# Co-Chairs summary
# First Global Consultation on nature-based solutions
# 16-17 May 2023

## Introduction

The starting point for these intergovernmental consultations, which were requested in Resolution 5/5 *Nature-based solutions for supporting sustainable development,* adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly on 2 March 2022, is the multilaterally agreed definition of nature-based solutions, which is cognizant of and in harmony with the concept of ecosystem-based approaches and is as follows:

> "nature-based solutions are actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems which address social, economic and environmental challenges effectively and adaptively, while simultaneously providing human well-being, ecosystem services, resilience and biodiversity benefits, and recognizes that nature-based solutions:
> a) Respect social and environmental safeguards, in line with the three "Rio conventions" (the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), including such safeguards for local communities and indigenous peoples;
> b) Can be implemented in accordance with local, national and regional circumstances, consistent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and can be managed adaptively;
> c) Are among the actions that play an essential role in the overall global effort to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, including by effectively and efficiently addressing major social, economic and environmental challenges, such as biodiversity loss, climate change, land degradation, desertification, food security, disaster risks, urban development, water availability, poverty eradication, inequality and unemployment, as well as social development, sustainable economic development, human health and a broad range of ecosystem services;
> d) Can help to stimulate sustainable innovation and scientific research.

The definition identifies *three* different dimensions to nature-based solutions.
1. Nature-based solutions work with nature in different ways – they are actions "to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage" ecosystems;
2. Nature-based solutions involve working sustainably (i.e. within the parameters of the ecosystem's ability to be sustained) with different types of ecosystems;
3. Nature-based solutions are solution-oriented. They "address social, economic and environmental challenges".

Further and very importantly, nature-based solutions must adhere to social and environmental safeguards. Nature-based solutions also do not replace the need for rapid, deep and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

The overall purpose of the consultations, as set by UNEA resolution 5/5, is "to further support the implementation of nature-based solutions".

Participants in the First Global Consultation were requested to address both this overall purpose and the three tasks for the consultations that are specified in the resolution. The three tasks are:
   a) Compile examples of best practice in nature-based solutions, based on the best available science;
   b) Assess existing and discuss potential new proposals, criteria, standards and guidelines to address divergences, with a view to achieving a common understanding among Member States for the implementation of nature-based solutions, including to support Member States in designing, implementing and evaluating nature-based solutions, building on existing work, initiatives and platforms, as appropriate, and without prejudice to existing efforts and initiatives of and new proposals from individual Member States;
   c) Identify options for supporting sustainable investment in nature-based solutions and share information on bilateral and multilateral sources of finance to enable developing countries to develop and deploy nature-based solutions;

The Co-Chairs are impressed by the range and quality of the points that were made in the First Global Consultation. We note that some divergences of opinion were apparent, and we will be seeking ways to bridge these divergences in order to build a common understanding of nature-based solutions.

Part 1 of this document provides a summary of the points made in the consultations. Part 2 provides some reflections on four important issues that emerged in the discussions and offers some suggestions for participants to consider.

## Part 1: Summary of First Global Consultation

**Purpose**
   • Many participants were supportive of purpose of the consultations as set out in Operative Paragraph 5 (OP 5): '…to further support the implementation of nature-based solutions, as defined in the present resolution'.
   • Participants noted that it provided an opportunity to share knowledge and information about nature-based solutions and that this could contribute to building a common understanding of nature-based solutions.
   • Some participants were more critical of the concept nature-based solutions and said the consultations should serve to understand these concerns. It was suggested that nature-based solutions could infringe the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities and that nature-based solutions should not be linked to carbon or biodiversity offset markets.
   • Some noted that these are consultations and not negotiations, and that they would not be used to agree on new text on nature-based solutions.

- It was said that the consultations needed to be interactive and could consider making use of break-out groups.
- Participants spoke of the importance of linking the outcomes to other processes and decisions. In this regard, the following were mentioned:
  - UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
  - Convention on Biological Diversity
  - Nature-based Solutions for Climate Manifesto
  - UNEA Resolution 1/10:  *Different visions, approaches, models and tools to achieve environmental sustainability in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication*
- It was noted that some of the ideas behind nature-based solutions are not new and that there are many concepts and approaches that overlap with nature-based solutions, including but not limited to "Ecosystem-based Approaches".

**Three tasks**

a)  *Compile examples of best practice in nature-based solutions, based on the best available science;*

The points made by participants which addressed this task included:
- The Background Paper provided by UNEP was welcomed for the information that it provided in support of all three tasks.
- The compilation of best practice examples needs to be broader in scope, both geographically (including Africa) and with regard to the range of ecosystem types that were covered.
- Participants highlighted that the contribution of indigenous peoples, including their leadership roles, needs to be better represented in the examples.
- On the one hand, some suggested that more examples of the role of nature-based solutions in climate mitigation needed to be included to address Task a), while others suggested that the potential mitigation contribution of nature-based solutions has been over-estimated.
- It was suggested that there should be more examples of the role of nature-based solutions in contributing to climate adaptation.
- Some interventions noted the role of a number of on-going initiatives in collecting more examples of nature-based solutions, including the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Ramsar Convention.
- Suggestions were made for the development of a new portal to collate examples of best practice.
- It was said that it would be important to develop criteria for what counts as best practice.
- Participants suggested that compilations should include examples that may not be called 'nature-based solutions' but which do embody the same approach as nature-based solutions.
- It was said that examples of bad practices should also be compiled, including those that had bad effects on indigenous peoples and local communities and/or biodiversity. The suggestion noted the possibility to learn from such examples.
- In the same way, some nature-based solutions are good in some respects and less good in others. Therefore, the distinction between good and bad practice is not straightforward.

