and Member States to enhance coordination in this matter by cooperating on innovative social, technological and digital solutions, including using data and spatial analysis in an integrated manner.

10. *Calls for* the development of green, inclusive, sustainable and resilient post-COVID-19 societies, taking into account the necessity to prevent further increase in risks connected to climate change, direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss, urbanisation, overconsumption and overexploitation of natural resources and the need for integrated and sustainable ocean and land management that promotes resource efficiency, biodiversity and resilient ecosystems, by including use of nature-based solutions.

Note

Definitions of 'Nature-based Solutions' **Prepared to inform development of UNEA resolution on Nature-based Solutions**

6 December 2021

1. Introduction

The term 'Nature-based Solutions' (NbS) first entered circulation over ten years ago. The European Commission and IUCN were early champions of the concept and subsequently they adopted (different) definitions of the term. In recent years the concept has become widely used, including by UNEP and by a range of national and international institutions and leaders. At the same time, concerns and criticisms have been voiced.

This note summarises the definitions and characterizations of 'Nature-based Solutions' (NbS) that have been proposed by IUCN, European Commission, World Bank and OECD. It notes the on-going discussions about NbS in the preparation of the CBD's Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and its possible replacement by the term 'ecosystem-based approaches'. It lists some of the key documents where 'NbS' has been used and notes UNEP's use of the term.

2. IUCN

In 2016, IUCN adopted a 'Definitional Framework on Nature-based Solutions' in a resolution of the World Conservation Congress ([Resolution 069](#)). The Definitional Framework includes the following definition:

Nature-based Solutions are defined as: "actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems, that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits"

The Definitional Framework also characterises the goal of Nature-based Solutions:

The goal of Nature-based Solutions is "to support the achievement of society's development goals and safeguard human well-being in ways that reflect cultural and societal values and enhance the resilience of ecosystems, their capacity for renewal and the provision of services; Nature-based Solutions are designed to address major societal challenges, such as food security, climate change, water security, human health, disaster risk, social and economic development".

In 2020 IUCN published [IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions](#). This states that the Standard 'aims to equip users with robust framework for designing and verifying NbS that yield the outcomes desired, in solving one or several societal challenge(s)'. The Standard includes eight criteria that set out desired features of NbS, addressing issues such as: net biodiversity gain; economic viability; inclusivity; equity and adaptive management.

3. European Commission

The European Commission offers the following definition of Nature-based Solutions on its website:

Solutions that are inspired and supported by nature, which are cost-effective, simultaneously provide environmental, social and economic benefits and help build resilience. Such solutions bring more, and more diverse, nature and natural features and

processes into cities, landscapes and seascapes, through locally adapted, resource-efficient and systemic interventions. (nd)

The definition is immediately followed by the following statement:

Nature-based solutions must therefore benefit biodiversity and support the delivery of a range of ecosystem services.

4. OECD

In 2020, OECD drew on the both the IUCN and European Commission definitions and offered its own definition:

NbS are measures that protect, sustainably or restore nature, with the goal of maintaining or enhancing ecosystem services to address a variety of social, environmental and economic challenges.

5. World Bank

In recent publications the World Bank has offered a range of characterizations of NbS, some of them related to specific societal challenges. For example, in the recent report, *A Catalogue of Nature-based Solutions for Urban Resilience*, the World Bank provides the following characterization NbS:

NBS use a set of structural and non-structural interventions that protect, manage, restore, or create natural or nature-based features. Alongside other benefits, NBS can reduce the impact of natural hazards in cities, such as flooding, erosion, landslides, drought, and extreme heat. They can also complement gray infrastructure such as storm drains, embankments, and retaining walls. In many cases, integration of NBS has proven to be cost-effective.

This characterization is broadly consistent with the definitions of IUCN, European Commission and OECD. The World Bank is not now offering its own definition of NbS.

6. NbS in the CBD Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

The Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity are currently developing the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. This Framework is expected to be finalised and adopted at COP 15 in Kunming (22 Apr – 8 May 2022). The term 'Nature-based Solutions' was included in two of the Targets of the zero draft of the Framework. Subsequently, these references have been replaced by 'ecosystem-based approaches'. Some countries wish to reinstate the term 'nature-based solutions'.

The CBD describes 'ecosystem approach' in the following way:

The ecosystem approach is a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way. Thus, the application of the ecosystem approach will help to reach a balance of the three objectives of the Convention: conservation; sustainable use; and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. (CBD Decision V/6, 2000)

Note: the above is a description of the ecosystem approach, and not of ecosystem-based approaches.

7. Increasing use of the term 'nature-based solutions'

The term has been used increasingly by a range of leaders and other actors; it is being used by an increasing number of international and national institutions. There is a growing academic literature on the topic.

Recent references to nature-based solutions include:

- UNGA 75/220 Resolution on Harmony with Nature adopted by the General Assembly on 21 Dec 2020, makes a specific reference to NBS: <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/75/220>
- Nature-based solutions were a priority for the UK Presidency of COP26 this year
- Nature-based solutions had a dedicated session during the Leaders Climate Summit convened by President Biden in April 2021
- G7 Summit Communiqué (2021) expresses increased commitment to nature-based solutions
- The [New Urban Agenda](#) adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in October 2016 and endorsed by UNGA at its 71st session December 2016 makes a specific reference to nature-based solutions.

8. UNEP and nature-based solutions

UNEP is one of the organizations making increased use of the term in its work. For example,

- UNEP supported the action area of nature-based solutions for the 2019 UN Climate Action Summit which resulted in the NBS for Climate Manifesto
- In May 2021 UNEP released the report *State of Finance for Nature: Tripling investments in nature-based solutions by 2030*
- UNEP was commissioned to prepare a working paper for the G20 on *Resilient, Smart and Sustainable Cities: The Power of Nature-based Solutions* (released June 2021).

UNEP has not made any organisation-wide decision to formally adopt the IUCN definition, although some of its publications do make use of the IUCN definition.