

# Co-Chairs' Summary

## First Regional Consultations on nature-based solutions June - July 2023

### Introduction

The first round of regional consultations on nature-based solutions were held, virtually, during June and July 2023.

The meetings were held on these dates:

Africa	10 & 11 July
Asia-Pacific	25 & 26 July
Eastern Europe	18 July
Latin America and Caribbean	22 & 23 June
Western Europe and Others	27 June & 6 July

This introduction is followed by a short description of themes that were common to several or all the regional consultations. The Co-Chairs then provide their reflections on the emerging issues and the potential ways forward. Annexed to the Summary are the more detailed summaries of each of the individual regional consultations. All the summaries are organized around the three tasks. Where other points relating to nature-based solutions have been made these appear under the heading 'Other issues'.

### Summary of common themes emerging from the regional consultations

*Task one: Compile examples of best practice in nature-based solutions, based on the best available science;*

- Widespread support for sharing examples of best practice.
- Information shared on new and on-going compilations.
- Support for also sharing examples of bad practice.

*Task two: 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;*

- Widespread recognition that standards and criteria for nature-based solutions can promote a common understanding of NbS.

- Some explicit support for the IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions
- Recognition that UNEA Resolution 5/5 does provide a guidance on what does and what does not count as NbS.
- Acceptance that there is a balance to be struck between having very detailed criteria and acknowledging that implementation needs to be context specific.

*Task three: 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;*

- Recognition of the importance of finance for NbS.
- Some uncertainty about the best way to increase finance for NbS, including finance from the private sector.
- A diversity of examples shared of both national and international public finance for NbS.

*Other issues*

- *Terminology.* There is a widely shared view that there are some terminological issues that need to be resolved.
- *Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities.* Many participants emphasized the importance of respecting the rights of IPLCs, and a recognition of the leadership role they can play in implementing NbS.
- *Policy.* The issue of policy – particularly national policy on NbS - emerged as a major issue. Recognition that the existence of national policy (and the avoidance of policy misalignment) can help with mainstreaming NbS. General recognition that national policy can take different forms.
- *Bad practice in NbS.* Recognition of the need to both learn from and address examples of bad practice of NbS.

## **Reflections on the way forward**

Four preliminary points may be made. First, it is worth reminding ourselves that Resolution 5/5 *Nature-based solutions for supporting sustainable development* is clear that the basis for the consultations are nature-based solutions ‘as defined in the present resolution’. It is not the purpose of the consultations to question or propose revisions to that definition.

Second, there are several connections between the three tasks for the consultations that are set out in the resolution. For example, the question of what counts as ‘best practice’ in NbS is closely related the issue of the standards and criteria for NbS. Such standards and criteria, if accepted, would help determine what counts as best practice and may facilitate investments in NbS.

Third, in addition to the points made about the three tasks, a number of points were made in the regional consultations about other issues that need to be addressed in order to support the overall goal of the consultations ‘to further support the implementation of nature-based solutions’. These issues included the role of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities and appropriate policies to support NbS implementation.

Fourth, the Co-Chairs consider that six key issues have emerged from the consultations so far and that under each of these issues there are a number of sub-issues. These provide a useful way to structure our future deliberations. There is considerable overlap between these six issues and the three tasks set out in the original UNEA resolution. The six issues and the sub-issues under each of them are set out below. The Co-Chairs welcome inputs from the consultation participants on these issues, both before and at the Nairobi meeting.

### **1. Best practice**

- a) Examples of best practice are widely thought to be valuable. A more comprehensive guide to the many existing compilations of examples would be a useful output from the consultations.
- b) It is worthwhile to identify the criteria for what counts as best practice. It may be that such criteria can be derived from the text of UNEA Resolution 5/5, and/or from criteria and standards that have been developed by others.
- c) Categorising the examples best practice by the type of ecosystem in which they are implemented, cross-referenced with the social, economic, and environmental challenges that they address, is a good way to organize compilations of examples of best practice.
- d) It is worthwhile to also compile examples of bad practice, which can provide useful lessons.
- e) In reality, examples of NbS often combine good features and less-good (or even bad) features.

### **2. Standards and criteria for nature-based solutions**

- a) Standards and criteria help to clarify the concept NbS.
- b) UNEA Resolution 5/5 itself provides a strong framework for determining whether an action counts as NbS.
- c) Standards and criteria developed independently of UNEA Resolution 5/5, and the consultation process may have a role to play.
- d) It is helpful to distinguish between, on the one hand, standards and criteria for NbS and, on the other hand, practical guidance on how to strengthen the implementation of NbS.

### **3. Opportunities and obstacles: nature-based solutions and climate mitigation**

- a) Nature-based solutions can make an important contribution to climate mitigation
- b) Nevertheless, some of the strongest concerns about NbS relate to its role in climate mitigation. It is important that these consultations, in the effort to build a common understanding, address these concerns directly. The concerns include claims that NbS for climate mitigation:
  - i. Takes attention away from the need for rapid and deep reductions in fossil fuel emissions.
  - ii. Infringes the rights and interests of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities
  - iii. Allows the private sector firms to avoid reducing their own emissions by buying carbon offsets derived from NbS.
- c) Operative Paragraph 2 of UNEA Resolution 5/5 is relevant to point (b)(i) above.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Operative Paragraph 2 of UNEA Resolution 5/5 reads: Recognizes that nature-based solutions may contribute significantly to climate action, while recognizing the need for analysis of their effects, including in the long term, and acknowledging that they do not replace the need for rapid, deep and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, but can improve action for adaptation and resilience to and mitigation of climate change and its impact;

d) Operative Paragraph 1(a) of UNEA Resolution 5/5 is relevant to points (b)(ii) and (b)(iii) above.<sup>2</sup>

#### **4. Policy to support the implementation of nature-based solutions.**

- a) One of the important barriers to the implementation of NbS can be the absence of appropriate and coherent policy at the national level.
- b) Existing commitments to NbS within NDCs and NBSAPs can provide important building blocks for mainstreaming NbS.
- c) Some countries are adopting national roadmaps and plans for NbS, others are incorporating NbS into specific policy instruments. It is likely that different approaches to NbS policy will be appropriate in different national contexts.

#### **5. Measuring benefits and costs of nature-based Solutions**

- a) Measuring the benefits and costs of nature-based solutions is important for several reasons. It is important for 'making the case' for nature-based solutions, for guiding decision-makers and for accessing finance.
- b) Several features of measuring benefits and costs are worth noting:
  - i. Measurement may take place before or after implementation. Measurement before implementation is important to the planning process. Measurement after implementation is usually part of monitoring and evaluation.
  - ii. Measurement may focus on the benefits alone, or on both benefits and costs.
  - iii. There are different methodologies for measuring benefits and costs.
  - iv. Guidance which methodology to apply, and how to apply it is valuable.

#### **6. Finance for nature-based solutions**

- a) The lack of finance for NbS is an important barrier in many countries but particularly in developing countries.
- b) The dissemination of clear and up-to-date information about different sources of finance for NbS in developing countries would be valuable.
- c) A good understanding of the circumstances in which the private sector is likely to invest, or not invest in NbS is important. Such an understanding can inform the allocation of public finance for NbS. The approach of 'public money for public goods' is relevant in this context.
- d) Sometimes nature-based solutions take a long time to deliver results. This can be a barrier to obtaining finance.

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<sup>2</sup> Operative paragraph 1(a) of UNEA Resolution 5/5 reads: 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;