b) *Assess existing and discuss potential new proposals, criteria, standards and guidelines to address divergences, with a view to achieving a common understanding among Member States for the implementation of nature-based solutions, including to support Member States in designing, implementing and evaluating nature-based solutions, building on existing work, initiatives and platforms, as appropriate, and without prejudice to existing efforts and initiatives of and new proposals from individual Member States;*

- With regard to proposals on nature-based solutions it was noted that the United States has developed a Roadmap for nature-based solutions, that Germany has a Federal Action Plan on nature-based solutions and that Ethiopia is considering developing a National Strategy on nature-based solutions.
- A number of interventions emphasized that criteria, standards and guidelines are important to avoid 'greenwashing'.
- It was suggested that the IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions is an important resource.
- It was stated that the International Standards Organization is interested in developing a standard for nature-based solutions.
- Amongst the issues addressed by standards and guidelines, the following were identified as particularly important: gender, the rights of indigenous peoples, Free, Prior and Informed Consent, youth and justice.
- It was said that if standards are too complicated, they may not be used by local authorities and others.
- It was noted that the multiplicity of standards and guidelines may lead to a 'pick and choose' approach.
- Attention was drawn to the social and environmental safeguards that are referenced in UNEA resolution 5/5.
- It was highlighted that some guidelines that do not refer to nature-based solutions may still be relevant. CBD Decision 14/5, which includes voluntary guidelines for the design and effective implementation of ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction was mentioned in this regard.

c) *Identify options for supporting sustainable investment in nature-based solutions and share information on bilateral and multilateral sources of finance to enable developing countries to develop and deploy nature-based solutions;*

- Canada and Germany noted the levels of finance that they will be providing for nature-based solutions.
- Some said that there is a need to scale up private finance for nature-based solutions
- Views were voiced that other types of support are needed, including capacity support, from bilateral and multilateral sources.
- Some participants stated that finance should not be diverted from ecosystem-based approaches to support nature-based solutions.
- It was noted that financing for nature-based solutions should not replace developed countries' financial obligations to developing countries.

## Part 2: Reflections on the way forward

We believe that the text of UNEA resolution 5/5 provides some helpful indications on how to address some of the issues that arose in the First Global Consultation. Here we highlight four such issues and make suggestions for the participants in the consultations to consider.

1. Safeguards

A number of participants drew attention to Operative Paragraph 1(a) which states that nature-based solutions:

> Respect social and environmental safeguards, in line with the three "Rio Conventions" (the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), including such safeguards for local communities and indigenous peoples;

In the light of this, participants may wish to consider whether the consultations should aim to set out in detail the safeguards that have been adopted under the Rio Conventions, including those safeguards for local communities and indigenous peoples, and to analyze their implications for nature-based solutions, including for issues of rights and justice.

2. Local and national leadership

Participants emphasized the importance of both of local leadership on nature-based solutions by indigenous peoples and local communities and of national leadership in the implementation of nature-based solutions. In this regard it can be noted that OP 1(b) states that nature-based solutions:

> Can be implemented in accordance with local, national and regional circumstances, consistent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and can be managed adaptively

In OP 8 there is reference to the importance of a 'country-driven' approach. Participants may wish to consider if this implies that decision-makers, including at the local and nationals level, should have some discretion in in adapting nature-based solutions to their circumstances.

3. Climate mitigation and adaptation

Some participants indicated that the potential role of nature-based solutions in climate mitigation has been over-stated, while others urged the importance of this contribution to mitigation and also urged more attention to the role of nature-based solutions in climate adaptation. In this context it can be noted that OP2 acknowledges that nature-based solutions 'do not replace the need for rapid, deep and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, but can improve action for and adaptation and resilience to and mitigation of climate change and its impact'. Participants may wish to consider the extent to which this may assist in bridging the different views on this matter.

4. Nature-based solutions and related approaches

Some participants noted that that there are a number of terms and approaches that are closely related to 'nature-based solutions' and are based on the same underlying ideas. Other participants indicated that they preferred to use other terms, including 'ecosystem-based approaches'. In this regard it can be noted that OP 4:

> Acknowledges that the concept of nature-based solutions is cognizant of and in harmony with the concept of ecosystem-based approaches identified under the Convention on Biological Diversity and other management and conservation approaches carried out under existing national policy and legislative frameworks and established under relevant multilateral environmental agreements.

Participants may wish to take account of this language in considering whether support for nature-based solutions can accommodate the preference amongst some actors for using different but related terms.